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**The (Un)Becoming-Scot: Irvine Welsh, Gilles Deleuze and the Minor
Literature of Scotland After Scotland**

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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July 2019

Abstract

This thesis examines the works of Scottish novelist Irvine Welsh alongside the philosophical works of French poststructuralists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari as a case study for *minor literature*. By utilising Deleuze and Guattari's aesthetic philosophies in a deep reading of Welsh's novels, the thesis hopes to highlight the post-national potentials within both minor literature theory and the literary philosophy of Irvine Welsh. The first half of the thesis consists of three chapters that highlight the three categorical elements of minor literature: minor use of a major language, anti-establishmentarian politics, and a collective value for audiences. In Chapters One, Two and Three, I will not only describe these factors, but I will attempt at examining the linguistic, political, and communitarian elements of unbecoming-Scottish throughout Welsh's novels. The second half of the thesis specifically focuses more on the ways in which becoming and unbecoming can alter Welsh's view of Scottish cultural and national identity, which, for him, begins in a critique of masculinity, violence, colonial histories, religious identity and the problems of family. Therefore, Chapters Four, Five and Six respond to the three elements of Welsh's critiques of majoritarian national identity: in a becoming-woman, an unbecoming-man and a new becoming-pack, modes of existential transformation that challenge both patriarchy and the institution of family. Throughout the thesis, I hope to illustrate how the minor voices of Welsh's works reflect the minor voices of other post-national, post-industrial writers and artists. In reading Welsh with Deleuze as a minor artist, we might find some radical value in the transgressive, cruel and brutal aesthetics of such an 'unbecoming Scot', Irvine Welsh. Like his characters who must face the terror of Scotland after Scotland, industry and country obliterated by failed attempts at independence and the growth of global neoliberal capitalism, this thesis faces the major, *molar* and dominant facets of national, linguistic, cultural, gendered or racial identity construction in Welsh's novels, and thus to establish a universal response to poverty and violence: to choose life.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	
Acknowledgments	
Declaration of Originality	
Abbreviations	
Introduction: Irvine Welsh, the Unbecoming Scot	9
The Receptions and Traditions of Irvine Welsh	10
The Rise of Welsh Studies as Minor Literature	19
Why Deleuze <i>and</i> Welsh?: Towards a Vernacular Philosophy of Literature	25
Summary of Chapters: Blood on the Tracks and Choosing Life	38
Part I: ‘Blood of the Tracks’ and Three Paths of the Minor	40
Chapter One: Minor Literature, Minor Voices and Translating Irvine Welsh	41
The Decolonial Projects of Welsh’s Diglossic and Heteroglossic Translations	54
Minor to Miner: The Argotic Bridge Between Scots and Picard	62
From Capitale to Cacapitale: The ‘Shitty’ Translation of Edinburgh’s Inner City	66
From Trainspotting to Ferroviopathes: The Québécois Conundrum	68
Chapter Two: The Minor Marxism of Irvine Welsh’s Minor Literature	73
A Scot Against the State: Deleuze, Althusser, and a Leith Head	79
Welsh Against Austerity, Renton Against Thatcher	84
Hard-On or <i>Braveheart</i> ?: The Failure of Phallic Freedom in <i>A Decent Ride</i>	94
A Dead Politics: The End of Spud as Welsh’s Marxist Lament	104
Chapter Three: Becoming-Skag and the Collective Value of Irvine Welsh’s Fiction	107
Enter the Welshverse: A Rhizomatic Reading	109
The Destruction of Community and the Rise of the Individual	113
Returning to the Pack: Becoming-Animal as Becoming-Skag in the Welshverse	116
Psychic Defence or Existential Ecstasy? The Nuances of Drug Use in Skag-Lit	127
Part II: Choosing Life and Its (Un)Becomings	136
Chapter Four: Becoming-Woman and Welsh’s Experience of <i>Écriture Féminine</i> in <i>Porno</i>	137
<i>Porno</i> ’s Popular Reviews and its Gendered Divisions	137
Becoming-Woman in Welsh’s Novels: Rhizomatism as <i>Écriture Féminine</i>	143
The Carnavalesque and the Abject: Inverting the Male Gaze	148
Nina and the Becoming-Woman of the Revolutionary Girl	155
The Joke of Womanhood: The Tensions of the Carnavalesque and Female Abject	159
‘Some cunt’s fuckin gittin it’: <i>Porno</i> and the Problematic Sex Wars for Feminism	164
‘To Lose a Whore’: The Problem of Mileage	170
Chapter Five: Facing the Stork: Confronting Colonisation and the History of Man in <i>Marabou Stork Nightmares</i>	175
The Brutal Being of the Hardman in the Welshverse	175
The Man of the House: Working-Class Masculinity in Crisis	179
<i>Marabou Stork Nightmares</i> and the Paradox of Becoming-Man	183
Diving into the Abyss: The Existential Horrors of the History of Man	189
Lies and Retaliation at the End of <i>Marabou Stork Nightmares</i>	208

Chapter Six: The Ethics of Choosing Life and the Alternative Working-Class

Families of Irvine Welsh	210
Unbecoming-Father?: Franco's Failed Escape from Fatherhood in <i>The Blade Artist</i>	212
The End of the Line?: The Last Lawsons, Williamsons, and Begbies of Edinburgh	223
The Redemption of the Murphys and the Rentons: Towards a Radical Ethics of Care	227
Conclusion: Irvine and Me	235
Bibliography	238
By Irvine Welsh	238
Fiction and Drama	238
Introductions and Forewards	238
Articles, Essays and Online Sources	239
Translation	240
Other Sources	240
Thesis	269
Films and Streaming	269
Podcast	270
Music	270
Reviews, Magazines, Websites, (listed by date)	270

List of Figures

Figure 1: Trainspotting, dir. by Danny Boyle (PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, 1996).

Figure 2: 'Labour Isn't Working' poster (1979): <<https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/history-advertising-no-90-labour-isnt-working-poster/1281255>> [accessed 05/04/2018].

Figures 3-4: Braveheart, dir. by and starring Mel Gibson, written by Randall Wallace (MGM, 1995).

Figure 5: 'Freedom' by Tom Church, sculpture remained on the steps of Stirling Castle between 1996-2008.

Figure 6: 'Auld Faithful 3' from Irvine Welsh's *A Decent Ride* (London: Vintage, 2015), p. 359.

Figure 7: T2 Trainspotting, dir. Danny Boyle (Film4, 2017).

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude for The Andrew Tannahill fund for their financial support during this project. I would also like to thank the staff and students at the University of Glasgow for their many helpful suggestions during my research. I would like to thank especially my supervisors Prof. Alan Riach and Prof. Willy Maley for their guidance, support and encouragement throughout this project.

I would not have started this PhD without the exceptional teaching of Dr. François Vergne and Mr. Dougal Campbell during my undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Thank you for inspiring me and helping me throughout these years. I am particularly grateful to Mr. Dougal Campbell for helping me with my first chapter, for providing me with materials and vivid conversations about translation, French culture and Scottish literature. Equally, I would like to thank Prof. Michael Syrotinski for kindly accepting to read this chapter and providing me with helpful advice. I want to thank Dr. Aaron Kelly and Dr. Theo Van Heijnsbergen for their profoundly informed feedback during my viva which will help me go further in my research in the future. I am also grateful to my time spent at the British Library, for the help of its staff in giving me access to so many useful materials; and to the Imperial College Library for sheltering me for about a year in South Kensington. I also want to thank the staff from the small library of the Institut du Monde Anglophone in Paris for helping me find sources for the first chapter of this thesis.

To my friends who supported me during these four years I want to say thank you, especially to my best friends Élodie Devauchelle and Maëlle Lebon for always welcoming me in either Paris or Barcelona and to Marc Colell Teixidó for being the best colleague and friend in the School of Modern Languages and Cultures. A special thanks to Maëlle for helping me translate Spanish in this thesis. I am also very lucky for my parents to have always pushed me to continue in my studies, for my brothers Antoine and Benjamin and my sister-in-law Salima for supporting me throughout the good and the difficult moments. Merci!

To my husband Dr. David John Boyd, thank you so much for being my best friend, my companion and philosopher. I would not have made it to the end without your love, your unflinching support and faith in me. I am incredibly fortunate to have met you during this experience, not only for our countless conversations about Deleuze and politics which shaped this PhD, but also for the rest of our lives shared together and my many endless becomings.

Declaration of originality

I declare that the thesis does not include work forming part of a thesis presented successfully for another degree.

I declare that the thesis represents my own work except where referenced to others.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviated references to Irvine Welsh's novels or short-story collections are employed:

T: Trainspotting

AH: The Acid House

MSN: Marabou Stork Nightmares

E: Ecstasy

F: Filth

G: Glue

P: Porno

C: Crime

S: Skagboys

ADR: A Decent Ride

BA: The Blade Artist

DMT: Dead Men's Trousers

Given the frequency with which this thesis invokes them throughout, the following books written by Gilles Deleuze, with or without Félix Guattari, are cited using the following abbreviations:

K: Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Deleuze and Guattari)

AO: Anti-Oedipus (Deleuze and Guattari)

ATP: A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (Deleuze and Guattari)

Essays: Essays Critical and Clinical (Deleuze)

NP: Nietzsche and Philosophy (Deleuze)

FB: Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation (Deleuze)

Introduction: Irvine Welsh, the Unbecoming Scot

In this thesis, I examine the works of Scottish novelist Irvine Welsh alongside the philosophical works of French poststructuralists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Throughout the thesis, I will show that a reading of Welsh's novels can be informed by Deleuze and Guattari's theories of *minor literature*, a categorisation of literature that exhibits the minor use of a dominant language while also containing a political and collective value that operates against not only the dominant language, but also against the dominant cultural, political and societal norms produced by said literatures. While I will extensively examine minor literature throughout this chapter and Part I of the thesis, it is important to remind readers that minor literature is not merely a theory of marginalisation, but most importantly, a revolutionary call for the production of new literatures, politics and communities. I hope to not speak for Welsh's Scotland or the many diverse populations that live in Scotland, but instead, to observe Welsh's complex depictions of a post-industrial world hollowed out, mutilated and destroyed by the economic effects of Thatcherite austerity, the rise of global neoliberal capitalism and the end of the working class.

The works of Irvine Welsh are difficult to situate in contemporary British fiction, probably because his works might at times be associated with the urban realism and Marxist high-concept aesthetics akin to China Miéville or Ken Loach, who hope to reveal the pain of the working class. Welsh's language use and his brutal worlds of white male violence and sectarianism resembles the fiction of Niall Griffith and John King, who, like Welsh, depict the gritty and cruel suffering of the British white 'underclass'. Welsh may even appear as a post-national voice like Salman Rushdie, Zadie Smith and Monica Ali, all of whom challenge their colonial experiences with being British. Readers might notice that Welsh contributed to the introductions or prefaces of the transgressive works of American Generation-Xers like Bret Easton Ellis, Chuck Palahniuk and Craig Clevenger, whose works share the same literary viciousness and expressions of stark nihilism in tone and temperament. In all of these intersecting similarities and literary kinships, however, what this thesis is concerned with is how Welsh's proliferation across cultures, nations, languages and media reflects how his practices and philosophies work against the limitations of national, linguistic and cultural identity. While his work might fit into generic, demographic or stylistic movements across the Anglo-American literary landscape, it is important to remember that Welsh's fiction transmits a radical rewriting of Scottish language, culture, gender norms and class conflict as it is presented in the grim,

realistic, and at times, banal experience of poverty in a post-industrial region. Welsh writes a fiction that reflects the conditions of destitute poverty, organised crime and the structural traps of enclosure that perpetuate vicious cycles of violence, first located in his experiences in Leith, but also experienced in other urban environments, ranging from Baltimore, St. Louis or Chicago in the U.S., Belfast or Glasgow in the U.K., or the *banlieue* of Paris. Under the universalising struggle against neoliberal capital, Welsh's fiction functions as both post-industrial and post-national artefacts that challenge Scottishness by challenging its history and complicity with capitalism, its decolonial efforts of the past and its inability to rewrite itself for a new generation that feels a sense that their futures have been foreclosed by capital and threatened by precarity.

The Receptions and Traditions of Irvine Welsh

Irvine Welsh gained an international reputation thanks to his first novel *Trainspotting* which was first published by Secker & Warburg on 30 August 1993, and by Minerva for the paperback edition. Soon after its publication, the novel became a literary phenomenon in Scotland, in the U.K., in the English-speaking world and, through translation, a global success story. A theatre adaptation and a three-hour audio version put together by Lesley Bryce followed to make *Trainspotting* a *livre de cachet*. In 1995, 100,000 copies were sold in the U.K. alone. By 2002, the book sold about 500,000 copies. Before its publication, Welsh had published the chapter 'The First Day of the Edinburgh Festival' in an anthology of new writing edited by Janice Galloway, a popular Scottish novelist, and publisher and poet Hamish Whyte, with both editors praising Welsh's 'Edinburgh dirty realism'.¹ In August 1993, *Trainspotting* was received at the Edinburgh Book Festival as a Booker Prize contender and later won the Scottish Arts Council Book award in 1994. The novel became a worldwide phenomenon after the release of the film directed by Danny Boyle in 1996. It was classified as a 'cult' novel and Welsh was dubbed 'Scotland's most passionate chemical-age author' by *The Face*.²

Irvine Welsh's works, while popular throughout the world, has not received as much academic criticism compared to literary criticism in magazines and newspapers. His work is often quite polarising to readers, especially to a British audience during his rise in

¹ Hamish Whyte and Janice Galloway, 'Introduction' in *Scream, If You Want to Go Faster, New Writing Scotland* 9, edited by Hamish Whyte and Janice Galloway (Association of Scottish Literary Studies, 1991).

² Irvine Welsh and Bobby Gillespie. 'Primal Scream' in *The Face*, Issue 93, June 1996, p. 123.

the 1990s. Welsh received a critical backlash upon the release of Danny Boyle's adaptation of *Trainspotting* in 1996. The novel was already controversial in 1993 while listed for the Booker Prize, but became a bigger controversy on the big screen. Indeed, the 'Cool Britannia' attitude of the film mixed with the representation of drug use challenged the moral values of British society. According to Merrill Singer and J. Bryan Page,

Trainspotting presented the most widely varied view of addiction ever on film, up to date of its release, presenting both the description of the effect of heroin, the 'kick' and the horrible consequences of use and addiction such as HIV/AIDS in the case of Tommy, prison sentence for Spud and the death of baby Dawn caused of the neglect.³

Giles Coren an article in *The Times* entitled 'Why drug addiction is not a style issue' criticises the film on the grounds that 'Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* has made heroin chic'.⁴ In *The Times* once again, Magnus Linklater published a column headed 'A culture in need of cold turkey', and denounces *Trainspotting* as a 'film that divides families', as Welsh describes the 'underclass lives' in a film which 'takes no moral attitude towards drugs, has – far from undermining its appeal – actually enhanced it'.⁵ By contrast, Lesley Riddoch in *The Scotsman* suggests that 'it's time to talk about the issues raised by Irvine Welsh' and goes against the idea that the novel and the film glamorise drug use as she notes 'the police have warned that *Trainspotting* glamorises heroin.' Riddoch calls for a debate in British society over drug use, stating that 'there is no typical drug user', and she continues:

Tackling these different people as if they were one undifferentiated mass is a mistake. Treating them as if they regard drug taking as nothing but a problem is also a mistake. Wouldn't it be better to acknowledge the reality of drug use in much the same way that needle-sharing and homosexual sex were finally acknowledged because of the threat of AIDS? [...] If *Trainspotting* gets any of this debated, it'll achieve more than mere cult status – it could yet be a watershed.⁶

³ Merrill Singer and J. Bryan Page. *The social value of drug addicts: uses of the useless* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 140.

⁴ Giles Coren, 'Why drug addiction is not a style issue', *The Times*, (1996), p. 15.

⁵ Magnus Linklater, 'A Culture in need of cold turkey', *The Times*, (1996), p. 14.

⁶ Lesley Riddoch, 'Film cue for a new deal on drugs', *The Scotsman*, (1996), p. 17.

Trainspotting not only sparked a debate on the representation of drugs but had a clear impact on bringing the issue of drug policies into the media as well as participating in bringing awareness of the issue of the AIDS epidemic, touching all categories of the population, exemplified in the short-story-like chapter entitled ‘Bad Blood’. This debate goes hand in hand with the moral attitude of substance abuse policies by the government because drug and alcohol problems affect people from all backgrounds. Welsh insists not only on the consequences of such behavior but most importantly on their socio-cultural origins. Welsh shows their devastating impact on the most vulnerable category of the population as he shows poverty at its worst with a group of individuals dependent on a shrinking welfare state with a government advocating individualism and self-help. The image of Edinburgh as a ‘drug city’ shows the failure to tackle issues and to help but also impacts upon the image of the city and therefore tourism. The middle- and upper-class façade of the city has been broken by Leith walk and Muirhouse housing estates as deplored by Giles Gordon in *The Scotsman*, seeing the image of Edinburgh reflected in the novel as another way to stereotype Scotland as poor and drugged:

The second point is that *Trainspotting* (and James Kelman’s Booker Prize-winning novel *How Late it Was How Late*) presents the Scots as the English like to see them: drunken or drugged, aggressive, illiterate, socially inept, boorish. Thus, of course, it makes sense for the BBC Scotland to make a series which portrays them as such. No doubt the network will leap to buy the programmes, endorsing as they do Scotland at its most ghastly and crass.⁷

Welsh responded to the debate over the glamorization of drug use in *Trainspotting*, film and novel, in *The Big Issue in Scotland*:

In a sense, I did consider there would be a lot of the general drug hysteria nonsense and completely superfluous debate as to whether the book and/or the play and/or the film encouraged or discouraged people to abuse drugs. Of course, anybody with any sense knows that it/they do neither, and that people abuse drugs for a variety of social and psychological reasons. [...] I’ve found, though, that when you dig a bit deeper, the subtext to much of the middle-class outrage around *Trainspotting* is not

⁷ Giles Gordon, ‘Pandering to English view of Scotland the drugged’, *The Scotsman*, (1997), p. 4. See also Carole Jones, “‘Acting the part of an illiterate savage’: James Kelman and the question of postcolonial masculinity”, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 45:3 (2009), pp. 275-284, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17449850903064724>> [accessed 05/03/2015]

to do with ‘drugs’ at all, but concerns the great British divide of social class. The truth of the matter is that ‘drugs’ books have been around for a long time. Thomas De Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* was published by the London Magazine in 1821. So it’s as well to stop all the bullshit at this point. Where the shock has come for the middle classes, be they of a ‘liberal’ or ‘conservative’ hue, is in ‘these people’ talking and interacting in ways they cannot immediately recognise. It’s long been the contention (usually of middle-class commentators) that class is not important any more in British society. However, the attitude of the middle classes to any piece of art from a working-class culture has to be one of the outsiders looking in, an essentially voyeuristic relationship.⁸

Morality becomes a key factor as the Conservative view of social problems tends to demonise the poor as John Welshman points out with the writing of the sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf:

One [change] was the increasing problem of football hooliganism. The traditional working-class sport had apparently become an underclass game. The culture included “a lifestyle of laid-back sloppiness, association in changing groups of gangs, congregation around discos or the like, hostility to middle-class society, peculiar habits of dress, of hairstyle, often drugs or at least alcohol.”⁹

Therefore, the term ‘underclass’ becomes a way to create a cast within the working class as the term was links to ‘dependency culture’ and was quickly replaced in the 1990s by ‘social exclusion’.¹⁰ Thus, the term ‘underclass’ is a way to stigmatise poverty which is closely linked to morality, as poverty or ‘the underclass’ being a moral threat to society, an image which is not new considering the treatment of class in the English novel which seeing poverty and the working class as Other, as a hostility to the higher classes.¹¹

Trainspotting focuses on a group of young people (‘schemies’ after the housing schemes they inhabit) in Leith in the 1980s. Welsh provides an insight into the historical, social and cultural context of urban Scotland by describing the lives of one particular

⁸ Irvine Welsh, ‘The confessions of Irvine Welsh’, *The Big Issue in Scotland*, (29 March – 11 April 1996), pp. 12-13.

⁹ John Welshman, *Underclass: a History of the Excluded Since 1880* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006; 2013), p. 168.

¹⁰ Welshman, pp. 182-3.

¹¹ See Mary Eagleton and David Pierce, *Attitudes to Class in the English Novel: from Walter Scott to David Storey* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979)

working-class community. Exploring interconnected social problems such as drug use and addiction, following the epidemic of HIV in Edinburgh in the 1980s and 1990s, which touched all generations in Scottish urban society, Welsh reveals how the people of Scotland and especially many people among the urban working class of Edinburgh were disregarded by the Thatcher government, leaving them to cope with poverty, unemployment, heroin addiction and the everyday violence that accompanied such precarity.

The Thatcher era increasingly stigmatised the working-class community in the ethos of *laissez-faire* economic policies and austerity. Welsh's ghettos were the remnants of the industrial past of Scotland when the nation was the right hand of the British Empire, complicit in the slave economies of the eighteenth century, global colonisation in the nineteenth century and mass industrial exploitation in the twentieth century. However, on the eve of Thatcher's rise in the late 1970s and her dominance in the 1980s, Scotland was subjected to a large measure of de-industrialisation alongside calls for political devolution. These policies led to mass unemployment and the utter destruction of the working class, dividing an already unequal society even more, undermining what labour once meant in an industrial age, as Duncan Petrie explains:

By the mid-1990s only 40 per cent of the British adult population were in what could be termed secure employment, the group [Will] Hutton terms *privileged*. A further 30 per cent – the *marginalised and insecure* – occupied either fixed-contract, part-time or casualised work, typically characterised by the absence of effective job protection, pension rights, sickness benefit, etc. The remaining 30 per cent – *the disadvantaged* – were either unemployed or economically inactive.¹²

Here we are shown groups of people not in terms of class but in terms of employment status divided between the privileged and the disadvantaged: the rise of the precariat.¹³ In the same tradition of William McIlvanney and James Kelman, Welsh shows the reader the remnants of the working class they once knew, behind the numbers, the real lives of his characters. Indeed, for Welsh, there is an urgency to give a voice to the voiceless, to the lost working-class voices of a post-industrial Scotland, as he explains in plain terms in an interview:

¹² Duncan Petrie. *Contemporary Scottish Fictions: Films, Television and the Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 88.

¹³ Guy Standing. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), p. 1.

In much of what is called ‘modern fiction’, working-class characters are given ‘speaking parts’ but not ‘thinking parts’. Thus, from Enid Blyton to popular modern novels like *London Fields* by Martin Amis, the narrative voice is unmistakably the authorial voice, with the working-class characters almost exclusively confined to dialogue.¹⁴

Scotland’s capital city is no longer positively seen as the ‘Athens of the North’, nor as a centre of cultural progress. Welsh shows another face of the city on the other side of Princes Street, by taking the reader downhill, to the end of Leith Walk, seeking ‘the realm of ordinary people’s lives and activities that have become increasingly disaffected from the major institutions of state and society’.¹⁵ These are the *minor* voices of Welsh’s oeuvre.

Like Edwin Muir and Muriel Spark before him, Welsh plays with the tourist eye. Instead of exploring the south/north divide of Edinburgh, Welsh takes his readers to the east of the city, away from the more prosperous west.¹⁶ This is a reconfiguration of coordinate points and a fresh emphasis, centring on an area otherwise neglected in fiction. This gap between the East and the West also testifies to Welsh’s determination to break with the tradition of Scottish literature which would play on the division between north and south, Old and New Town, rural and urban, etc., compelling his readers to see Edinburgh through the lens of the minoritarian populations in the east. Here, we are brought to a little port at the east of the city, where divisions and disconnections are no longer seen, felt or experienced. In the chapter of *Trainspotting* entitled ‘Inter Shitty’, Begbie and Renton take the train to London from Waverley Station in Edinburgh and engage in conversation with two Toronto tourists. Begbie then describes the arrival of a family friend from an island on the west coast of Ireland and her discovery of the city:

These burds ur gaun oantay us aboot how fuckin beautiful Edinburgh is, and how lovely the fuckin castle is oan the hill ower the gairdins n aw that shite. That’s aw they tourist cunts ken though, the castle n Princes Street, n the High Street. Like whin Monny’s auntie came ower fae that wee village oan that Island oaf the west coast ay Ireland, wi aw her bairns.

¹⁴ Irvine Welsh, ‘The confessions of Irvine Welsh’, p. 13.

¹⁵ Aaron Kelly, *Irvine Welsh* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 2.

¹⁶ See also Manfred Malzahn, ‘Hells, Havens, Hulls: Literary Reflections of Scottish Cities’, *International Journal of Scottish Literature* 8, (Autumn/Winter 2011) <www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk> ISSN 1751-2808 [accessed 10/01/2014].

The wifey goes up tae the council fir a hoose. The council sais tae her, whair's it ye want tae fuckin stey, like? The woman sais, ah want a hoose in Princes Street lookin oantay the castle. This wifey's fuckin scoobied likes, speaks that fuckin Gaelic is a first language; disnae even ken that much English. Perr cunt jist likes the look ay the street whin she came oaf the train, thoat the whole fuckin place wis like that. The cunts it the council jist laugh n stick the cunt n one ay they hoatline joabs in West Granton, thit nae cunt else wants.¹⁷

The language barrier is not the only obstacle described here; rather, it is the incomprehension following the horror of the many realities of the city that contrasts completely with the imagined version of the city. This obstacle is not only defined by language, but entirely by spatial discourses on poverty, making the alienating experience described entirely tragic. This hellish descent recalls Muir's notes on his first arrival in the city: 'The whole town was ... an unforetrollable surprise to me, for I arrived in it straight from the Orkney Islands, where I had never seen a train, a tram-car, a factory, a tenement, a theatre, a slum, or any of the other normal features of a modern city'.¹⁸

Like Welsh, Muir, in *Scott and Scotland* (1936), describes the Scots as a populace overcome by a linguistic, economic and cultural subjective schism, or as he calls it, a 'divided consciousness'.¹⁹ This crisis of identity captured by Welsh in the Waverley anecdote and Muir in his description of Edinburgh is also expressed in the crisis of national identity and notably with the creeping Anglicization from 1603 with the Union of the Crowns and the Act of Union in 1707, until the present day, which Muir defines as the alienation of Scottish native language and culture. Scottish life and thought were split in two: Scots was the language of sentiments and English the language of thought, creating a duality in the mind as he called it the 'dissociation of sensibility'.²⁰ For Muir, the loss of a native language provoked the loss of a native culture. The real impact on the Scottish mind was the process of desperate assimilation of Scotland into an English Britain. Calvinism may have been a repressive force on the Scottish mind, but the notion of Britishness, in alienating Scottishness as Other and as minor, has been more powerful than anything else. What haunts the Scottish people is the question of the origins of their culture, and the role their culture plays in the present and future of British society. Consequently, unifying Scottish history under the banner of Britishness is impossible because of the colonial

¹⁷ Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting* (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 146-7. Hereafter *T*.

¹⁸ Edwin Muir, *Scottish Journey* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1979;1935), p. 8.

¹⁹ Edwin Muir, *Scott and Scotland; the Predicament of the Scottish Writer* (London: Routledge, 1936)

²⁰ Muir, *Scott and Scotland*, p. 115.

trauma of speaking a coloniser's language in their own home. According to Muir then, Britain can barely be called a 'home' for Scots because they are alienated, othered and with a minor language that stands opposed to the existence of the British state in the first place.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, authors such as Hugh MacDiarmid (1892-1978) who promoted the use of the vernacular Scots in literature, and Lewis Grassic Gibbon (1901-1935) author of the trilogy *A Scots Quair*, including *Sunset Song* (1932), *Cloud Howe* (1933) and *Grey Granite* (1934) also used Scots dialect in both narrative and dialogue and thus 're-energised the traditional Scottish literary focus of the small rural community through a modernist aesthetic in which this community is allowed its own voice'.²¹ Cairns Craig also points out that 'for Gibbon, the dialect voice maintains the possibility of a community and a communality in defiance of the hierarchies of the class system that are embodied in and through the voice of Standard English'.²² For Welsh, there was a sense of estrangement beneath the use of Standard English in narrative as he explains in *The Guardian*: 'I tried to write *Trainspotting* in Standard English but it sounded ludicrous and pretentious when I read it back'.²³

In his interview with Kelly, Welsh outlines a less outlandish, more distinctly Scottish literary genealogy for his writing, citing the influence of James Hogg (1770-1835), Lewis Grassic Gibbon (1901-35), Alasdair Gray (b. 1934), William McIlvanney (1936-2015), James Kelman (b. 1946) as he explains in the introduction to Iceberg Slim's *Pimp: The Story of my Life* (2009):

William McIlvanney was a revelation. He was writing about a place and people I could identify with and they were the central characters, the stars of the show, not wheeled on as villains or comedians. James Kelman and Alasdair Gray, in their different ways, would come along and take this to new levels. Kelman's insistence on the importance of voice in the narrative was particularly liberating. Then I moved backwards, through Hogg, Stevenson, Scott, Grassic-Gibbon and Burns. But wherever I travelled in literature, through Becket and Joyce and Ireland to Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy in Russia, Iceberg Slim remained one of my biggest influences.²⁴

²¹ Matt McGuire, *Contemporary Scottish Literature* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 115.

²² Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 96.

²³ See Julia Reid's 'The Foreigner at Home: Stevenson and Scotland' in *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 108-37.

²⁴ Irvine Welsh, 'Introduction' in *Pimp: The Story of my Life* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2009), p. xiv.

Spanning nearly 200 years of literary production, these writers share a dedication to the literary development of the Scottish vernacular, understood to be the register of the indigenous, ‘natural’ speech of the nation’s people.²⁵ The inclusion of Iceberg Slim as his biggest influence guides us towards the black English vernacular and the minor experience of African-Americans in the U.S., deterritorialised from Standard American English as we are going to explore in Chapter One.²⁶ The influence of James Kelman and Tom Leonard on Irvine Welsh’s style is undeniable as he explains himself, writing that Kelman’s first novel *The Bus-Conductor Hines* (1984) ‘was like Year Zero’.²⁷ In the novel, Kelman wants to give a voice to working-class Glaswegians that were largely ignored before he began writing, as he explains:

I wanted to write as one of my people, I wanted to write and remain a member of my own community [...] Whenever I did find somebody from my own sort of background in English literature, they were confined to the margins, kept in their place, stuck in the dialogue. You only ever saw them or heard them. You never got into their mind.²⁸

Kelman gives his characters the possibility to speak in their own voices in the Glaswegian vernacular and Welsh does the same with his characters from Leith. The orality of the text comes from the phonetic representation of the Scottish vernacular, which substitutes Standard English with urban Scots in both dialogue and narrative. The Scottish urban dialect became a primary influence in contemporary Scottish literature through Kelman’s work as a response to the failure of the 1979 referendum and the lack of representation of Scotland within the British state, and to distinguish Scottish literature from its neighbours. As Michael Gardiner notes,

Kelman’s voice is in part a transmission of the possibilities for the poetic reconfiguring of the relation of speech and writing as in Edwin Morgan, Ian Hamilton Findlay and later Tom Leonard; via Kelman, as Cairns Craig has noted, ‘voice’ then opens up paths for Janice Galloway, Alan Warner and Irvine Welsh.²⁹

²⁵ Alice Ferrebe, ‘Welsh and Tradition’ in *The Edinburgh Companion to Irvine Welsh* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 10.

²⁶ Russell A. Potter. *Spectacular Vernaculars: Hip-Hop and the Politics of Postmodernism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), pp. 69-70.

²⁷ Aaron Kelly, p. 11.

²⁸ James Kelman, ‘The Importance of Glasgow in my Work’, in *Some Recent Attacks* (Stirling: AK Press, 1992), pp. 78-84.

²⁹ Michael Gardiner, *From Trocchi to Trainspotting* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 159.

Kelman's interest in Kafka's fiction is demonstrated in his long essay 'A Look at Franz Kafka's Three Novels' (2003).³⁰ Kelman describes Kafka's linguistic and narration style as integral in establishing his own use of viewpoints (subjectivation) in narration. Kelman explains that Kafka's use of vernacular language inspired his own writing; just as Kafka oscillated between Prague-German and Yiddish, Kelman too established a sense of movement and tension between Broad Scots and Standard English. Like Kafka, Kelman notes that this shift in high and low language was not only used in dialogue, but it established a sense of subjective difference and psychic othering as each language informed the shifts in a sense of self, in between first and third person perspective.³¹ For Cairns Craig, it is 'the liberation of the Scottish voice in Scottish fiction' that Kelman's work introduces, albeit due in part to his dedication to Kafka's mastery in producing minor, repressed and silenced voices of post-industrial Scotland.³²

The Rise of Welsh Studies as Minor Literature

Welsh has just been recently canonised in Scottish literature, pushed by the success of *Trainspotting* throughout the U.K. and the following international success of the film. In the last 20 years there has been a growing interest in Welsh from academics following the *Trainspotting* phenomenon as I have summarised above. Aaron Kelly's *Irvine Welsh* (2005) and Robert Morace's *Irvine Welsh* (2007) are the most deeply researched and thorough monographs on Welsh,³³ covering mainly Welsh's novels and novella collections until *The Bedroom Secrets of the Master Chefs* (2006) as well as the film and other pieces of journalism. Kelly conducted an extended interview of Welsh, revealing of Welsh's turn in his fiction as well as his take on Scotland, literature and politics.³⁴ Alan Freeman was one of the first to see Welsh's *Trainspotting* as a witty distortion of realism in order to reveal 'Late Capitalism's replacement of work with leisure, of action with consumption, of meaning with system, of life with lifestyle',³⁵ placing Welsh into the line of postmodern

³⁰ James Kelman, 'A Look at Franz Kafka's Three Novels' in *And the Judges Said*, (London: Polygon, 1999), pp. 264-334.

³¹ See Cairns Craig, 'Resisting Arrest: James Kelman', in Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson's (eds.) *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), p. 112.

³² Cairns Craig, *Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and British Culture* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996), p. 193.

³³ Robert A. Morace, *Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Continuum, 2001)

³⁴ Aaron Kelly, 'In conversation with Irvine Welsh' in *Edinburgh Review* 133, (2004), pp. 7-17.

³⁵ Alan Freeman, 'Ghosts in Sunny Leith: Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*', in Susanne Hagemann (ed.) *Studies in Scottish Fiction: 1945 to the Present* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1996), p. 256.

literature.³⁶ Berthold Schoene-Harwood³⁷ is perhaps the most frequent contributor to Welsh studies with the edition of *The Edinburgh Companion to Irvine Welsh* (2010) regrouping names such as Matt McGuire,³⁸ Duncan Petrie,³⁹ Carole Jones⁴⁰ and Gavin Miller.⁴¹

Other noteworthy and important contributions to Welsh's studies include Christie L. March's *Rewriting Scotland*, which dedicates a chapter to Welsh's fiction,⁴² as well as Cairns Craig's discussion of *Trainspotting* in *The Modern Scottish Novel*, in the chapter 'Fearful Selves: Character, Community, and the Scottish Imagination,' where Craig reads Welsh's fiction in the tradition of Scottish literature. Ellen-Raïssa Jackson and Willy Maley's article on Welsh's *Marabou Stork Nightmares* is a groundbreaking essay that first links the postcolonial nature of the novel to Welsh's own colonial concerns about Scotland,⁴³ which I will discuss at length in Chapter Five alongside Schoene-Harwood's essays on Welsh and masculinity. Jessica Homberg-Schramm's monograph '*Colonised by Wankers': Postcolonialism and Scottish Contemporary Fiction* (2018) gives a detailed background to Scottish literature's engagement with its postcolonial relationship, with itself and the world, tracing back the history of Scotland's impact in colonialism and its internal conflict. Her analysis is exemplified with her study of various Scottish writers including Welsh, Kelman, but also Jackie Kay and Leila Aboulela. Mark Schmitt's *British White Trash: Figurations of Tainted Whiteness in the Novels of Irvine Welsh, Niall Griffiths and John King* (2018) follows a similar approach in exploring Welsh's preoccupations with race and class.⁴⁴

Schoene-Harwood also edited *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature* (2007) which gathers updated and thoughtful analysis of Welsh's fiction such as with Robert Morace, 'Irvine Welsh: Parochialism, Pornography and

³⁶ Alan Freeman, 'Realism Fucking Realism: The Word on the Street - Kelman, Kennedy and Welsh', *Cencrastus*, 57 (1997), pp. 6-7.

³⁷ Berthold Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men: Literary Masculinities from Frankenstein to the New Man* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000). See also 'Nervous Men, Mobile Nation: Masculinity and Psychopathology in Irvine Welsh's *Filth* and *Glue*', in Eleanor Bell and Gavin Miller (eds), *Scotland in Theory* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 121-45.

³⁸ Matt McGuire, *Contemporary Scottish Literature* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

³⁹ Duncan Petrie, *Screening Scotland* (London: British Film Institute, 2000). See also *Contemporary Scottish Fiction: Films, Television and the Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

⁴⁰ Carole Jones, *Disappearing Men: Gender Disorientation in Scottish Fiction, 1979-1999* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009).

⁴¹ Eleanor Bell and Gavin Miller (eds), *Scotland in Theory* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004).

⁴² Christie L. March, *Rewriting Scotland: Welsh, McLean, Warner, Banks, Galloway, and Kennedy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).

⁴³ Ellen-Raïssa Jackson and Willy Maley, 'Birds of a Feather?: A Postcolonial Reading of Irvine Welsh's *Marabou Stock Nightmares* 1995' in *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, special issues on *Contemporary Scottish Literature, 1970-2000* (ed.) Tomas Monterrey, 41 (November 2000), pp. 187-96.

⁴⁴ Mark Schmitt, *British White Trash: Figurations of Tainted Whiteness in the Novels of Irvine Welsh, Niall Griffiths and John King* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

Globalisation’, and Kirstin Innes, ‘Mark Renton’s Bairns: Identity and Language in the Post-*Trainspotting* Novel’. Aaron Kelly contributed to the companion with his essay ‘James Kelman and the Deterritorialisation of Power’, which adopts Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s concept of *minor literature* from their *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1975) to analyse Kelman’s fiction. Kelly raises the importance of post-national literature when analysing Kelman, which influenced my readings of Welsh. Michael Gardiner had taken a similar path with *From Trocchi to Trainspotting: Scottish Critical Theory Since 1960* (2006) which sought to bring together Scottish writing such as James Kelman, Alexander Trocchi, Janice Galloway, Alan Warner and Irvine Welsh with postmodern, deconstructive and post structural French theory (mainly Deleuze, Guattari, Virilio and Derrida.). Gardiner traces the links between Scottish literature and philosophy with French theory which constructs an important basis for this thesis. For example, Gardiner exposes Trocchi and Guy Debord’s Situationism, R. D. Laing’s work on schizophrenia and psychiatry institution most notably in *The Divided Self* (1960) and its influence on Guattari or tracing back the influence of Kenneth White’s *géopoétique* with Deleuze. Deleuze’s own doctoral thesis was dedicated to the philosophy of David Hume, as Gardiner too reminds us. Moreover, Deleuze was on the panel to judge White’s thesis on nomadism, ‘*le nomadisme intellectuel*’, which will bring *L’Esprit nomade* (1987).⁴⁵ In *L’Esprit nomade*, White uses Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the rhizome in ‘*Eléments de géopoétique*’⁴⁶ even though White will later critically respond to Deleuze at length in *Dialogue avec Deleuze* (2007).⁴⁷ White replies to Deleuze and Guattari’s use of his thesis in *A Thousand Plateaus*, which he sees as a misreading of his work; this is most likely a consequence of Deleuze working from memory as I will discuss shortly. White nonetheless describes what brings together Deleuze’s ‘*géophilosophie*’ and White’s *géopoétique*. Gardiner dedicates a large section to Kelman and most importantly on Kelman as a *minor* writer, as he describes Kelman’s novel *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994) ‘as his most Deleuzian’.⁴⁸ Although Gardiner significantly uses *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) in order to trace back to Laing, Guattari and Kelman, which renders the analysis jargon-ridden and limited at times to only psychoanalysis, it is nevertheless a detailed and clear introduction to *minor literature* in Kelman, allowing me to build a bridge toward Welsh Studies.

Other scholars have applied Deleuze to Welsh, even if at times these applications are perhaps not as thorough, rigorous, or effective as the works of Kelly or Gardiner. This

⁴⁵ Kenneth White, *L’Esprit nomade* (Paris: Grasset & Fasquelle, 1987).

⁴⁶ White, p. 386.

⁴⁷ Kenneth White, *Dialogues avec Deleuze: politique, philosophie, géopoétique* (Paris: Isolato, 2007)

⁴⁸ Gardiner, *From Trocchi to Trainspotting*, p. 164.

being so, it is still extremely important that numerous scholars have noticed the exciting possibilities of using the philosophy of Deleuze in literature and the concept of minor literature with Scottish literature, especially in reference to writers like Irvine Welsh. Robert Crawford suggests in *Devolving English Literature* a similar position, arguing that:

Encouragements has come also from a very different approach. Though the idiom of *Devolving English Literature* is not at all that of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, their *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* contains material likely to be stimulating for anyone interested in questions of how an un-English identity may be preserved or developed within 'English Literature'.⁴⁹

Following the linguistic component of minor literature, Jennifer M. Jeffers in her article 'Rhizome National Identity: "Scatlin's Psychic Defense" in *Trainspotting*', applies the concept of rhizome to Welsh's narrative and tackles Crawford's allusion to minor literature as 'Welsh's presentation of difference does not promote an idea of "un-English identity" or a "pro-Scottish identity"'⁵⁰. For both Jeffers and Crawford, Welsh's 'minor literature' rejects identities of all sorts (national, gendered, racial, etc.), so to instead produce a roadmap for existential becomings.

In this context, Stefan Herbrechter, in his article 'From *Trainspotting* to *Filth*: masculinity and cultural politics in Irvine Welsh's writings', focuses on the 'psychosis of masculinity' in discussing power struggles and the consequences of identity construction.⁵¹ Herbrechter explains in a Deleuzian fashion that

while this affects all forms of identity the hegemonic identification process within white heterosexual patriarchy has been scrutinised for its violent exclusions of 'others' and its projections of anxieties and desires outside of itself. Difference and otherness play a key role in these processes of self-identification.⁵²

In response to the disintegration of masculinity in Welsh's *Filth*, Herbrechter suggests a *becoming-woman* to Bruce Robertson citing the renowned Deleuzian feminist scholar, Rosi

⁴⁹ Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 6.

⁵⁰ Jennifer M. Jeffers, 'Rhizome National Identity: "Scatlin's Psychic Defense" in *Trainspotting*', *Journal of Narrative Theory*, 35: 1 (2005), 88-111 (p. 94).

⁵¹ Stefan Herbrechter, 'From *Trainspotting* to *Filth* – masculinity and cultural politics in Irvine Welsh's writings' in Russell West and Frank Lay (eds.), in *Subverting Masculinity: Hegemonic and Alternative Versions of Masculinity in Contemporary Culture* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 109-127.

⁵² Herbrechter, p. 124.

Braidotti,⁵³ concluding on Welsh's challenging identity politics and failed egalitarianism as an engagement with poststructuralist feminist theory, such as Hélène Cixous and Alice Jardine in exposing gender as the first space for the crumbling of ideologically-constructed identities.⁵⁴ Jeffrey Karnicky's article 'Irvine Welsh's Novel Subjectivities'⁵⁵ and his later monograph *Contemporary Fiction and the Ethics of Modern Culture* (2007) give the first Deleuzian analysis of Welsh's fiction, extending the application of Deleuze and Guattari from the concept of minor literature to more central concepts in the philosophy of Deleuze such as *becoming* or *BwO* ('body without organs') in his reading of *Trainspotting*, which has been extremely helpful in my reading of drug use in *Skagboys*. Similarly, Roberto Del Valle Alcalá's monograph *British Working-class Fiction: Narratives of Refusal and the Struggle against Work* (2016) has a chapter on Kelman and Welsh.⁵⁶ In the subsection 'Beyond civil society: Irvine Welsh's *Skagboys*', Del Valle Alcalá uses Deleuze and Guattari to discuss the working-class struggle through their Marxist discourse, which leads Del Valle Alcalá ultimately to examine the political elements of Welsh's minor literature in a reading of the end of the working class in *Skagboys*. Del Valle Alcalá's subsection on Welsh is arguably the most poignant analysis of Welsh to this date, and has helped situate my reading of Deleuze and capitalism in Welsh's novels.

Furthermore, Emily Apter has dedicated a chapter of *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (2006) to Welsh's *Trainspotting*.⁵⁷ In the chapter 'The Language of Damaged Experience', she traces the lineage of 'rotten' and 'damaged' language of the 'subaltern' within the Frankfurt School of Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin before applying the concept of minor literature to Welsh's *Trainspotting*, which works as an extremely nuanced introduction to Welsh as a minor writer and artist. Similarly, Willy Maley's essay, 'Subversion and Squirrility in Irvine Welsh's Shorter Fiction', notes the potential of Deleuze and Guattari's minor literature and its variation such as 'minority discourse', as described by Abdul R. JanMohamed⁵⁸ and David Lloyd.⁵⁹ Maley's use of Gayatri Spivak's postcolonial term of 'the subaltern' exceptionally describes Welsh's

⁵³ Herbrechter, p. 126.

⁵⁴ Herbrechter, p. 126.

⁵⁵ Jeffrey Karnicky, 'Irvine Welsh's Novel Subjectivities', *Social Text*, 21 (2003), pp. 135-53.

⁵⁶ Roberto Del Valle Alcalá, *British Working-class Fiction: Narratives of Refusal and the Struggle against Work* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

⁵⁷ Emily S. Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁵⁸ Abdul R. JanMohamed and David Lloyd, 'Minority Discourse: What Is to Be Done?' *Cultural Critique*, No. 7, The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse II (Autumn, 1987), pp. 5-17.

⁵⁹ Abdul R. JanMohamed, 'Humanism and Minority Literature: Toward a Definition of Counter-Hegemonic Discourse' in *boundary 2*, Vol. 12/13, Vol. 12, no. 3 - Vol. 13, no. 1, On Humanism and the University I: The Discourse of Humanism (Spring/Autumn, 1984), pp. 281-99.

characters and the use of vernacular Scots, and pushes towards a more complex reading of Welsh's 'uncompromising' postcolonial impulses in his fiction. This essay importantly shifts the discourse away from the polarising criticisms of Welsh's writing, which are often rooted in morality and the lineage of a patronising representation of the workingclass.⁶⁰ David Lloyd has applied the term of minor literature in *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* (1987),⁶¹ which marked the very beginning of the application of Deleuze and Guattari's concept on Irish and British literature. However, while Lloyd's work is important as a foundation in Celtic minor literatures, my approach perhaps aligns closer to Apter, especially the way she describes the problematic use of *minor literature* amongst anglophone literary theorists. As Apter explains, 'David Lloyd tends to use the concept of minor literature to refer to emergent or marginalised national literary traditions, thus giving a regionalist application to master-minor or metropole-periphery paradigms that in turn privilege thematic and narrative applications.'⁶² Indeed, the complexity is also probably situated in Lloyd's use of the term minor itself as the problem lies in the distinction between minor *usage* and being a minority in social, linguistic, and political contexts. Apter is perhaps most skeptical about Lloyd's view of the 'assimilation of the minor', which according to Deleuze and Guattari, is philosophically and linguistically impossible, as they explain: 'We might as well say that minor no longer designates specific literatures but the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature'.⁶³ In other words, it is impossible to assimilate that which is not assimilable, that which is anomalous to the State and its dominant languages. This is a mistaken understanding of minor languages and the minor usages of dominant languages, as Deleuze and Guattari remind us: 'There is nothing that is major or revolutionary except the minor. To hate all languages of masters'.⁶⁴ Apter, following suit, explains that the problem of misusing minor literatures is the attempt to make-major that which is marginalised, to legitimise the minor, or strive for the neoliberal pursuit for literary egalitarianism. Nationalism cannot be conceived through the minoritarian, although it seems Lloyd misconstrues this point, writing:

⁶⁰ Willy Maley, 'Subversion and Squirrility in Irvine Welsh's shorter fiction', in Dermot Cavanagh and Tim Kirk (eds.), *Subversion and Scurrility: Popular Discourse in Europe from 1500 to the Present* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2000), pp. 190-204.

⁶¹ David Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

⁶² Apter, *The Translation Zone*, p. 274.

⁶³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. by Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003). p. 19. Hereafter *Kafta*.

⁶⁴ *Kafka*, p. 26.

Insofar as the political task of Irish literature is conceived in these terms by nationalists, and indeed by many unionists, a certain ‘minor’ status is written into the literature of this period. Representing quite programmatically the infancy of a literature that in a sense never existed, it is defined by its minority, having yet to mature to majority status.⁶⁵

Herein lies the problems of reading Welsh through a strict literary theory of marginalisation, an approach that is limited without a robust reading of Deleuze and Guattari’s complex philosophical elements of their other works, especially those after the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*. While it is necessary to read Welsh in the tradition of Scottish literature, it may be limiting in a broader sense if we do not address his works as an accessible approach to post-national minor literatures, as Chapter One asserts. We must avoid the pitfalls of arguing incorrectly that ‘not popular’ or ‘marginal’ languages, arts, music, or other forms of expression can always be related to the minor. For Deleuze and Guattari, minor literature is but one of thousands of aesthetic expressions of their primary philosophies of the *rhizomes*, *nomadology* and *becomings* that stand against the centralised ideologies of the greater whole of culture and the State itself. That does not invalidate these other approaches, but in my own attempts, I would hope that the study of minor literatures may open a path towards reading the aesthetic, political, and social philosophies of Deleuze in congress with the vernacular philosophies of Welsh.

Why Deleuze *and* Welsh?: Towards a Vernacular Philosophy of Literature

In my methodological approach to Welsh’s novels, it is important to explain why I chose the aesthetic, political, and existential philosophies of Gilles Deleuze (and to a lesser extent, Félix Guattari). I want to begin by noting that my use of Deleuze is not in mere theoretical application. In reading Welsh through Deleuze, I find that his works reveal a vernacular, embodied and playful approach to philosophies of existence and expression, or as Welsh himself writes famously: *choosing life*. While Guattari would challenge Freud and his teacher Lacan, so to radically politicise the field of mental healthcare in the 1960s and 1970s,⁶⁶ Deleuze would separate his works from Guattari by leaving the world of

⁶⁵ Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature*, p. 3.

⁶⁶ François Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, trans. by Deborah Glassman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 11.

psychoanalysis for aesthetic and existential philosophy, drawing on the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Baruch Spinoza and Henri Bergson in his readings of literature, cinema, and painting. As Stephen Zepke explains in his seminal text *Art as Abstract Machine: Ontology and Aesthetics in Deleuze and Guattari*, art is not merely a process of understanding representations of the world, but it is rather a highly embodied, sensuous and ontological expression of the real-time experiences of *becoming*, *immanence*, and *vitalism* felt both by the creator and viewer:

For Deleuze and Guattari aesthetics is not the determination of the objective conditions of any possible experience, nor does it determine the subjective conditions of an actual experience *qua* beautiful. Aesthetics instead involves the determination of real conditions that are no wider than the experience itself, that are, once more, indiscernible from *this* experience. Aesthetics then, is inseparable from ontology, because experience is, for Deleuze and Guattari, irreducibly real.⁶⁷

Hence, while Guattari's political intensity transformed the realm of thought into the new fields of war against the State, for Deleuze, the realm of thought was not just a battlefield for emancipation or freedom. It is a creative, exciting yet challenging game [*un jeu*] of existence, making art the active role of play [*jouer*] in that game, as he describes his early thoughts on Nietzsche's concept of *affirmation* in *Logique du sens* (1969):

Car *affirmer tout le hasard, faire du hasard un objet d'affirmation*, seule la pensée le peut. Et si l'on essaie de jouer à ce jeu autrement que dans la pensée, rien n'arrive, et si l'on essaie de produire un autre résultat que l'œuvre d'art, rien ne se produit. C'est donc le jeu réservé à la pensée et à l'art, là où il n'y a plus que des victoires pour ceux qui ont su jouer, c'est-à-dire affirmer et ramifier le hasard, au lieu de le diviser *pour* le dominer, *pour* parier, *pour* gagner. Ce jeu qui n'est que dans la pensée, et qui n'a pas d'autre résultat que l'œuvre d'art, il est aussi ce par quoi la pensée et l'art sont réels, et troublent la réalité, la moralité et l'économie du monde.⁶⁸

For only thought finds it possible *to affirm all chance and to make chance into an*

⁶⁷ Stephen Zepke, *Art as Abstract Machine: Ontology and Aesthetics in Deleuze and Guattari*, ed. by Robert Bernasconi (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 3.

⁶⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Logique du sens* (Paris: Les éditions de Minuit, 1969), p. 76.

object of affirmation. If one tries to play this game other than in thought, nothing happens; and if one tries to produce a result other than the work of art, nothing is produced. This game is reserved then for thought and art. In it there is nothing but victories for those who know how to play, that is, how to affirm and ramify chance, instead of dividing it *in order to* dominate it, *in order to wage*, *in order to win*. This game, which can only exist in thought and which has no other result than the work of art, is also that by which thought and art are real and disturbing reality, morality, and the economy of the world.⁶⁹

Deleuze's description of art as play in the game of an affirmative existence (of choosing life and sharing experience) transforms the expressive into a subjective mapping as much as a challenge against the institutionalism of aesthetic theory or discourse.

Rosi Braidotti, an esteemed student of Deleuze, similarly describes Deleuze's play with philosophy as a 'philosophical nomadism', which she associates with Deleuze's anti-institutional approach to a history of philosophy and art.⁷⁰ Importantly, Braidotti treats Deleuze's philosophical nomadism as a memory game, in which he plays out the rules of philosophical thought (from Kant, Nietzsche, Spinoza, Bergson) against the rules of institutionalised interpretation. Concepts like minor literature, minor history, minor art and minor politics continually work *against academic theory* and towards the affirmative elements of existential philosophy:

what exactly is involved in 'working from memory' when one is writing commentaries on the history of philosophy or on other theoretical texts? The most notorious statement to this effect concerns Deleuze's two-volume study of cinema, in which he states that he did not watch again any of the movies he was to discuss. He just wrote from the memory of the first time he watched those films, which often was years before. Most of his literary citations, however, bear the same style: they are rarely verbatim repetitions of the original texts. Nor are they 'close textual readings,' following the dominant mode of teaching philosophy in the academic world today, where the repetition of 'his master's voice' is the name of the game.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, ed. by Constantin V. Boundas and trans. by Mark Lester (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 71.

⁷⁰ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 232.

⁷¹ Braidotti, p. 232.

In reading and thinking through Welsh in the context of nomadic philosophy, I do not argue that students or thinkers should not learn the rules of academic interpretation; that would in many respects undermine the purpose of the given elements of exegesis or hermeneutics. Rather, I find it important to highlight that philosophy for Deleuze was a vernacular, accessible and vitalistic venture that allowed him to feel at home in the cosmos, much like his favourite characters from Franz Kafka, Samuel Beckett, and Virginia Woolf. Perhaps like these writers, Deleuze himself felt out of place, alien and foreign in his own land, as well as in the philosophical and academic circles he spent his entire life in; it seems that he simply wanted to play with thought and art.

Much like Deleuze, Welsh too emphasises the affirmative qualities of *choosing life* outside of the parameters of the ‘reality, morality, and the economy of the world’, also marked by his enjoyment with playing with language and philosophy, the reader’s expectations, and with images and representations of the working-class and the ruling-class. For example, in Welsh’s first novel, *Trainspotting*, Renton and Spud, the most sympathetic and philosophically rich characters throughout his works, are caught stealing books from a Waterstone’s bookshop, one of which is a copy of Kierkegaard. In a Kafkaesque trial, the magistrate asserts that the two boys had the intention of reselling the books, which would worsen their sentence and raise the fine. Renton objects, claiming that they were for his own personal use. Challenged by the magistrate, Renton gleefully describes, from memory, his understanding of Kierkegaard:

I’m interested in his concepts of subjectivity and truth, and particularly his ideas concerning choice; the notion that genuine choice is made out of doubt and uncertainty, and without recourse to the experience or advice of others. It could be argued, with some justification, that it’s primarily a bourgeois, existential philosophy and would therefore seek to undermine collective societal wisdom. However, it’s also a liberating philosophy, because when such societal wisdom is negated, the basis for social control over the individual becomes weakened and...but I’m rabbiting a bit here. Ah cut myself short. They hate a smart cunt. It’s easy to talk yourself into a bigger fine, or fuck sake, a higher sentence [...] The magistrate snorts derisively. As an educated man, ah’m sure he kens far mair about the great philosophers than a pleb like me.⁷²

⁷² *T*, pp. 207-8.

We see in this scene that Renton is encouraged to shift between his native tongue and ‘the master’s voice’, which is even reflexively exposed once Renton quits speaking and begins thinking about his role as ‘a pleb’ compared to the judge. Welsh’s minor use of English by writing in a Leithian dialect of Scots alters substantially here in this scene. Not only does Renton speak in Standard English, but his speech to the judge appeals to the majoritarian use of language in a courthouse; it is highly literary in argumentative structure and description, seeming more thoughtful essay than witty quip, more academic response than vernacular thrust. The scene, while quite humorous, is deftly sharp in its critique of institutional thought, one that may make readers conclude that only judges know old philosophers, and junkies like Renton and Spud, on the other hand, would rather sell philosophy for skag.

Indeed, Welsh continues to explore the vernacular and accessible theories of philosophy and art in the character of Spud, who we might term as the manifestation of the *rhizome* and *nomadology* in Welsh’s narrative universe, which I refer to as the ‘Welshverse’ throughout the thesis. Spud, a nickname given to Daniel Murphy, is no doubt signified by the potato, first in its symbolic significance to Ireland’s uneasy history with potatoes (denoted by his last name of Murphy and his Catholic upbringing),⁷³ and perhaps more importantly for this ‘Introduction’, his role as the roving centre – the rhizome – of Welsh’s collection of Leith-based schemies. As Deleuze and Guattari write,

A rhizome as subterranean stem is absolutely different from roots and radicles. Bulbs and tubers are rhizomes [...] The rhizome itself assumes very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers. When rats swarm over each other. The rhizome includes the best and the worst: potato and couchgrass, or the weed.⁷⁴

Opposed to the tree, the tuber does not expand its roots into the ground. While the tree is dependent on the sedentary scaffolding of the soil, bedrock, and geological strata beneath it, a potato, on the other hand, is nomadic and mobile. As Deleuze and Guattari remind us, tubers, once taken out of the ground and left out a bit in a damp environment, will begin to erupt from the centre, drawing out to the bright sky rather than digging into the dark earth.

⁷³ For more on the construction of Irish identity around the symbol of the potato, which should be understood as a colonial descriptor often associated with the intense poverty of Ireland during colonial rule, and after the Great Potato Famine of 1845-52, see Michael de Nie’s *The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press, 1798–1882* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), pp. 85-143.

⁷⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 5. Hereafter *ATP*.

Spud is, for all intents and purposes for this reading, the rhizomatic tuber, the central node in the narrative web of Welsh's world.

It is for this reason that Spud becomes a figure of the nomadic too, a nomadologist. To be a nomadologist does not merely mean a nomadic person displaced by external forces, be it social, political or environmental reasons. A nomadologist studies the minor. Deleuze and Guattari explain nomadology as such: 'History is always written from the sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary State apparatus, at least a possible one, even when the topic is nomads. What is lacking is a Nomadology, the opposite of a history'.⁷⁵ Welsh similarly rewrites the histories of the working class he grew up with, making Spud the minor voice that is continually described as one of Irvine Welsh's alter-egos, the *real* author of *Trainspotting*. In the most recent film adaptation of Danny Boyle's *T2: Trainspotting* (2017), Welsh merges the plot of Renton's journals from *Skagboys*, the prequel to *Trainspotting*, with the plot of the film. Throughout the second half of the film, we see Spud writing the events of *Trainspotting* on yellow notebooks with the opening line of the novel being read out loud by Spud as he reads it to Begbie. We see Spud paste and tape the pages of his novel all over his flat to remember the order of events of *Trainspotting*, annoying Begbie in a couple of scenes.

The events of *Skagboys* and *T2* are further complicated by Welsh's second novel, *Porno*, in which we see Spud begin to write a 'History of Leith'. Welsh describes the alienation Spud feels as he enters the Central Library in Edinburgh. Spud thinks to himself that as a young, poor and uneducated 'historian' of Leith, he can only hope that he will be 'Innocent until proven', as he marches into the library.⁷⁶ In the library, Spud begins to explore the history of Leith, when Leith merged with Edinburgh in 1920 after a referendum which saw Leithers rejecting the fusion: 'so that seems like a good place for ays tae start, 1920: the great betrayal, man'.⁷⁷ Spud displays not only nostalgia for the past, but an acute clarity and clear understanding of a time which was as bleak as the one he is living in in *Porno*, the same nostalgia and fear exhibited in *T2*, which enables him to voice his minor history of Leith *against* the official History of Edinburgh. Spud, a master Marxist thinker, is able to equate the current crisis of the gentrification of Leith described in *Porno* with the 'great betrayal' of Leith's incorporation into Edinburgh, a move that would forever alter the local history and working-class lives of those who remained there. Both events – from 1920 to 2002 – reveal Spud's nomadological curiosity as much as his desire to write about

⁷⁵ *ATP*, p. 24.

⁷⁶ Irvine Welsh, *Porno* (London: Vintage, 2013), p. 146. Hereafter *P*.

⁷⁷ *P*, pp. 146-7.

a people and their lost history that has become displaced, erased, and extinct, already long forgotten by the ‘ordinary cats’ of Edinburgh, Scotland and Great Britain:

Leith, 1926, the General Strike. Ye read aw that n what they aw said then, n ye pure see what the Labour Party used tae believe in. Freedom for the ordinary cat. Now it’s like ‘get the Tories oot’, which is jist a nice way ay sayin ‘keep us in, man, keep us in, cause we like it here’. Ah takes tons ay notes but, n the time jist whizzes past.⁷⁸

Thus, we see the reasons why Spud tries to write his history, a minor history that has never been told about people who will be forgotten otherwise, of nomadic people who escaped the lines of History, as Deleuze and Guattari explain in incredible detail:

How can the book find an adequate outside with which to assemble in heterogeneity, rather than a world to reproduce? The cultural book is necessarily a tracing: already a tracing of itself, a tracing of the previous book by the same author, a tracing of other books however different they may be, an endless tracing of established concepts and words, a tracing of the world present, past, and future. Even the anticultural book may still be burdened by too heavy a cultural load: but it will use it actively, for forgetting instead of remembering, for underdevelopment instead of progress toward development, in nomadism rather than sedentarity, to make a map instead of a tracing [...] History has never comprehended nomadism, the book never comprehended the outside. The State as the model for the book and for thought as a long history: logos, the philosopher-king, the transcendence of the idea, the interiority of the concept, the republic of minds, the court of reason, the functionaries of thought, man as legislator and subject. The State’s pretension to be a world order, and to root man.⁷⁹

Spud’s nomadology of Leith is just that: a roving history that is in-between oral and written, in-between English and Scots, in-between memoir and fiction, and most importantly, in-between the real and the representational. As he explains to Begbie, Spud feels the need to write his story in his own voice, about the people living in Leith, because

⁷⁸ *P*, p. 257.

⁷⁹ *ATP*, pp. 25-6.

it is the only thing that he believes will reveal the ‘rooting of man’, the trapping and displacement of Leithers by the State:

- What the fuck dae ye mean? You tryin tae take the fuckin pish?
- Naw, Franco, man, naw, it’s just that ah want the book tae be about the real Leith, ken, about some ay the *real* characters. Like you, man. Everybody in Leith kens you.⁸⁰

Spud continues:

- Cause it’s aw changing, man. Yuv goat the Scottish Office at one end and yuv goat the new Parliament at the other. Embourgeoisement, man, that’s what the intellectual cats call it. Ten years’ time, there’ll be nae gades like me n you left doon here.⁸¹

Here, Welsh emphasises how the process of devolution had given a glimpse at what could be a Scottish State, and for Spud, it means that things would only get worse as neoliberal policies began to threaten the existence of a working-class in Leith. Spud and Franco, in this moment, see themselves once again displaced from Leith, just like their parents and grandparents were being displaced from the city centre, only this time, Leith itself is becoming gentrified and men like them remain expendable, as much as their families’ labour in the twentieth century.

After Spud finishes his manuscript, one that he writes for himself as much as for a dying social body and the minor communities of Edinburgh, Welsh exposes the hegemonic power of History, what the State represents and means to replicate, specifically by barring minor voices in the grand discussion of national or historic narrative. Later in the novel, Spud’s manuscript is rejected without explanation. As Spud phones the publishing house, the interlocution provides us with a clash between the voice of the majoritarian and the minoritarian:

- I’m sorry if I seemed ambiguous, Mr Murphy. To be more frank, it’s quite an immature work, and you’re not really yet up to publishable standard...
- What dae ye mean, man?

⁸⁰ *P*, p. 260.

⁸¹ *P*, p. 261.

- Well, the grammar...the spelling...
- Aye, but are youse no meant tae sort aw that oot?
- ...to say nothing of the subject matter being not right for us.
- But youse've published history books about Leith before...ah kin feel ma voice gaun aw high, cause it's no fair, it jist isnae, it isnae fair, nowt's fair...
- Those were serious works by disciplined writers, the boy sortay snaps. – this is a badly written celebration of job culture and of people who haven't achieved anything noteworthy in the local community.⁸²

Silenced by the voice of the majority, Spud's history is displaced, perhaps even erased, the reader fears. And yet, Welsh persists in his quest to write his own anti-history, his nomadology, of Leith, disguising it as Spud's wayward manuscript.

Welsh's latest book, *Dead Men's Trousers*, is an ode to Spud and his long-lost manuscript, unpublished and left for Renton after Spud tragically dies. As Renton returns home to visit his father in Edinburgh twenty years after the events of *Trainspotting*, he discovers what Spud left him: his late brother's jeans and a manuscript. Welsh masterfully describes Renton's discovery of and enjoyment in reading a nomadology of Leith:

It's a thick manuscript, typed, with some handmade corrections. Astonishingly, it's written in the same style of my old junk diaries, the ones I always thought I might do something with one day. In that sort of Scottish slang that takes a wee while tae get on the page. But after a few pages of struggle I realise that it's good. Fuck me, it's very good. I lie back on my pillow, thinking about Spud.⁸³

In a minor, nomadological telling of his memories – or what Braidotti calls 'Molecular or nomadic memories' – Renton too begins to reflect on Spud's life differently, more so as the centralising force in the decentralising experience of neoliberalism and post-industrialism. Inspired by Spud, Renton decides to, again, choose life, to choose to share the lives of Spud and Leith with the rest of the world, just as Welsh does with his novels.⁸⁴ Renton is the one in the novels who sends Spud's manuscript off for publication in London, only after he discovers its intensive qualities and philosophical potential, as Welsh writes: 'Renton thinks about Spud's manuscript. How Spud's life wasn't all wasted. How

⁸² *P*, p. 380.

⁸³ Irvine Welsh, *Dead Men's Trousers* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2018), p. 345. Hereafter *DMT*.

⁸⁴ Braidotti, p. 32.

he sent it off to that publisher in London, with some minor modifications'.⁸⁵ While in *T2*, Boyle directs the publication of *Trainspotting* differently, describing the Bulgarian sex worker, Veronika, as the one character wise enough to send Spud's expressive, vernacular history of Leith to publishers, Welsh describes the events differently in *Dead Men's Trousers*. It is significant that Renton is the one to 'share' Spud's life with the world, because again, it reflects Welsh's vitalistic, existential, and ethical terms impulses as a minor artist. This is again illustrated by the phone call Renton receives from the publisher in London, in which Renton takes ownership of Spud's work:

My phone rings, and I step down the beach to take it. It's Gavin Gregson, the publisher in London. The one I sent Spud's manuscript tae, with just a few corrections. Well, two words mainly, both on the title page. He will reiterate to me about how excited they are to be publishing my book next spring. I think about Sick Boy's words, that you can only be a cunt or a mug, and you really can't be a mug. A thousand things go through my mind at once. Maybe atonement is about doing the right thing. But who for? I see Vicky smiling at me, Alex does a wee dance on the spot. What do I do? What would you do? I let it ring another couple of times, then hit the green button. – Gavin, how goes?⁸⁶

As the final scene in the entirety of the current Welshverse (for now), Renton articulates an affirmative response in the existential move of choosing life by reviewing Spud's death and his manuscript through the publication of Spud's work as his own. While the scene can be troubling for readers, primarily because Renton uses Spud once again in his compulsion of book theft, the scene is once again, a powerful reminder of the problem of nomadic histories and their authorships. Renton, in a bizarre move, is just as much of 'an artist-philosopher' as Spud or Begbie here in this scene, regardless of questions of morality, ethics or authenticity. This scene echoes Zepke's reading of Deleuze and art, in which Zepke explains that creation is centred around selection and interpretation of the world more than the claim of authenticity, a view shared by one of Deleuze's favourite artists, the compulsive art thief, Andy Warhol: 'The artist-philosopher selects (interprets) what is active in the world, thereby affirming will to power, and actively overcoming nihilistic art and thought. Selection is therefore the artistic construction of new truths as the creative

⁸⁵ *DMT*, p. 349.

⁸⁶ *DMT*, p. 420.

expression of life'.⁸⁷ Renton's 'minor modifications' is an existential selection, as much as Spud's desire to write about Leith: both are articulations of minor expressions of life.

While every character, as this thesis will illustrate, struggles to overcome the everyday hurdles of poverty, addiction and violence in post-industrial Scotland, Welsh makes sure that his 'Leith Heads', his main characters from Leith, experience life in affirmative measures, however intense their attempts may be through aesthetic expression. The term 'Leith Heads', which will be used as a shorthand to describe Welsh's primary Leithers (Renton, Spud, Begbie, Sick Boy), is also used artfully as a way to describe the phenomenon of unbecoming-Scot.⁸⁸ The 'Leith Heads' originates from Welsh's novel *Dead Men's Trousers* (2018), first mentioned as the name of Begbie's sculptures that he made with the same sort of knives that he would have used while growing up in Edinburgh, killing many a man with them. The sculpture is a series, depicting the heads of Spud, Sick Boy, Renton, and Begbie as if distorted Roman busts of Leith. From the beginning of the novel, Welsh depicts how Begbie – now known as Jim Francis – is reformed as an artist. As the most violent member of Welsh's Leithers, Begbie is the most complex of the artist-philosophers in Welsh's novels. His inhuman fury and uncontrollable rage are truly unsettling to the reader, and his psychopathic joy in killing is disturbing, familiar to viewers in *T2*. However, while I will examine Begbie much closer in Chapter Six, his persona as Jim Francis is curious, considering its origins seem closely tied to the biography of the infamous Glasgow gangster Jimmy Boyle, who became a popular artist after his prison sentence in the 1970s, sparking such interest in his story that a film adaptation was made after the publication of his memoirs, *A Sense of Freedom*.⁸⁹

Welsh's clear interest in Boyle's life notwithstanding, there are other interesting parallels between Jim Francis and other artists who excelled in deterritorialising faces, as Begbie does by hacking and hewing each feature of each Leith Head: namely the Anglo-Irish painter Francis Bacon. As Deleuze writes in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, one of the most important elements of undermining the construction of subjectivity and identity was in the way that Bacon furiously carved away the human subject's head to expose the meat, bone, and blood of the face: 'Bacon thus pursues a very peculiar project as a portrait painter: *to dismantle the face*, to rediscover the head or make it merge from

⁸⁷ Zepke, p. 27.

⁸⁸ See also the Stirling Heads displayed at Stirling Castle. The Stirling Heads are a series of 37 historical figures painted and carved on oak dating from the 16th century. Recently renovated, they are described by the BBC as 'a lost Renaissance masterpiece': <<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-12208716>> [accessed 30/05/2019]. The reference to the Stirling Heads made by Welsh with Begbie's Leith Heads emphasises the *minor* potential of such faces, carved as a totemic nomadology.

⁸⁹ Irvine Welsh, 'Foreward' in *A Sense of Freedom* by Jimmy Boyle (London: Ebury Press, 2016): i-v.

beneath the face'.⁹⁰ In his head paintings, Bacon would first construct the layers of a realistic head of a subject. However, he would then furiously deform the figures on the canvas, eventually destroying the image of the human, and mutating the face into something grotesquely nonhuman, something animal:

The deformations which the body undergoes are also the *animal trait* of the head. This has nothing to do with a correspondence, between animal forms and facial forms. In fact, the face lost its form by being subjected to the techniques of rubbing and brushing that disorganize it and make a head emerge in its place.⁹¹

Jim Francis, like Francis Bacon, too uses a furious fashion in his aesthetic production to practice eviscerating and gutting his works as much as revealing the meat and bone behind each sculpture, each painting. Francis is far too similar to Bacon, who Deleuze describes as 'a butcher', an artist who all too often 'goes to the butcher's shop as if it were a church, with the meat as the crucified victim', making Francis, like Bacon, 'a religious [artist] only in the butcher's shop'.⁹² The importance of Bacon for Deleuze is in his ability to deterritorialise, or reidentify and wipe away previous subjective significance, on the subject of his portraits. In this way, the Leith Heads are not simply images or representations of the working class of Scotland: they are the real elements of a process of 'unbecoming', a shattering of existential anchors of not only the self, but the self constructed by the institutional spaces that contribute to the definition of cultural or national Scottishness. There is a violent unbecoming in the works of Jim Francis and Francis Bacon, both of which are incredible visceral, vicious and Catholic in their masochistic attempts to obliterate the painful experiences of identity, as indicative of their attack on the face, the prime signifier of selfhood.⁹³ The Leith Heads, like Bacon's portraits, are exercises in the Deleuzian process of unbecoming as much as in an aesthetic

⁹⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. by Daniel Smith (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016). p. 15. Hereafter *FB*.

⁹¹ *FB*, p. 15.

⁹² *FB*, p. 17.

⁹³ For more on unbecoming, see Andrew Culp's *Dark Deleuze* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016). Culp explains that unbecoming is a severe experience of existential deterritorialisation and the creation of the new: 'The undoing of the subject is un-becoming. Deleuze withholds praise for the subject but does not deny it a place, unlike Althusser [...] Becoming is really a process of un-becoming', p. 28. Elizabeth Grosz, in *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections of Life, Politics, and Art* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011) similarly writes: 'Philosophy is restored, not as conceptual master of the real, but as that labor of undoing and redoing, unbecoming and becoming, that approaches the real with increasing complexity, that demarcates for it concepts that more and more adequately fit the real, including the dynamic forms of life and the dynamic patterns of matter that the real contains,' p. 56.

process of deterritorialising the subject's identity, which Deleuze and Guattari explain in *What is Philosophy?*, is the most radical element of an artist-philosopher, as they write:

The painter does not paint on an empty canvas, and neither does the writer write on a blank page; but the page or canvas is already so covered with preexisting, preestablished clichés that it is first necessary to erase, to clean, to flatten, even to shred, so as to let in a breath of air from the chaos that brings us the vision. When Fontana slashes the colored canvas with a razor, he does not tear the color in doing this. On the contrary, he makes us see the area of plain, uniform color, of pure color, through the slit.⁹⁴

Like the works of Jim Francis and Francis Bacon, Fontana's violent shredding of the canvas itself is a keen metaphor for Welsh's eschewing of cultural clichés and national identities, as much as the gendered elements that arise in the struggle for national identity. With each strike of the razor, Welsh – like Spud and Begbie – clears a way into viewing his tapestry in alternative perspectives, to view Leith, Edinburgh, and Scotland through the slits and the cracks of his visceral language and the communities that usher into existence through the intensities of this minor literature. In the words of Deleuze, minor writers like Welsh provide aesthetic examples of 'sublime developments to the system of cruelty, a writing of blood and life that is opposed to the writing of the book, just as justice is opposed to judgement, provoking a veritable inversion of the sign'.⁹⁵ The butchers of Francis and Bacon remain powerful avatars for the bloody business of unbecoming in Welsh's aesthetic and political philosophies, as we will examine in Chapter Two and Chapter Six.

From Renton the book thief to Begbie the head-smith, Welsh's literary philosophy of aesthetics and life is the central element of what this thesis questions about minor literature: how does it express minor experience? For Welsh, and Deleuze, I believe, it is through a ludic, embodied, and intense charge that produces revolutionary art, politics, and philosophy. What began as a quest to read Welsh as minor literature transformed into a pan-Deleuzian reading of Welsh's portrait of a post-industrial, post-national Scotland after Scotland. Throughout this thesis, I hope to approach Welsh as an artist-philosopher who too finds the value in giving life to the minor, as Renton perversely does for Spud at the end of

⁹⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 204.

⁹⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. by Daniel Smith and Michael Greco (London: Verso, 1998). p. 128. Hereafter *Essays*.

Dead Men's Trousers, and in a reflexive and humourous fashion, the same way Simon wishes someone would in *Skagboys*:

it's weird that we're here one minute, gone the next. In a couple ay generations' time naebody's gaunny gie a fuck. We'll just be some funny-dressed wankers in faded photographs that the one sad descendant wi too much time oan their hands pulls oot a sideboard tae occasionally look at. It's no like some famous cunt's gaunny come along and make a film ay *our* lives, is it?⁹⁶

Summary of Chapters: Blood on the Tracks and Choosing Life

The thesis is divided in two parts, with three chapters introducing the concept of minor literature and the second part of this thesis exploring Welsh's philosophies of becomings and unbecomings. Part I, entitled 'Blood on the Tracks', comprises of Chapters One, Two and Three, focusing primarily on the three elements of minor literature, such as described by Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* in the third chapter entitled 'What Is a Minor Literature?'. Chapter One establishes a literary and linguistic background to Welsh's fiction and examines Welsh's use of the Scottish, vernacular, minor voice throughout his work as the first component of minor literature, that is the deterritorialisation of a major language through minor use of it. This chapter includes extensive case studies of Welsh's francophone translation of *Trainspotting* in order to illustrate the power of Welsh's minor literature in translation, especially as post-national and post-industrial literature beyond Scotland, reaching out to other minor voices throughout the world. Chapter Two explores the minor Marxism of Welsh's minor literature in order to illustrate the second component of minor literature: a politically charged element in the work that challenges the majoritarian. By looking closely at *Skagboys* and *A Decent Ride*, this chapter hopes to illustrate the *becoming-revolutionary* of Welsh's work, which challenges both the British and Scottish States which have forgotten the marginalised, or actively exploited them for their own cultural or political purposes. Chapter Three examines a vaguer element of minor literature, what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as a literature's 'collective value', which is the third and final component of minor literature. I will use Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome in order to describe what I call the 'Welshverse,' an interconnected web of Leith Heads, places and voices

⁹⁶ Irvine Welsh, *Skagboys* (London: Vintage, 2013), p. 545. Hereafter *S*.

forming Welsh's enriched worlds, exemplified by the narrative structure of *Trainspotting*. Drawing from Deleuze and Guattari's theory of *becoming-animal*, *Body-without-Organs* and Guattari's *revolution moléculaire*, this chapter describes the communities of *becoming-skag* in Welsh's fiction, journalism and interviews. In this examination of becoming-skag, this chapter seeks to bring a nuanced analysis of drug use and abuse in the Welshverse as an alternative force in developing new communities beyond the institutions of family, work or religion.

Part II, entitled 'Choosing Life and Its (Un)Becomings', contains Chapter Four, Five and Six, which moves into a much more expansive and deep analysis of Welsh's novels that I consider are highly important in understanding the deterritorialisation of the Scottish man and the Scottish State. Chapter Four explores the process of *becoming-woman* through numerous female characters, unveiling Welsh's potential for woman's writing, following Hélène Cixous's philosophies of *écriture féminine* and Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection in *Trainspotting* and *Porno*. Following these gendered discourses from Chapter Four, Chapter Five confronts the history of colonisation and the History of man in *Marabou Stork Nightmares*. By tracing back to the tradition of the hardman in Scottish literature and the crisis of masculinity in post-industrial Scotland, this chapter examines the cruelty of Welsh's fiction as a way to expose how the Being of Man is the corrupt heart of national identity structures and the writing of hegemonic history. In denying such colonial histories and challenging the Being of Man, Welsh seems to argue that Scotland will never be able to move beyond its own internally colonised psyches until it faces the central truth of its origins in colonisation. Finally, Chapter Six focuses on Welsh's *The Blade Artist* and its direct sequel *Dead Men's Trousers*, primarily to examine the ways in which Welsh views the problems of patriarchal lineage and familial structures in Scottish society. In a 'post-family' tradition, I examine the way that Welsh views a solution to the violence in Scotland in the killing off and reforming of the patriarchal family, from the end of the patrilineal lines of Terry, Begbie, and Sick Boy, to the utopian family of the Rentons and the Murphys that find ways to address violence and patriarchal power through what Carol Gilligan refers to as 'an ethics of care'. Throughout these chapters, I will continually refer back to Welsh's philosophies of choosing life, and in doing so, I hope to illustrate that unbecoming-Scot is not simply a deconstruction of national identities, but that it is a necessary formation in his works for his characters to truly fit in their own skins, bodies, and homes.

Part I: 'Blood on the Tracks' and Three Paths of the Minor



Figure 1

'He [Begbie's agent] points to a big canvas on one of the walls. It depicts a man tied to railway tracks. – *Blood on the Tracks*, it's been bought by Marcus Van Helden for one million, Jim! One painting! [...] They move across to the picture, Spud staggering along behind them. The piece depicts a bloodstained figure bound to a railway line. – That pure looks like Mark, Spud sings excitedly'. – *Dead Men's Trousers*, p. 310.

Chapter One

Minor Literature, Minor Voices and Translating Irvine Welsh

‘I just hear voices, yez’re coming at me from all directions.’⁹⁷

– James Kelman, *How Late It Was, How Late*

Alongside Kelman’s introduction of Scottish vernacular – or what I refer to as *lingua scotia* in the Introduction – Welsh also experiments with narrative structure in *Trainspotting* in a manner that suggests a Kafkaesque crisis of linguistic subjectivity. At first, *Trainspotting* does not appear to have a main character and for the first half of the novel, it is sometimes hard to identify which character is the narrator. Between short stories and a novel, *Trainspotting* is fragmented into episodic tales told by a variety of voices, just as Kelman describes the dizzying cacophony of minor voices flooding onto the pages of his novels. Little by little links between these episodes become clear to finally focus around Mark Renton. What is narrated is reflected in the narrative technique: the novel offers a fragmented and rhizomatic vision of life mirrored in a hybrid construction and discontinuous narration with several first-person and third-person narrators episodes, somewhat drawn together in the same struggle for survival. The novel’s narrative also refers back to both the eighteenth (orality) and nineteenth century tradition (literacy) in which continuity and discontinuity, orality and literacy and vignettes and novellas are in constant conflict, causing the reader to get lost in a whirlwind of affects, events, and intensities. From Kafka to Kelman to Welsh, the common link between these excavators of lost voices is in their use of language against itself, the use of narration against the novel, the Brechtian revolt of the very medium itself. This, as I discussed in the Introduction, is the revolutionary experience of *minor literature*, or the literary practice of deterritorialising the dominant, majoritarian voices of the State. Against the replication of national literatures and thus, the monolith of national identities, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari write in *Kafka: Towards A Minor Literature*:

A minor literature doesn’t come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language. But the first characteristic of minor

⁹⁷ James Kelman, *How Late it Was, How Late* (London: Vintage, 1998), p. 163.

literature in any case is that in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialisation.⁹⁸

Welsh writes minor literature not only because he is a minority nor because he only writes with a particular identity, dialect, patois, but because he writes with a multitude of voices that escape the constraints of identity. Welsh's *lingua scotia* is the voice of a people who have yet to come-into-being, yet to be created, in a place that so happens to be called Scotland. Welsh's minor literature is a vehicle for exploring a process of becoming-minor, rather than centralising Being in the legitimising eyes of the State's imperial, codified discourse on language. Welsh's fiction situates identity of all sorts (national, gendered, racial, and economic) as the central conflicting element between major expectations of the State and its institutions and the painful, yet exhilarating minor experiences of Scots on the outside, on the margins of a post-industrial, post-national Scotland. This chapter addresses the first element of minor literature, which Deleuze and Guattari describe as a linguistic double bind between the major language usage of the State and its bourgeoisie (for example for the purpose of centralisation, colonisation, and assimilation), and the minor language usage that often challenges the dominance of both. Verena Conley reminds us that the becoming of new identities (assemblages) are always in flux throughout these incursions of major and minor uses of languages, producing a torrent of alien, foreign, and othered voices:

Major and minor are two different usages of the same language. A minor language opens a passage in the order-word that constitutes any of the operative redundancies of the major language. The problem is not the distinction between major and minor language but one of becoming. A person (a subject, but also a creative and active individual) has to deterritorialise the major language rather than reterritorialize herself within an inherited dialect. Recourse to a minor language puts the major language into flight. Minoritarian authors are those who are foreigners in their own tongue.⁹⁹

Thus, Welsh's *Trainspotting* develops the tradition of the Scottish vernacular in pushing the linguistic experimentation further in implementing an 'eye dialect' in both narration

⁹⁸ *Kafka*, p. 16.

⁹⁹ Verena Conley, 'Minoritarian', in *The Deleuze Dictionary: Revised Edition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005; 2010), p. 167.

and dialogue.¹⁰⁰ Yet, this dialect is not a ‘revival’ of a literary tradition nor anecdotic in the text or a Standard Scottish voice. On the contrary, the ‘polyphony of voices’ of the minor, as Mikhail Bakhtin writes, overwhelms the readers that listen; in Welsh’s phonetic displacement of Standard English for a Leith-centric dialect, we are able to assess the minor experiences of those who survive the horrors of the poor housing estates of Leith. The locality of the language is such that it is uncompromising, violent and unsettling to the non-local reader, as Alan Sinfield emphasises:

The writing in dialect and the violence of language and action are not just realism: they are designed as an impediment to the middle-class and non-Scottish reader [...] What is accomplished specifically is that English people and other literary readers are prevented from supposing that they can readily assimilate Scotland, as if it were merely an extension of Englishness, or merely a tourist theme park.¹⁰¹

Trainspotting is about a specific community that is no more, a result of late capitalism that has hollowed out a working-class district of Edinburgh. It is a novel about how the youth of Leith and of the nation of Scotland have no future in either anymore: they have become nomads, and the minor language use reflects the liminal space they now occupy.

Hence, when Deleuze and Guattari examine minor literature they start by explaining that its first characteristic is that ‘a minor literature doesn’t come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language’.¹⁰² Welsh writes in English, a major language, and deterritorialises Scottish English and makes it ‘appropriate for strange and minor uses’.¹⁰³ Welsh’s language comes from the voices of the community of Leith: a specific place, a specific social class (sociolect) and a multitude of unique voices (idiolect). For middle and upper classes, this community does not speak English but a dialect, another language, they speak a language of their own, attached to the way they live and where they live. Welsh’s minor usage of Scots is representative of how a minor place like Leith (no different from places like the Gorbals, Govanhill or Drumchapel in Glasgow) looks now and/or how it used to be. Welsh’s *lingua scotia* is not

¹⁰⁰ Jane Raymond Walpole defines ‘eye dialect’ as such: ‘Eye dialect is merely a variant form of orthography, and English orthography is notoriously inaccurate. In its inaccuracy, however, lies its economy and utility. For a written English word is, in a sense, more an ideograph than a symbol of sound [...] Like standard orthography, eye dialect is merely a typographical convention, an arbitrary cue to the reader and not an accurate written reproduction of speech’ in ‘Eye Dialect in Fictional Dialogue’, *College Composition and Communication*, 25:2 (1974), pp. 195-6.

¹⁰¹ Alan Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (London: Continuum, 1997), p. xxvii.

¹⁰² *Kafka*, p. 16.

¹⁰³ *Kafka*, p. 17.

commemorative of Scottish identity, as much as it asserts itself as a reality and a remnant of people lost through the cracks of failed State institutions: hospitals, schools, prison.¹⁰⁴ Just like Kafka's use of the German language of Prague (inflected by Yiddish), Welsh opts for the sociolect and idiolect of Leith as it is.¹⁰⁵ There is no uniform Scottish identity formulated in Welsh's minor literature: there are only roadmaps for wild, violent, and intense becomings outside of a linguistic and national identity imposed by British colonisation and, now, by global capitalism. In other words, Kafka's Jews of Prague are Welsh's schemies of Leith, aliens and foreigners in their own homes.

Similarly, Jeffrey Karnicky, in his article 'Irvine Welsh's Subjectivities', examines Welsh's novella *The Rosewell Incident* to illustrate that:

When the aliens address the world's leaders, translation, as in most science fiction of the 'aliens taking over the Earth' variety, becomes a problem. But the problem is not that the Earthlings cannot understand an extraterrestrial language; rather, the leaders of the world cannot understand the aliens' Edinburgh-inflected speech.¹⁰⁶

Like Sinfield's view of Welsh's language as an 'impediment to the middle-class and non-Scottish reader' (although we could easily argue for just 'middle-class' as the Scottish middle and upper class would not use Welsh's language), we can see the deterritorialisation of the Leith community itself as 'an oppressive minority that speaks a language cut off from the masses'.¹⁰⁷ Leith is a ghost-town, once a separated town from Edinburgh before 1920, it was a vital port until the post-war period where it went on the decline to be by 1970 and 1980 a deprived area severely hit by the ruthless austerity measures of the Thatcher government (1979-1990). Welsh's protagonist Renton notices that due to the deep structural failures of the Thatcherite era, Leith has been unable to

¹⁰⁴ Deleuzian discussion of difference in a global context makes the concept of *lingua scotia* culturally relative as it is another mutation of global identity production of a dominant language and therefore threatens the concept of minor writing as notes by Kirstin Innes in "Mark Renton's Bairns: Identity and Language in the Post-*Trainspotting* Novel," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, pp. 301-9: '*Trainspotting* has become not only a cutting-edge brand signifier for a fetishised, cool version of working-class drug culture, but also the most widely globalised representation of contemporary Scottishness. As a result, the particular linguistic code developed by Welsh to articulate the experiential reality of a certain community in a certain part of Edinburgh has become standardised as *the* authentic Scottish voice, both celebrated by the media and eagerly emulated by Welsh's peers and successors.' (p. 301) See also Scott Hames 'On Vernacular Scottishness and its Limits: Devolution and the Spectacle of "Voice"', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 39.1, pp. 201-222 <<http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol39/iss1/16>> [accessed 24/03/2017].

¹⁰⁵ *Kafka*, p. 19.

¹⁰⁶ Karnicky, 'Irvine Welsh's Subjectivities', p. 135.

¹⁰⁷ *Kafka*, p. 16.

recover since austerity gutted the thriving port town, as he explains in *Dead Men's Trousers* (2018):

I head down Great Junction Street. This stretch of Leith has struggled since as long as I recall; my auld girl and Auntie Alice taking ays up to the Clocktower Café in Leith Provy Co-op for juice; the auld State Cinema, long closed, where I watched the matinees on Saturday with Spud and Franco; Leith Hospital, where I got my first stitches, above my eye, after some cunt smashed the swing seat in my pus at the playground. All ghost buildings. Crossing over the bridge at the river, a place of phantoms.¹⁰⁸

Leith is therefore a shipyard cemetery where people wander around without any purpose, cut off from the rest of the city with a morose nostalgia and the traumatic wound of state-neglect still festering to this day. While Edinburgh is branded as 'Edinburgh City of Literature', known for its Edinburgh Fringe Festival and the Edinburgh Book Festival, Leith is a spectre of its former self, once a waypoint between the British Empire's trade outposts across the world and the Athens of the North, and now a wasteland of dying 'junkies', struggling schemies, and neglected neds. Leith, in this respect, does not exist and cannot exist in a post-industrial Scotland, especially because it is often overshadowed by its larger, more dominant cousin, Glasgow, which as I illustrated in the Introduction, has retained a cultural monopoly of the suffering working-class of a post-industrial Scotland in its literature. While Kelman and others have used Glasgow as a proletarian springboard for describing Scotland after Scotland, Renton argues that Leith can compare to Glasgow in *Trainspotting*:

When ye think about it [Govan] though, it isnae that much different fae growin up in Leith n leaving school at sixteen n takin an apprenticeship. Especially as he nivr grew up in an era ay mass unemployment. Still, ah'm in nae shape tae argue, n even if ah wis, it's pointless wi Weedjies. Ah've never met one Weedjie whae didnae think that they are the only genuinely suffering proletarians in Scotland, Western Europe, the World. Weedjie experience ay hardship is the only relevant experience ay it.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ *DMT*, p. 343.

¹⁰⁹ *T*, p. 242.

As we see here, Renton and other characters in Welsh's novels have a sharp, acerbic, and critical political eye that articulates a vernacular Marxism, a minor Marxism, which I will examine in the next chapter.¹¹⁰ In this minor Marxist position, Welsh writes in English to minorise (*minoriser*) the language, to impoverish it, to strip it bare of its classist, colonial, and imperial trappings, and to create new forms of collective and individual expressions of those who live, love, and die in places like Leith. Welsh's Marxist *lingua scotia* is a mixture, a source of creation, ever changing and adapting, from diverse cultures and diverse places, which, in turn, creates a new intensity of living as a nomad within the State.¹¹¹ Deleuze and Guattari, when writing about Kafka, likewise see a new use of language that imbues a minoritarian community with a vigour, rage, and intensity that deterritorialises the colonial linguistic symbols of the majoritarian's use of its language:

Kafka will quickly choose the other way, or rather, he will invent another way. He will opt for the German language of Prague as it is and in its very poverty. Go always farther in the direction of deterritorialization, to the point of sobriety. Since the language is arid, make it vibrate with a new intensity. Oppose a purely intensive usage of language to all symbolic or even significant or simply signifying usages of it. Arrive at a perfect and unformed expression, a materially intense expression.¹¹²

Following Deleuze and Guattari on Kafka, we can argue that Welsh's use of the Leith dialect with English 'carves out a space of expression for a novel form of identity'.¹¹³

Furthermore, Welsh breaks with the tradition of twentieth-century Scottish literature by complicating Scottish identity through his use of the Leith dialect, crossing borders and languages within the nation of Scotland; the Welshian *lingua scotia* is equally

¹¹⁰ In choosing the term 'vernacular Marxism' this thesis is not advocating of an overturning of Marxism, it simply seeks to examine minor voices of Marxist thoughts like Welsh and Deleuze, opposing academic or institutional Marxists. For more information on the multiplicity of Marxism see Alexander R. Galloway, Eugene Thacker and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2014). According to the American Marxists Alexander R. Galloway and McKenzie Wark, the production of a multiplicity of Marxism or what they call a 'a post-hermeneutic Marxism, or "marxism of the swarm"' (p.19) brings a 'a freeing of Marxism' (p. 201). Wark specifically encourages readers of minor Marxist works (ranging from thinkers including British new weird novelist China Miéville and Situationist theorist Raoul Vaneigem) to envision 'a heretical formation within modernist culture, cross-pollinated with Marxism', like l'internationale situationniste 'who proposed innovations not only in critical theory but in organization, everyday life, and communication as well.' Following Galloway and Wark, I read Welsh's works in the lens of a 'heretical Marxism' that challenges the norms of Hegelian-Marxist teleology in the production of a Scottish State (p. 158).

¹¹¹ For more information on the Welshian dialect's input of other minoritarian languages see: Yaron Matras, 'The Romani Element in Non-standard Speech' in *Sondersprachenforschung 3*. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998), pp. 193-230.

¹¹² *Kafka*, p. 19.

¹¹³ Karnicky, p. 138.

universal and particular to specific Scottish neighbourhoods, districts, and cities. Welsh challenges clichés of Scottish identity and nationalism, being very wary of national or cultural identity and the subjectivities that are emphasised in the sectarianism of politics, football, religion, gender, or nationalities. As Karnicky emphasises, ‘Welsh’s fiction is oriented toward the future, toward the creation of these new forms of identity’.¹¹⁴ Welsh creates subjectivities, away from the imposed forms of identity, feeling of belonging and from various forms of nationalism. Yet, if Welsh refuses to identify with the post-1979 referendum nationalism, Welsh’s fiction does not fit into the post-nationalism scope as it gives new forms of identity – subjectivities – with a use of the urban Leith Scots which instantly marked his characters as belonging to a specific place, nation and cultural context, as emphasised by Willy Maley:

Nationalism has always been both a test of faith and a statement of fact. One can see oneself belonging to a nation, and having a nationality, without perceiving oneself as a nationalist. Yet simply to speak is to assert nationhood, for as soon as one starts to speak one’s place within a nation is marked. As soon as I start to speak, for example, whether I like it or not, my language places me in a national context, no matter what I say.¹¹⁵

Yet, the formation of a Welshian subjectivity is never fixed, always in between, always *becoming* as Deleuze and Guattari theorise. For Welsh, the language used does not hierarchise or striate national identity, but rather, as emphasised by Karnicky: ‘These novel subjectivities negotiate class and race politics, issues of national identity, and psychological conceptions of selfhood as they struggle to invent new ways of living in the contemporary world.’¹¹⁶ The use of Scots is not a marker of a Scottish identity but a cipher, a sign, of Leith (as well as Pilton, Muirhouse, Wester Hailes and Granton to name the key housing schemes that provide the settings for Welsh’s fiction) and the becomings of what is now a nomadic *smooth space*, an ever changing community that continually flattens the old hierarchies of identity, unifying all ‘Leith heads’ under the universal banner of precarity, neglect, and vicious cycles of violence that have destroyed and are destroying international communities, ranging from the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota,

¹¹⁴ Karnicky, p. 138.

¹¹⁵ Willy Maley, ‘Varieties of Nationalism: Post-Revisionist Irish Studies’, in *Irish Studies Review* 4.15 (1996), pp. 34-37 (p. 34) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09670889608455537>> [accessed 05/04/2017].

¹¹⁶ Karnicky, p. 137.

U.S., the Seine-Saint-Denis banlieue in Paris, France, to the refugee communities of Exarcheia in Athens and the temporary housing districts of Fukushima, Japan.

‘A Scot Abroad’: A Case Study of Irvine Welsh in French Translation

Because of Irvine Welsh’s commitment to becoming-minor in his novels, Welsh has garnered an immensely popular international following, having been translated in over twenty-five languages.¹¹⁷ The universality of his work should be no surprise: while his novels tell the story of Leith under siege, his novels also speak to the global problem of urban poverty, austerity, precarious labour, the gentrification of working-class places, and the socio-economic realities of the displacement of the poor and their subsequent ghettoization. As his novels reach across the world, they have been translated in minor ways, adapted in *joual* in Québec, in Kansas in the United States or in Sofia, Bulgaria. Welsh’s *lingua scotia* has indeed gone global. Therefore, Welsh’s incredible international reception confirms the need of a new post-national consciousness that imagines the many possible communities that can exist beyond the borders of Leith in Edinburgh and the linguistic constraints of only the anglophone world. This portion of the chapter, then, is dedicated to a reading of how francophone translations of Welsh’s work reveal the universal minorisation of his project. In this case study, we might note how the role of translating Leith Scots can be translated into other minor languages, such as Quebecois in North America, or my own minor languages spoken either in the banlieues of Paris – which borrow syntax and vocabulary from North African Arabic and other elements of working-class French spoken language like the argotic *verlan* – or in Brittany, where the native tongue of my grandmother, for example, is Breton.

Let us begin with Welsh’s famous idiom that jumpstarted his international career: trainspotting. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, ‘trainspotting’ is the hobby or activity of observing trains and recording railway locomotive numbers, sometimes with other details. As a result, a trainspotter is:

a person (often a boy) whose hobby is observing trains and recording railway locomotive numbers, sometimes with other details. In extended use

¹¹⁷ Katherine Ashley, ‘Welsh in Translation’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Irvine Welsh* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 113

(freq. *depreciative*): a person who enthusiastically or obsessively studies the minutiae of any subject; a collector of trivial information.¹¹⁸

Trainspotting is therefore the hobby of counting, reporting and watching trains. The trainspotter is obsessed and always waiting for the next train, his next hit. Trainspotting is a nomadic activity. Seen as a tedious hobby, it is an ironic title reflecting the boredom and obsessiveness of the lives of the main characters described in the novel *Trainspotting*. Emily Apter offers a definition of ‘trainspotting’ and an analysis of the title in her book *The Translation Zone*:

The title is already in idiolect, for it is a slang term designating a favorite British pastime in the era of steam engines that consisted of collecting train-car numbers and their appointed station destinations. The trainspotter, as Randolph Stow reminds us, was the synonym of the preeminent Nerd, preoccupied ‘with making his fellow citizens live like battery hens. He loves regimented living quarters, dining facilities and child-care arrangements. He adores interfering in other people’s sex lives. He frequently shows an obsession with the trivia of décor: one of the ways in which the genes betray Nerdish nature.’ As in the way of all good appropriations, the term’s usage has moved off its ‘regimental’ course and come to refer to the broader category of the loser, whiling away dead time, or doing drugs. The vocabulary of trains – ‘mainlining,’ ‘tracks,’ ‘spotting the vein,’ ‘getting a rush,’ a ‘hit,’ ‘crashing,’ or ‘getting wrecked’ – is also the argot of smack addiction. Trainspotters, even if they are sympathetic dossers or vagabonds, and especially if they are junkies, are the lowest of the low.¹¹⁹

Both French translations of *Trainspotting* chose to keep the title so as to, on the one hand, echo the title of the film for marketing reasons (except for Quebec where it was translated as ‘Férovipathes’ for political and cultural reasons), and, on the other hand to keep the otherness of the text.¹²⁰ As Françoise Vreck puts it, ‘keeping the title *Trainspotting* comes down to grant to English [sic] boys and their daddies their unequalled fad on this side of

¹¹⁸ ‘trainspotter, n.’ OED Online. Oxford University Press, March 2015. Web. 29 March 2015.

¹¹⁹ Randolph Stow, ‘Trainspotters’ Heaven’ in *Times Literary Supplement* no. 5037, Oct. 15, 1999, p. 40. Quoted in Emily Apter, ‘The Language of Damaged Experience’ in *The Translation Zone: a New Comparative Literature*, (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 152.

¹²⁰ Following a situation of diglossia with a growing marginalization of francophones in Québec, a law was passed in 1969 in order to maintain and promote the use of French. For more information, see: Jacques Maurais. *Les Québécois et la norme: L'évaluation par les Québécois de leurs usages linguistiques* (Québec: Office québécois de la langue française, 2008).

the English Channel for trainspotting’.¹²¹ At first glance, the tone here is condescending, yet Vreck points out that the choice of keeping the title might register a form of humility in the translator. Welsh experiments with forms and narratives but especially with the language, which makes the task of translating *Trainspotting* much more complex than starting from a typical Standard English.¹²² The use of a working-class Edinburgh vernacular as a narrative voice was going to be a real challenge for translators and the French version of *Trainspotting* had to be translated twice.¹²³ The text already needed support in its original form for anglophone readers because of the sociolect (the dialect of a particular social class) used in dialogue and narration as well as the idiolect of the characters,¹²⁴ which put the novel into a very particular place and context.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Françoise Vreck, ‘L’intraduisible et l’ineffable’ in Fabrice Antoine (ed.), *L’Intraduisible*, ‘Ateliers’ 24/2000 (Cahiers de la Maison de la Recherche, Etudes sur le lexique et la traduction, Université Charles-de-Gaulle-Lille 3, 2000), p. 57: ‘Garder le titre *Trainspotting* revient ainsi à concéder aux petits Anglais et à leurs papas leur engouement, inégalé de ce côté-ci de la Manche, pour l’observation des trains.’

¹²² I will name ‘Standard English’ the language which has been codified in its spelling and its pronunciation (I refer here to the RPI (Received Pronunciation Intonation) of Standard British English as codified for instance in the *Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary*), knowing however the fragile nature of a ‘Standard’ language’ as explained by John Corbett in *Written in the Language of the Scottish Nation: a History of Literary Translation into Scots* (Clevedon, Bristol: Multilingual Matters Ltd., 1999), p. 44: ‘The concept of a ‘standard’ language is a relatively modern one – I use it here to mean a variety of language whose spelling, vocabulary and grammar has been codified by dictionaries and other reference books, which has been widely accepted by society as the “natural” form or written discourse in formal and public situations, and which is disseminated as such through a mass education system’.

¹²³ In the same way, I will use the term ‘vernacular’ to refer to the language of Welsh’s characters, which is a combination of the urban Scottish dialect, the sociolect and idiolect of each characters. As John Corbett explains in *Written in the Language of the Scottish Nation: a History of Literary Translation into Scots*, p. 127: ‘However, the term “vernacular” also captures the modern distinction between those translations which attempt to represent the speech of an actual community and those non-vernacular translations which attempt to reconstruct a synthetic Scots. The “vernacular” varieties of Scots reject the notion of a “nation language” in favour of a form of speech and writing which is rooted in a particular locality and social class. Linguistically, the line between Lallans and the “vernacular” Scots is far from absolute – the most synthetic Scots usually has a basis in everyday speech, and the most “representational” of vernacular Scots often resorts to some vocabulary-extending strategy associated with the Lallans movement once it is written down, especially if some unfamiliar concept has to be communicated’.

¹²⁴ The definition of sociolect can be found in Malcolm H. Offord’s *Francophone literatures: a Literary and Linguistic Companion* (Psychology Press, 2001): ‘The collection of speech habits associated with a particular social group, as in the case of the *joual* of Quebec’ (Tremblay), p. 8.

¹²⁵ The notion of ‘idiolect’ and ‘sociolect’ is explained by Roy Harris in ‘Linguistics After Saussure’, *The Routledge Companion to Semiotics and Linguistics*, (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 126: ‘The socially defined variety of a language spoken by a certain social group within a community is sometimes called a “sociolect” (in order to distinguish it from the “dialect”, based on geographical criteria).’ Roy Harris adds that ‘linguistics have been unable to agree on how an idiolect is to be defined. One famous definition, dating from the 1940s, was: “the totality of the possible utterances of one speaker at one time in using a language to interact with one other speaker” (Bloch 1948). This definition already tries to forestall two objections. One is that the characteristic way an individual speaks may vary over the course of a lifetime. The other is that an individual may speak differently to different addresses in different circumstances. This is a linguistic phenomenon now known as “accommodation” (Giles 1994) [...] For even in the course of a single conversation with the same interlocutor it is possible for a speaker to introduce noticeable variations of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, etc. Furthermore, it is hard to know how to make sense in practical terms of a “totality of possible utterances” directed to a single interlocutor “at one time”. And this, in any case, seems to give us in the end not a definition of an idiolect but what other theorists call a “style” or “register”. The more narrowly one tries to restrict the scope of a linguistic description, the more elusive the notion of *langue* becomes.’

For *Trainspotting*, the language and the cultural milieu are intrinsically linked and therefore cannot be separated. The sociolect of *Trainspotting* includes forms and expressions close to a dialect with words such as ‘auld’, ‘bairn’, ‘aye’, ‘lassie’, ‘wee’, which work as linguistic and cultural landmarks in the text. Welsh was and still is experimenting with language, reproducing in his writing an eye dialect, to form what could almost be described as a new written language. The work of phonetic transcription of the Edinburgh accent and dialect becomes a form of realism, witnessing and archiving a language heard in everyday life. This distinctive use of the language allows the author to create and to emphasise a new Scottish literary identity. The work on language itself shows how Scottish dialect and accent must be able to be read by any English speaker and emphasises the tensions between Standard English and Scottish English to stress, not only a distinctive Scottish identity that cannot be assimilated to Englishness or even Britishness, but a distinctive class and community.¹²⁹ Because of the almost-untranslatability of minor literatures like Welsh’s novels, it is important to remember that the French translations undergo their own challenges in replicating minor literary experiences.

More specifically, the first translation of *Trainspotting* in France was carried out by Éric Lindor Fall who was urged to produce a translation as fast as possible just like all the other translators asked to translate *Trainspotting* after the release of the film, as stressed by Eduardo Barros-Grela on his article on the Spanish translation of *Trainspotting*:

I believe that two different possibilities explain this dysfunction. On the one hand, the editorial urgency imposed on translators in Spain nowadays does not enable Corriente to dwell upon the specific uses of the everyday register (from the streets), which he uses. On the other hand—without the two being necessarily exclusive—the cultural context (field of production) in which the translator finds himself does not provide him with a sufficient ability to understand the use of words and periphrases used in this specific context.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ A dialect of English now referred to as Standard Scottish English.

¹³⁰ Eduardo Barros-Grela, ‘El tratamiento de lexicografía ficticia en la traducción de narrativa. Una perspectiva prosódico-discursiva en torno a la idiosincrasia sociocultural del traductor’, *Espéculo. Revista de estudios literarios*, 23 (April 2003), <www.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero23/traducci.html> [accessed 12/02/2015]: ‘Encuentro como causas de esta disfunción dos posibilidades divergentes. Por un lado, que la urgencia editorial que actualmente se impone a los traductores en España, no le permitiese a Corriente pararse en los usos específicos del puntual registro callejero del que está haciendo uso. Por otro lado, (sin que sea necesariamente excluyente) que el entorno cultural del traductor no le provea de una capacidad suficiente como para poder entender los usos de las palabras y perífrasis que está utilizando en su particular contexto.’

Trainspotting was popular among French youth as a movie, but the novel was also a commercial success, being re-edited as a larger print-run paperback after an initial larger format edition published by Les éditions de l'Olivier. The translation of *Trainspotting* in French was very well received by critics, being described as perfectly reproducing the Edinburgh accent and speech patterns (advertised on the fourth cover of the book for both French translations). The trouble is that the translation by Lindor Fall in 1996 was littered with dozens of objective misreadings of the original text. Rhyming slang like 'to storm off in the cream puff' was translated actually as if the character was literally walking through cream cakes; the smackheads would go off to buy 'sandwiches and snacks' (carry-outs) before they got on the train; a character who relates that he cannot give someone a good kicking because he's 'wearing trainers' is presented as saying that he is not very good as an animal. At the beginning, Renton talks about Sick Boy as 'scoring' and in French this turns into 'going shopping' ('aller aux courses'). The first sentence of the novel is also surprising, describing Sick Boy literally as 'leaking':

Sick Boy **avait ses fuites**. Il tremblait. [...] **Mais d'un autre côté, j'allais être malade pas tard et** si la moule allait aux courses et en revenait chargé, **il nous forcerait à lécher par terre.**¹²⁶

The sweat wis lashing oafay **Sick Boy; he was trembling**. [...] Oan the other hand, ah'd be gitting sick tae before long, and if **that cunt went n scored**, he'd hauld oot oan us.¹²⁷

The result is a French *Trainspotting* that really did not make much sense at all, but neither the translator nor the critic seemed to see the problem with this until another translation was published in 2011. Since the original text did not make sense to them it was natural to have a translation that was equally incomprehensible. Other works by Welsh were also translated (among them *Ecstasy* 1999, *Filth: Une ordure* 2000, *Glue* 2009) but they were not as widely read. Perhaps, while this translation does not make literal sense in its translation, it also does not adhere to the minor linguistic translation, where the sociolect of Leith could be in some way translated for a French audience – whose demographic skews young – that would embrace the radicality of Welsh's vulgar *lingua scotia*.

¹²⁶ Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting*, trans. Éric Lindor Fall, (Paris: Ed. de l'Olivier, 1996), my emphasis. Hereafter Lindor Fall.

¹²⁷ *T*, p. 1.

However, the second French translation by Jean-René Étienne was published fifteen years after the first one, in 2011. In the meantime, *Porno* translated by Laura Derajinski, had been published in France in 2003. Here, the use of language was very different from the one chosen by Lindor Fall. Indeed, the argotic French (minor) used by Lindor Fall's translation was not representative of a young or popular argotic way of speaking in French anywhere in the world. Lindor Fall had the task of translating *Trainspotting* in a very short period of time, leaving in the text some understandable mistakes but also some odd colloquial expressions that contrast with the choices made by Derajinski in her translation of *Porno*. Étienne had the task to make a link between the first translation of *Trainspotting* that was outdated, and the sequel published seven years after it. The second translation chose to put an emphasis on the colloquial oral French language to represent a young and argotic way of speaking French (a minor language use that was depicted in films such as *La Haine* [1995] and French and francophone rap and hip-hop scene which spread from the Paris suburbs in the 1990s).

As stressed above, there was no translation available in any languages before the film and most of the European translators were in the same situation.¹²⁸ As a result, there are a lot of issues with the first French translation especially. The difficulty of translating Welsh is that the language of the original text is already challenging for a native English speaker, whatever their background, which could suggest a double translation task for the translator. Gardiner had already explored the question of translating *Trainspotting* in his article “‘British Territory’: Irvine Welsh in English and Japanese’ on the Japanese translation, where he discovered the actual double translation that was needed for the Japanese translator: translating *Trainspotting* first into Standard English to then be able to translate into Japanese:

The Japanese translation of *Trainspotting* comes at the end of a double process of removal, first from the story's local and specifically Scottish contexts into 'English', and second into the target language of Japanese. [...] Given this success, it is not surprising that Makiko Ikeda's Afterword notes its debt to the film version and that the translation's cover is decorated with its actors. Perhaps more surprising is that the same Afterword also acknowledges help from the British Council with the translation [...] Asking the British Council about the 'slang' in *Trainspotting* is

¹²⁸ Katherine Ashley, 'Welsh in Translation', pp. 113-4.

the equivalent of consulting with the cultural wing of the body which guaranteed the disappearance of the dialect being translated.¹²⁹

Needless to say, the final translation lost most of its local resonance with its original minoritarian oeuvre, especially in its narrative language, visual and oral representations, colloquial expressions, and references to places. From Lindor Fall's literalised French translation to the Japanese reterritorialised translation that lacks a minor glossia, what is lost in these translations is not only a sense of authenticity, which I do not intend to argue. Rather, what is lost is Welsh's minoritarian spirit, and with that, its political charge, and its attention to linguistic variance as a nomadic process of decolonising places like Leith.

The Decolonial Projects of Welsh's Diglossic and Heteroglossic Translations

Beyond these international translations, there is a tension in the domination of Standard English over Scottish English which brings the colonised discourse into Welsh's novel. This is illustrated several times, for example, here by Sick Boy:

– Can I help you? Where are you headed? ah ask. *Good old-fashioned Scoattish hoshpitality, aye ye cannae beat it, shays the young Sean Connery, the new Bond, cause girls, this is the new bondage...*

– We're looking for the Royal Mile, a posh, English-colonial voice answers back in ma face.¹³⁰

Here, we can note the self-reflexivity of Sick Boy is a response to Scottish clichés spread by the tourists in Edinburgh, and their sense of the image of Scotland. Sick Boy mocks the apparent credulity of those tourists. Finally, we note the adjective 'English-colonial' to identify a southern English accent, which he will then impersonate in order to gain their trust so as to fool them in the end. Chapters such as 'Speedy Recruitment' and 'Courting Disaster' illustrate quite well the interplay of languages, playing with accent and Scottish dialect as a commentary on the minoritarian conflicts between colonial English and Welsh's *lingua scotia* that arise throughout the novels

¹²⁹ Michael Gardiner, "'British territory': Irvine Welsh in English and Japanese", *Textual Practice* 17:1 (2003), pp. 107-8.

¹³⁰ *T*, pp. 36-7.

- Ehm...ehm...Mr Renton...ehm...can you, eh explain...eh, your employment gaps, eh... Can you explain the gaps between your words, you doss wee cunt.
- Yes. I've had a long-standing problem with heroin addiction. I've been trying to combat this, but it has curtailed my employment activities. I feel it's important to be honest and mention this to you, as a potential future employer.
- A stunning *coup de maître*. They shift nervously in their seats.¹³¹

Michael Hechter in his work *Internal Colonialism* published in 1975 describes how 'a national discrimination on the basis of language, religion and other cultural forms' as internal colonialism, applies to Scotland, recalling the notion of diglossia.¹³² The reception and the translation of Welsh's *Trainspotting* thus depend also on the ability of the translators to recreate a situation of diglossia in the language expected. According to the sociolinguist Charles A. Ferguson, 'a diglossic situation exists in a society when it has two distinct codes which show clear functional separation; that is, one code is employed in one set of circumstances and the other in an entirely different set'.¹³³ In other words, when two languages coexist in the same country, one is usually an official language and the other a dialect or a vernacular.¹³⁴

In the case of Scotland, the coexistence of languages, English, Gaelic and Scots, makes the situation of diglossia even more plausible and understandable as the complex political status of Scotland in relation to England and the United Kingdom creates a clash of cultural authority between dominated and dominating nation. In *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin explain that the 'model such as Dorsinville's [dominated/dominating] also makes less problematical the situation of Irish, Welsh and Scottish literature in relation to the English mainstream':¹³⁵

While it is possible to argue that these societies were the first victims of English expansion, their subsequent complicity in the British imperial enterprise makes it

¹³¹ T, p. 85.

¹³² Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (London: Routledge, 1975), p. 33.

¹³³ Charles A. Ferguson, 'Diglossia', *Word* 15: 325-340, (1959), p. 87.

¹³⁴ See also P. H. Matthews' *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 95: 'The case in which a community uses two distinct forms of the same language, one acquired through education and appropriate to one range of contexts, the other acquired before formal education and appropriate to another. Thus German-speaking Switzerland is described as a diglossic community, where the distinct varieties are Standard German and the local forms of Swiss German.'

¹³⁵ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (Routledge, 2003), p. 32.

difficult for colonized peoples outside Britain to accept their identity as post-colonial. Dorsinville's dominated-dominating model forcefully stresses linguistic and cultural imposition, and enables an interpretation of British literary history as a process of hierarchical interchanges in internal and external group relationships.¹³⁶

However, if nowadays, and especially in the case of urban Scotland, the language is more a mixture of Standard English with a few Scots dialectal inflections forming Standard Scottish English, Welsh's *Trainspotting* highlights a very specific type of diglossia which is the 'intonational diglossia', that is to say, Scottish intonation (accent) and its use in a diglossic way. As Alan Cruttenden explains:

Urban Scots speakers (including Glaswegians) may continue the diglossic situation, controlling use of both Scots and Standard Scottish English or they may indeed control a continuum between the two (Stuart-Smith 2003). We have almost no way of knowing how intonation was involved in the earlier diglossic situation but, given the historical and current language situation in Scotland, it is interesting to check on variation in intonational use at present. Hence a study of Glasgow intonation may contribute not only to our knowledge of dialectal variation in intonation but also to our understanding of the role of intonation in a potentially diglossic situation.¹³⁷

The important point that Cruttenden picks out is the 'role of intonation' as this is a key feature in the novel. Intonation or accent is illustrated in the chapter 'Courting Disaster'. The title is already announcing the linguistic tensions that are taking place in this chapter with the word 'court' as to woo someone and the obvious 'court' where the trial is taking place. The intonational diglossia is condemning Spud who cannot escape his language and its inflections and *a fortiori* is condemned literally to stay in Leith Walk. On the other hand, Renton 'courts' the judge or plays him, adjusting his own speech to the same intonation as that of the judge, that is to say in a Standard Scottish English, heavily connoting his social class and minority.¹³⁸ Therefore, in blurring the traces of his origins, he manages to escape his condition and avoid the judge's sentence as illustrated in these examples:

¹³⁶ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, p. 32.

¹³⁷ Alan Cruttenden. 'Intonational diglossia: a case study of Glasgow', *Journal of the International Phonetic Association*, 37, (2007), p. 258.

¹³⁸ Michael Gardiner also discusses the Scottish diglossia in *Modern Scottish Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 122.

- And you, Mr. Murphy, you intended to sell the books, like you sell everything else you steal, in order to finance your heroin habit?

- That's spot on man ... eh ... ye goat it, likesay, Spud nodded, his thoughtful expression sliding into confusion.¹³⁹

-Et vous, monsieur Murphy, vous aviez l'intention de vendre ces livres, comme vous vendez tout ce que vous volez, dans le but de financer votre dépendance à l'héroïne ?

-**Pile doit dessus, man...heu...c'est ça, jveux dire**, acquiesce Spud et son expression songeuse glisse dans le désarroi.¹⁴⁰

-Et vous, Mr Murphy, vous aviez bien l'intention de revendre ces livres, comme vous revendez tout ce que vous dérobez, afin de financer votre consommation d'héroïne ?

-**T'as tout bon, mec...euh...c'est exact, tsais**, et Spud hoche la tête, et son air réfléchi glisse dans la confusion.¹⁴¹

Here, we can see clearly that the first word that Spud pronounces condemns him not in terms of content but of sound and lexicon. This shows the diglossic situation in which a Scottish word cannot be used in an official context. This example below shows Spud's linguistic jail as he does not understand what is going wrong during this trial apart from his speech and language, as noted by Aaron Kelly:

The judge's inability to attribute feelings to Spud is directly related to the incapacity of the dominant discourse which the judge represents to permit an articulation of oppressed voices. Hence the importance of the vernacular in *Trainspotting* is that it is offered as a mode that is capable of thought, feelings, intelligence, philosophy and so on. The polyphony of demotic voices provides a range of experimental discourses that articulate those oppressed groups without register of Standard English.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ *T*, pp. 207-209.

¹⁴⁰ Lindor Fall, p. 192.

¹⁴¹ Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting*, trans. Jean-René Étienne, (La Laune: Au diable vauvert, 2011), p. 214. Hereafter Étienne.

¹⁴² Aaron Kelly, *Irvine Welsh*, p. 54.

In Bakhtin's 'dialogism', the role of 'utterances' is fundamental and echoes the role of intonation and register in Welsh's fiction, as according to Michael Holquist:

The Bakhtinian utterance is dialogic precisely in the local need of a particular speaker to communicate a specific meaning, and the global requirements of language as a generalizing system. While there is some room for relative freedom in the utterance, it is always achieved in the face of pre-existing restraints of several kinds, some of which had always been recognized by linguists (such as Jakobson) and some of which Bakhtin was the first to recognize (such as speech genres).¹⁴³

Here Renton is code-switching in order to be able to adapt and get way from his prison sentence but also to play the magistrate: 'With god's help, I'll beat this disease. Thank you again... The magistrate looks closely at us tae see if thirs any sign ay mockery oan ma face. No chance it'll show'.¹⁴⁴ The tension here is also a symbol of two different worlds cohabiting as well as a symbol of its power and class dynamic. As Bakhtin demonstrated:

An utterance, then, is a border phenomenon. It takes place between speakers, and is therefore drenched in social factors. This means that the utterance is also on the border between what is said and what is not said, since, as a social phenomenon *par excellence*, the utterance is shaped by speakers who assume that the values of their particular community are shared, and thus do not need to be spelled out in what they say.[...] Intonation is the immediate interface between said and unsaid: 'it pumps energy from a life situation into verbal discourse – it endows everything linguistically stable with living historical momentum and uniqueness' ('Discourse in life and discourse in art', p. 106)¹⁴⁵

Consequently, the translator has to make choices whether to translate a dialect by another dialect, to transpose the location, so that the reader can identify with the characters, or to make it remain 'foreign' to the reader's eyes, just like the above quote with the use of 'man' in the first translation or contraction of words:

¹⁴³ Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World* (London; New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 60.

¹⁴⁴ *T*, p. 167.

¹⁴⁵ Holquist, p. 61.

When this experimentation is transferred to another culture, or to another language through translation, the struggle is transferred to a different cultural and linguistic context, challenging a foreign rule of type. By the time this transfer occurs, the texts themselves are no longer marginal; transferring them to another culture assimilates them into a new contact, and, most likely, the new ‘rule of type’ that is being overthrown will belong to a dominant culture/language that does not - and may not want to - contain the same political, cultural or linguistic tensions as does Scotland.¹⁴⁶

The accent therefore condemns as well as discharges the characters. The linguistic diversity is an advantage for Renton but Spud’s inability to use it or even to be aware of it binds him and marginalises him:

The text, therefore, constructs a linguistic unity that resists the fragmentation and isolation that the novels chart as the experience of their characters. Unity of voice replaces unity of political or social purpose as the foundation of solidarity: the texts enact at a linguistic level what it points to as an absent world, a communality that transcends the absolute isolation of the individual human being.¹⁴⁷

The sequel of *Trainspotting, Porno* (2002), reunites the characters, Renton, Spud, Sick Boy and Begbie five years later. In the novel, we see once again how political change affects the everyday lives of the characters, in particular the most precarious such as Spud and Begbie struggling in adapting to these changes: devolution, gentrification and globalisation. As Spud reflects: ‘Cats like me have become extinct. Cannae adapt, so cannae survive.’¹⁴⁸ In *Dead Men’s Trousers*, seeing Begbie becoming Jim Francis, a successful artist living in California, Spud finds himself the one left on the side of the walk and his accent is described as a symbol of entrapment by Renton:

Spud is still in the chair, head twisted, eyes rolling, drooling out the side of his mouth. Franco is close by with Melanie, chatting to some guests. – Can’t wait tae get home, Renton hears his old pal sing in an accent more Californian than Caledonian. But, his reasons, his own one is blanded out through living in Holland.

¹⁴⁶ Ashley, ‘Welsh in Translation’, p. 118.

¹⁴⁷ Petrie, *Contemporary Scottish Fictions*, pp.103-4.

¹⁴⁸ *P*, p. 63.

Sick Boy has also picked up a dreary, poncey metropolitan ubiquity, though Leith was seeping back into his tones. Only Spud, he looks at the mess, crumpled into the seat beside the decks, is keeping it real.¹⁴⁹

If Ashley is sceptical about a successful translation of Welsh's novel, both translations try to recreate the same impressions a native English speaker can have while reading *Trainspotting*. These impressions are intended to disturb the reader by the use of colloquial expressions they may not be familiar with, or by experimentation in typography. The translator is required to find an equivalent in the targeted language of the Scottish dialect that Welsh uses. For this purpose, both French translators used the argotic (slang) French, with a colloquial, vulgar, and minoritarian vocabulary and insults as well as experimentations in French typography such as:

Rents, a gargouillé Sick Boy en secouant la tête, **faukjaille** chez Mère Supérieure.¹⁵⁰

Rents. **Ah've goat tae** see Mother Superior, Sick Boy gasped, shaking his heid.¹⁵¹

Here, we can see that the first French translation tries to reproduce Welsh's eye dialect in using 'faukjaille' instead of 'il faut que j'aïlle'. The introduction of foreign words in the translation bridges the cultural gap between the original and its translation but the translator's strategies to reproduce the same visual impression as Welsh could be seen as a good initiative. This phonetic use of language by Welsh reproduces the Edinburgh dialect, sound by sound, and thus recreates the music and rhythm of the Edinburgh sociolect.

Finally, in the first translation we can find a number of *calque* or word-for-word translations especially in the syntax of the French epithet position of adjectives. Expressions are even reproduced word-for-word, which, of course, do not make sense in French in an attempt to recreate the same bewilderment or the loss of linguistic landmarks an English person could have reading Welsh for the first time:

'Il n'y a rien dans son regard **sinon qu'il** en veut.'¹⁵²

'There's nothing in his eyes **but** need.'¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ *DMT*, p. 313.

¹⁵⁰ Lindor Fall, p. 11.

¹⁵¹ *T*, p. 1.

¹⁵² Lindor Fall, p. 12.

¹⁵³ *T*, p. 2.

‘Mon **il-paraît** copain’¹⁵⁴

‘My **so-called** mate’¹⁵⁵

‘Je ne suis pas encore malade mais, pour sûr, le paquet est **en route pour la poste.**’¹⁵⁶

‘Ah’m no sick yet, but it’s **in the fuckin post**, that’s fir sure.’¹⁵⁷

For the first example, the exact syntax is kept in French, which would make the French reader question the meaning of this sentence more than once. This is a choice made by the first translator to keep the author’s style as visible as possible, but this choice can only be addressed to readers who have enough knowledge in the English language to notice it and appreciate it. The same impression applies to the use of compound words where in English the use of it is more freely performed and inventive in everyday speech rather than in French.¹⁵⁸

Despite the use of the argotic French and slang, both French translations lose the musicality of the original language, a defect that has been observed as well by Barros-Grela for the Spanish translation, as mentioned earlier:

The cultural connotations specific to this dialect represent an almost insurmountable obstacle for the translator. The result obtained by Corriente in Spanish presents many problems, especially in two aspects: on the one hand the reading of the translation is clumsy and difficult for the implicit reader (which, unfortunately, I represent) due to the broken rhythm and the absence of musicality. On the other hand, without knowing the personal and social background of the translator (and we come here to the problem of the little importance given to the role of creativity, of which we are only aware through a minimal nomenclatural reference), we can argue with some strength that the slang used in his translation into Spanish is taken from a dictionary, not from its personal everyday use.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ Lindor Fall, p. 12.

¹⁵⁵ *T*, p. 2

¹⁵⁶ Lindor Fall, pp. 12-13.

¹⁵⁷ *T*, p. 3.

¹⁵⁸ For a more detailed analysis between the French translations of Welsh novels, see Cindy Lefebvre-Scodeller, ‘La traduction des marques d’oralité dans deux romans d’Irvine Welsh: *Trainspotting* (1993) et *Porno* (2002)’, *GLOTTOPOLO Revue de sociolinguistique en ligne*, 15 – Oralité et écrit en traduction (July 2010), pp. 159-176.

¹⁵⁹ My translation: ‘Las connotaciones culturales específicas de este dialecto representan un obstáculo casi insalvable para el traductor. El resultado conseguido por Corriente para la lengua española presenta muchos problemas, sobre todo, en dos aspectos: por un lado la lectura de la traducción se hace pesada y difícil para el lector implícito (a quien, afortunadamente, yo represento) por la falta de ritmo, por la ausencia de musicalidad. Por otro lado, sin conocer el entorno social y personal del traductor (y entraría ya en el

As we can see, in the Spanish translation of *Trainspotting*, the same problem can be found in the translated text where the register used is not the same as the one used in the original, along the way losing all the language's interplay and linguistic tension of the novel that made it so revolutionary in the anglophone world.¹⁶⁰ Rather, it conveys an idea of domesticating and abnegating the difference of the original text, of otherness, flattening it into an ordinary sameness. Katherine Ashley similarly notes that assimilation in translation is a real debate in translation studies theorised by Lawrence Venuti in his book *The Translator's Invisibility* that he calls 'the translator's domesticating work', writing that:

The aim of translation is to bring back a cultural other as the same, the recognizable, even the familiar; and this aim always risks a wholesale domestication of the foreign text, often in highly self-conscious projects, where translation serves an appropriation of foreign cultures for domestic agendas, cultural, economic, political. Translation can be considered the communication of a foreign text, but it is always a communication limited by its address to a specific reading audience.¹⁶¹

The main challenge for the translator was to understand the text and its context for the French readership as well as coping with stress due to intense time pressure given the expected success of the film in France. Lindor Fall chose to keep the text 'foreign' instead of rendering it as accessible as possible by domesticating the original which is yet a standpoint that would rule out some readers, as Ashley explains: 'Intentionally estranging the text from Standard English provides direct access to characters who would otherwise remain voiceless, but can also close the text to non-Scots' and in this case to non-anglophones.¹⁶²

Minor to Miner: The Argotic Bridge Between Scots and Picard

problema de la poca importancia que se le da a este cooperador de la función creativa, de quien sólo se sabe por una mínima referencia nomencladora), se podría argumentar con una cierta solidez que la jerga que está empleando en su traducción al español ha sido sustraída de un diccionario, no de su uso común personal.'

¹⁶⁰ For more information on the Spanish translation of *Trainspotting*, see: Ricardo Muñoz Martín, "'Ah jist likes, dinnae ken how ye do it.'" Translating the Literary Dialect of *Trainspotting* into Spanish', in Laura Callahan (ed.), *Spanish and Portuguese across Time, Place, and Borders* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 3-19.

¹⁶¹ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 18-9.

¹⁶² Ashley, 'Welsh in Translation', p. 119.

The French translation of *Docherty* (1975), carried out by Freddy Michalski in 1999, used the Picard to translate the Scottish dialect. The novel describes the lives of Scottish miners at the beginning of the twentieth century which mirrors the way of life of French miners in the North of France which explains the translator's choices. Indeed, Michalski, born in the same region, used the 'patois des mines', a variety of Picard as noted by Alain Dawson:

This choice is *a priori* perfectly justifiable if one considers that Picard has always been the first means of expression among miners in Nord – Pas-de-Calais, and that the way of life in Scottish mining regions showed big similarities to that of our region in the same period. Therefore, there was nothing shocking, on the contrary, to make a family of miners speak with 'the dialect of the Nord', a family which appeared to be Scottish.¹⁶³

The use of Picard in the translation can be witnessed in the following example:

What's wrong with your face, Docherty?

'Skint ma nose, sur.'

'How?'

Ah fell an' bumped ma heid in the sheuch, sur.'

'I beg your pardon?'¹⁶⁴

Qu'est-ce que tu as à la figure, Docherty?

- J'm'a raflé min nez, M'sieur.

- Comment?

- Ch'sus keu et j'm'a cogné m'tête dins ch'ruicheau, M'sieur.

- Pardon?¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³Alain Dawson, 'Le Picard dans la traduction : accent-cible ou langue-cible?', in Fabrice Antoine (éd.), *Argots, langue familière et accents en traduction*, 'Ateliers' 31/2004 (Cahiers de la Maison de la Recherche, Études sur le lexique et la traduction, Université Charles-de-Gaulle-Lille 3, 2004), pp. 51-52 :

'Ce choix est *a priori* parfaitement justifiable si l'on considère que le picard a toujours constitué le vecteur d'expression normal des mineurs du Nord – Pas-de-Calais, et que le mode de vie dans les régions minières d'Écosse présentait de très larges analogies avec celui qui prévalait dans notre région à la même époque. Rien de choquant, donc, bien au contraire, à faire s'exprimer en « patois du Nord » une famille de mineurs, fût-elle écossaise...'

¹⁶⁴ William McIlvanney, *Docherty* (London: Spectre Edition, 1975; 1996), p.114.

¹⁶⁵ Freddy Michalski, *Docherty* (Paris: Payot & Rivages, 1999), p.137.

The use of another minor language is indeed very relevant for the translation of *Docherty* but the use of another French dialect such as Picard or Alsatian, or the Gallo-French language of Breton (as opposed to a francophone dialect such as the *joual* in Quebec) would not make sense because of the generational gap and the context of usage. Vreck in her article ‘Translating *Trainspotting*: From Word for Word in Standard French to Picard or SMS’s style’ explains the difficulty in rendering the language of *Trainspotting* by using a French dialect such as the Picard: ¹⁷¹

It actually does not matter in this context if Amiens replaces Edinburgh or Paris replaces London and that the port of Leith does not find an equivalent. However, it could be arguable to attribute to young people an accent or a dialect which is only spontaneously spoken by a small minority of French people, old people, as it is often the case with a dialect or a language in survival. Only our grandparents could have learned the Picard from their mother. ¹⁶⁶

In the second translation, the translator did not choose a dialect or an accent, but a vernacular very much spoken in the suburbs of Paris combining *verlan*, insults and colloquial argotic French expressions and Arabic words that had been borrowed by the French such as ‘bled’ for ‘country’, as mentioned earlier. This language emerged around the 1980s and the 1990s in the suburbs of Paris where a multicultural working-class community began to make its own use of the French language especially in inventing words with the *verlan*, that is saying a word in reverse such as ‘pécho’ for the verb ‘chopper’. This language which was spoken by young people and represented in the French film *La Haine* seemed to be the perfect choice to convince a large audience in the francophone world for the new French translation. *La Haine* by Mathieu Kassovitz has had a similar impact in France than *Trainspotting* in the U.K. and abroad as explained by Ginette Vincendeau:

¹⁷¹ Françoise Vreck, ‘Traduire *Trainspotting*: Du goutte à goutte en français standard à la douche picarde ou sms, exercices de style’ in Fabrice Antoine (éd.), *Argots, langue familière et accents en traduction*, ‘Ateliers’ 31/2004 (Cahiers de la Maison de la Recherche, Etudes sur le lexique et la traduction, Université Charles-de-Gaulle-Lille 3, 2004), pp. 44-9.

¹⁶⁶Vreck, ‘Qu’Amiens se substitue à Edinburgh, Paris à Londres, que le port de Leith n’ait pas d’équivalent, peu importe dans ce contexte. En revanche, il peut paraître discutable de prêter à des jeunes gens un accent que n’utilise spontanément qu’une petite minorité de Français, de Français âgés, voire très âgés de surcroît, comme c’est souvent le cas lorsqu’il s’agit de dialecte ou de langue en survie. Seuls nos grands-parents peuvent encore avoir appris le picard au sein de leur mère’ (my translation), pp. 46-7.

Most reviewers were at pains to describe the special qualities of the French *banlieue* and place the film in an international context. As in France, it was compared to black films ('A kind of Parisian *Boyz 'N the Hood*'), but also to two other 1995 [sic] British and American films about troubled youth, *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle) and *Kids* (Larry Clarke).¹⁶⁷

Trainspotting and *La Haine* follow the story of marginalised youth in the housing of Muirhouse and the *cit * of Muguet in the suburbs of Paris, dealing drugs and facing everyday violence. In her book *La Haine*, Vincendeau elaborated a *verlan* glossary,¹⁶⁸ which recalls the American glossary for *Trainspotting*. *La Haine* came out in November 1995 in the U.K. and in February 1996 in the U.S. and also had a big success in France and abroad, which certainly contributed to the success of *Trainspotting* in France at least. The gap between the haves and the have-nots is intrinsically linked with the linguistic gap. The lack of job security in a young community such as the French *banlieue* is intensified by the feeling of rejection from the French population, of becoming-minor-French, of unbecoming-Parisian. Not being 'of French's origin' marginalises and generates a need to assert a different identity through a specific use of language in a sort of solidarity, as pointed out by Jean-Pierre Goudaillier:

The form of identity of language, we notice in the *cit s*, *banlieues* and in some quarters of France, is built from French, which is the dominant code and provides a sort of mould, and from diverse dominated codes themselves, which instil in the mould of the French language an entire *ensemble* of words stemming from other languages; it is therefore about the building of a language from the elevated linguistic form, French, which comes to replace the diverse 'foreign' speeches. From that point, a permanent wish develops to create, by instillation of specific traits coming from the level of identity within the dominating linguistic system, a diglossia, the genuine linguistic demonstration of a revolt, which is above all and first and foremost social, given the vividness of the immediate socio-economic environment felt in the everyday life and quite often unfavourable. The identity form becomes the expression of *lived difficulties* the saying of the difficulties. The

¹⁶⁷Ginette Vincendeau, *La Haine* (Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995) (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), p.93.

¹⁶⁸Vincendeau, p.116.

claiming of identity does not only happen in language but can also be found across music, graphics and clothes.¹⁶⁹

In that respect, Goudaillier raises this particular use of French (englobing argot, verlan, borrowed words from diverse languages) as a language in its own right, enabling him to describe a diglossia in Metropolitan France. This justifies the use of this minor language in both French translations; it is the best way to recreate the same tensions described in Welsh's novel, and it reflects the ever-changing nature of minor literature.

From Capitale to Cacapitale: The 'Shitty' Translation of Edinburgh's Inner City

The chapter 'Inter Shitty' contains a lot of meaning in just two words: the pun is on the reference to the inter-city train (linking two cities, here Edinburgh and London) which brings us back to the title of the novel. Moreover, the pronunciation of [s] sound as [sh], which gives 'shitty' instead of city, makes a reference to Sick Boy's impersonation of Sean Connery's voice giving a comical slip of the tongue with the bitterness of the reality (the actual 'shite' of the characters' situation). The title of this chapter is also subjected to two different French translations. Lindor Fall chose a word for word translation with 'Caca dedans', literally 'poo inside', losing the pun and the references linking the chapters together. Étienne's translation has the merit to adjust and correct this first shaky translation to 'De capitale à cacapitale' which includes the same pun 'from capital to capital' or inter-city, adding the syllable 'ca' to the notion of 'shit' with 'caca', losing however the reference to Sick Boy and Sean Connery.

In those two extracts, we are going to see one of the main difficulties of translating *Trainspotting*, which is how to render the interplay of languages and dialects as well as accents. Welsh uses the eye-dialect in English, which was used by Kelman for example in

¹⁶⁹ Jean-Pierre Goudaillier, 'Le dire des maux, les maux du rire' in *Comment tu tchatches! : dictionnaire du français contemporain des cités* (Maisonneuve et Larose, 2001), pp. 3-33:

'La forme identitaire de la langue, que l'on constate dans les cités, banlieues et quartiers de France est construite à partir du français, qui est le code dominant et fournit en quelque sorte le moule, et à partir des divers codes dominés eux-même, qui instillent dans le moule en langue française tout un ensemble de mots issus d'autres langues; il s'agit, par conséquent, de la construction d'une langue à partir de la forme linguistique élevée, le français, qui vient supplanter les divers parlers « étrangers ». Se développe dès lors une volonté permanente de créer, par instillation de traits spécifiques provenant du niveau identitaire dans le système linguistique dominant, une diglossie, véritable manifestation langagière d'une révolte, qui est surtout et avant tout sociale, compte tenu de la prégnance de l'environnement socio-économique immédiat vécu au quotidien et bien souvent défavorable. La forme identitaire devient l'expression *des maux vécus*, le dire des maux. La revendication identitaire n'a pas seulement lieu dans la langue; elle s'exprime aussi au travers de la musique, du graphisme, des vêtements.' p. 8.

Scottish literature or Kipling in English literature in his novel *In Black and White* (1888).¹⁷⁰

- WHERE...ARE...YOU...FROM¹⁷¹

- **PUIS – JE... SAVOIR ... D’OÙ...TU...VIENS...?**¹⁷²

- D’OÙ...VIENS...TU?¹⁷³

Here, Lindor Fall succeeds in rendering the hierarchy and the play on register in French as the original with the overly formal ‘Puis-je’ which makes up for the switch to Standard English by Begbie.

- Je vous demande pardon ? qu’elle me fait et ça sonne genre « **démaïnde pardon** » [...] - je **rgraitte**, je ne vous **comprin** pas bien ...¹⁷⁴

- Pardon? Qu’elle me fait mais ça sonne «**pardawn**», ou quoi. [...] - **Désolée, je ne comprends pas très bien** ce que vous dites.¹⁷⁵

As Ashley explains:

‘This scene speaks volumes about reading *Trainspotting* abroad: just as Begbie’s idiom eludes the Torontonians, Welsh’s dialect has the potential to escape his anglophone readers. For Begbie, the issue is class: he needs to speak “mair posh”. For foreign readers, the issue is slowing down: they need to read with increased vigilance’.¹⁷⁶

Trainspotting is a very difficult text to translate but if the text cannot be completely translated, it can at least be adapted to another culture without losing the sense of minority, orality, and locality. In that respect, the theatre adaptations in Quebec and Belgium are good examples (Martin Bowman and Wajdi Mouawad for the French Quebec adaptation and Richard McCarthy and Olivier Peyon for the Belgium adaptation). It is also relevant to

¹⁷⁰ Françoise Vreck, ‘Traduire *Trainspotting*: Du Goutte à goutte en français standard à la douche picarde ou sms, exercices de style’, p. 42.

¹⁷¹ *T*, p. 146.

¹⁷² Lindor Fall, p. 135.

¹⁷³ Étienne, p. 152.

¹⁷⁴ Lindor Fall, p. 135.

¹⁷⁵ Étienne, p. 152.

¹⁷⁶ Ashley, ‘Welsh in Translation’, p. 120.

look at how the film was received in another anglophone country. In Ireland, *Trainspotting* was subtitled but, in the U.S., as Milly Jenkins observes in *The Independent*, the first twenty minutes of the film were dubbed in order to help the American audience get accustomed to the Scottish accent:

He [director Andrew Macdonald] insists that the changes are not fundamental. ‘It just meant cleaning it up so the pronunciation is clearer,’ he says. ‘We’ve concentrated on the first 20 minutes to give people a chance of getting into it. We didn’t want them to reject it from the beginning. After that, they either get it or they don’t.’¹⁷⁷

In the introduction of the review *The Translator*, Yves Gambier talks about intralingual dubbing when he refers to *Trainspotting*: ‘We can also mention here intralingual dubbing. For instance, a film such as *Trainspotting* has been dubbed in the U.S., just as *Harry Potter* has been translated into American English’.¹⁷⁸ American publishers first translated it and changed the title of the first book from ‘Philosopher’s Stone’ to ‘Sorcerer’s Stone’. The glossary at the end of *Trainspotting* that was added for the American readers is also another relevant element to the unique status of *Trainspotting*. The Glossary provides the American reader with a ‘translation’ of Scottish words such as ‘bevvy’, ‘dosh’, ‘gaff’, ‘giro’ and ‘square-go’, for example. The ‘*Trainspotting* Glossary’ was published by *The Paris Review* (n°.138, June 1996) to profit a larger audience and become according to Milly Jenkins ‘a cultural artefact in its own right’.¹⁷⁹

From *Trainspotting* to *Férrovipathes*: The Quebecois Conundrum

In March 1994, Harry Gibson decided to produce a theatre adaptation of *Trainspotting* with Mark Renton played by Ewen Bremner (who went on to play Spud in Danny Boyle’s film). The play was a huge success with performances in Glasgow (nine months after the book publication) and later in London, gaining immediate international attention. In May 1994 the play was awarded *The Herald* Spirit of Mayfest Prize and the *Sunday Times* Best New Play Award. Gibson went on to adapt *Marabou Stork Nightmares* in 1996 and *Filth*

¹⁷⁷ Milly Jenkins, ‘Trainspotting made easy – for Americans’, *The Independent*, (26 May 1996), <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/trainspotting-made-easy-for-americans-1349197.html>> [Accessed 23/02/15].

¹⁷⁸ Gambier, ‘Introduction’ in *The Translator*, p. 173.

¹⁷⁹ Jenkins, *The Independent*, (26 May 1996).

later on for the Citizens Theatre Company of Glasgow. The play has travelled widely, not only in the anglophone world but also in the francophone world. It was translated and adapted into Spanish, German, Czech, and French (for France, Belgium and Quebec). John Neil Munro's *Lust for Life: Irvine Welsh and the Trainspotting Phenomenon*, quotes Harry Gibson:

Trainspotting has often filled up theatres which hadn't seen a cool, youthful audience for ages. My modest script has been translated into 9 languages (they loved it in Cluj [in Romania] and trans-accented into Missourian American for a run in Chicago. I've just heard of interest from an Appalachian company to do it hillbilly-style. In Paris, Dresden and Reykjavik I've seen it done *à l'enfant terrible* in a playground, with too many blue-eyed boys engaging in unscripted bumming, and as an Icelandic saga-dream. And I've seen it badly murdered by a bunch of Oxford students.¹⁸⁰

The francophone theatrical adaptations of *Trainspotting* have been adapted for the culture's audience. The French, the Belgian and the French-Canadian translation all contain linguistic local elements in order to compensate for the loss of the Scottish sociolect and recreate the same impression of precise locality and estrangement for the audience. The Canadian adaptation of the play in Quebec chose to use the French-Canadian sociolect and the Belgian adaptation does the same with local Belgian expressions to convey the notion of culture hegemony and here a diglossia.

Wajdi Mouawad and Martin Bowman wrote the Quebec adaptation of the play. Martin Bowman is the son of a Scottish immigrant and was born in Montréal. He has, with William Findlay, co-translated ten Quebecois plays in Scots and *Trainspotting* with Mouawad in *joual*, a Canadian-French associated with the working-class of Quebec. Mouawad has directed *Trainspotting* in Montreal with a premiere in January 1998. The play was a huge success in Quebec and they kept producing it: its most recent theatre adaptation in Montreal was in April 2013. The Belgian adaptation of the play was written and directed by Richard McCarthy and Olivier Peyon. *Trainspotting*'s first representation took place in 1996 at the Théâtre de Poche of Brussels, went back in November 2000 at the Festival Pur Kultur, and finally ran from the 11 December 2000 to 6 January 2001. As we have seen, the matter of language is crucial in adapting *Trainspotting*. Both Canada and

¹⁸⁰ John Neil Munro, *Lust for Life! Irvine Welsh and the Trainspotting Phenomenon* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2013), p. 184.

Belgium have a situation of diglossia in their country and we are going to see that both translations made different choices regarding the translation and appropriation of the dialect of the original. First, Quebec has a lot of similarities with Scotland regarding its experience of history and identity, as Bowman explains:

As both Scotland and Quebec move forward with their ongoing projects of political self-realisation, many Quebecers and Scots have come to share a sense of common aspirations rooted in a common experience of history. Recent developments in Scotland, for example, such as the opening of the Parliament, were followed in the French media in Quebec with a keen interest. As someone who has lived these parallel cultures for so many years through the medium of literary translation, it was an exciting project to see to what degree the vernacular language of Montreal could embrace the Edinburgh Scots of *Trainspotting*. The capacity of *joual* to reflect the complexities of Welsh's demotic language was so complete that one wonders what other Scots writers would be well-served by translation into this language. *Trainspotting (version française)* so far is the only work to be translated from Scots into Quebec French. It may not be the last.¹⁸¹

As argued by Murielle Chan-Chu in her presentation 'Trainspotting au théâtre: une adaptation culturelle' the *joual* used by Bowman and Mouawad conveys the same sociocultural background with the same hybridity – between French, English and the vernacular – and as we are going to see, also brings not only the social class or the cultural inferiority felt by the francophone Canadian but also the political dimension:

To go back to the use of blasphemes/religious curses mentioned earlier, some words such as 'câliss/câlisses', 'hostie/ésti takes diverse forms comparing to 'fuckin/fuck/fucking' which express the intensity of the verbal violence and the evolution of Franco's current mental state. In the blasphemes/religious curses, we can find the social and emotional part/inscription of the character as well as the rhythm and the power of the language. The use of an Anglicism 'blowait' for

¹⁸¹ Martin Bowman, 'Trainspotting in Montreal: The Dramatic Version' in *International Journal of Scottish Theatre*, 1:1(2000), <www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ScotLit/ASLS/ijost/Volume1_no1/M_Bowman.html> [accessed 05/03/15]

‘nippin’ in the Quebecois version increases the vernacular nature of the *joual* just like the Scottish language.¹⁸²

Gaston Miron, a French-Canadian poet and writer, talks about the linguistic alienation he had to face in Quebec before real political measures were undertaken by the Canadian government to give an official status to French:

I was born in a situation of domination of a language by another one, the result and the characteristic of a more global domination; in a defined state of institutional and social one-way bilingualism leading to linguistic absurdities and psychological ravages in the presence of a phenomenon of diglossia where English and the French of France were perceived as prestigious dialects in comparison with mine, twisted and degraded. It is all connected: it is again my relationship with language which is closely related with my relationship with writing. We certainly have come a long way and achieved immense progress but I don't see that the situation has fundamentally changed because we never saw it through. The solution is political. Full stop.¹⁸³

The social and political context of the release of *Trainspotting* in most francophone countries has been essential for the reception of the film (which gave rise to a francophone readership of Welsh's work). The novel, as we have seen, only reached notoriety after the release of the film in most non-anglophone countries, which makes the film the first medium for the *Trainspotting* phenomenon in these countries. For the French reception, it was the conjunction of the success of the ‘Cool Britannia’ movement that spread worldwide and a social malaise shared globally in post-industrial societies. Those

¹⁸² My translation: ‘Pour renvoyer à l'emploi des sacres mentionné plus haut, certains mots comme « câliss/câlisses », « hostie/ésti » prennent diverses formes en parallèle aux mots « fuckin/fuck/fucking » qui expriment l'intensité de la violence et l'évolution de l'état d'âme dans lequel Franco se trouve. Il y a dans le sacre toute l'inscription sociale et émotive du personnage, une puissance et une rythmique du langage. L'emploi d'un anglicisme, « blowait » pour « nippin », dans la version québécoise accentue le caractère vernaculaire du *joual*, en réponse à la langue écossaise.’ Murielle Chan-Chu ‘*Trainspotting* au théâtre : une adaptation culturelle’ in *Postscriptum*, Université Concordia, (2014), <<https://post-scriptum.org/03-09-trainspotting-au-theatre-une-adaptation-culturelle/>> [accessed 20/03/2015].

¹⁸³ My translation: ‘Je suis né dans une situation de domination d'une langue par autre, résultat et caractéristique d'une domination plus globale; dans un état de fait de bilinguisme institutionnel et social à sens unique entraînant des aberrations langagières et des ravages psychologiques; dans la présence d'un phénomène de double diglossie où l'anglais et le français de France étaient perçus comme des dialectes prestigieux par rapport au mien, tordu et dévalorisé. Tout se tient: c'est encore mon rapport avec la langue et celui-ci est en corrélation intime avec mon rapport à l'écriture. Nous avons certes fait beaucoup de chemin, d'immenses progrès. Je ne vois cependant pas, n'en déplaise à nos internationaux, que la situation ait fondamentalement changé, parce que nous n'avons pas été jusqu'au bout. La solution est politique. Point.’, Gaston Miron. ‘Le Mot juste’, *Possibles* II: 3 (1987), p.14.

translations therefore highlight the complex relationships between social class, politics and language and thus explains the immense potential for a nomadic universality of Welsh's *Trainspotting* despite its specific vernacular, locality, political tensions and social context, as Deleuze and Guattari write:

because collective or national consciousness is 'often inactive in external life and always in the process of break-down,' [minor] literature finds itself positively charged with the role and function of collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation. It is literature that produces an active solidarity in spite of skepticism; and if the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility.¹⁸⁴

This is the first of three chapters in this section that examines Welsh's minor literature. The study of translation gives a unique entry into Welsh's work and the reception of his novels as well as, more generally, Scottish literature. *Trainspotting* became a literary phenomenon because it is a work of minor art; powerful in its representation of minor voices waking up to the horror of late capitalism in a world where no alternatives are imaginable. Reading Welsh through Deleuze and Guattari allows the global phenomenon to go further and perhaps allows it to release its full potential as minor literature and its *becoming-revolutionary*, as the following chapter will demonstrate.

¹⁸⁴ *Kafka*, p. 17.

Chapter Two

The Minor Marxism of Irvine Welsh's Minor Literature

As we have seen in the first chapter on language and minor literature, Welsh deterritorialises Standard English in order to release the minor voices, or the 'thinking parts', of post-industrial, post-national Scotland.¹⁸⁵ These vernacular voices are minor voices, intense and in continuous variations, and they extend to a global discourse of minorisation in literature and its translation. As Welsh demonstrates, his minor use of languages is a play on power, the imperial power of a language such as Standard English in its major uses, which assimilate, centralise, and oppress its minor populations. Because any dialect or sublanguages can dominate another language, Deleuze and Guattari inquire how minor literatures are able to escape or challenge the linguistic dominance of nationalist or regionalist claims to legitimacy and dominance, i.e., Kafka on Prague-German, Welsh on Leith-Scots. Deleuze and Guattari pose this very question, writing:

Should we identify major and minor languages on the basis of regional situations or bilingualism or multilingualism including at least one dominant language and one dominated language, or a world situation giving certain languages an imperialist power over others (for example, the role of American English today)?¹⁸⁶

For Deleuze and Guattari there can be two different usages of a language; major or minor, they list for example, Irish English, the German of Prague, Black English and Quebecois.¹⁸⁷ There is therefore a becoming-minor of a language and a deterritorialisation of the major language:

Minor languages do not exist in themselves: they exist only in relation to a major language and are also investments of that language for the purpose of making it minor. That is the strength of authors termed 'minor', who are in fact the greatest, the only greats: having to conquer one's own language, in other words, to attain that sobriety in the use of a major language, in order to place it in a state of continuous variation (the opposite of regionalism).¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Irvine Welsh, 'The confessions of Irvine Welsh' in *The Big Issue in Scotland*, (29 March – 11 April 1996), pp. 12-13.

¹⁸⁶ *ATP*, p. 119.

¹⁸⁷ *ATP*, p. 119.

¹⁸⁸ *ATP*, p. 122.

That is why, as we have seen in Chapter One, it was impossible to translate or render Welsh's English into a regional language such as the Picard in France and, we could argue, any regional language. Due to generational and cultural difference, we cannot simply translate minor to minor. As my translation case studies showed, even if Welsh's language could be translated into Quebecois or *verlan* effectively, it is still a minor usage of English and therefore is in a continuous becoming of something-other-than English, *becoming-revolutionary*. Plainly put, minor and major uses of language are not simply about linguistic difference. The minor use of any language is a direct discourse that enunciates the voices of the voiceless (the subaltern) who revolutionise literatures as a means for challenging the centralised State and its hegemonic ideologies, as Deleuze and Guattari write:

It is in one's own language that one is bilingual or multilingual. Conquer the major language in order to delineate in it as yet unknown minor languages. Use the minor language to *send the major language racing*. Minor authors are foreigners in their own tongue.¹⁸⁹

As we have seen, minor literature reveals the split between dominant-dominated populations based on specific criteria that differentiates gender, race, class, religion, and other identarian markers of minority. Deleuze and Guattari note that the *problem of literature* is not so much a debate about canon or popularity. Rather, Deleuze and Guattari expose how literatures that have become institutionalised are extensions of the State, in that these major literatures replicate State ideologies and identities beyond the aesthetic realm. To speak in minor English (Scots), French (Breton), or German (Yiddish) is to speak as non-English, non-French, and non-German in the very real, lived experiences of social, economic, and political inequality and discrimination: 'the majoritarian as a constant and homogenous system; minorities as subsystems; and the minoritarian as a potential, creative and created, becoming'.¹⁹⁰ In this becoming-minor, Deleuze and Guattari anticipate new *political* elements of minor literature, whereby a writer of Scots, Breton, or Yiddish find avenues toward *becoming-revolutionary*.¹⁹¹ Minor languages and minor arts disturbs the centralised structures of the Major, unsettling the State as much as

¹⁸⁹ ATP, p. 122.

¹⁹⁰ ATP, p. 123.

¹⁹¹ *Kafka*, p. 18.

its ideologies and its political ontologies whereby the Being of dominance and hegemony remain as they often are in, let us say, Eurocentric or occidental contexts: white, heterosexual, male, adult, and Christian.

Minor literature, then, assesses new subjectivities (becomings, assemblages) and revolutionary models for becoming-minor, in which readers can accompany the minor artist outside of these strict roles designated by major language, as Deleuze and Guattari explain:

Becoming-minoritarian as the universal figure of consciousness is called autonomy. It is certainly not by using a minor language as a dialect, by regionalizing or ghettoizing, that one becomes revolutionary; rather, by using a number of minority elements, by connecting, conjugating them, one invents a specific, unforeseen, autonomous becoming.¹⁹²

This becoming-revolutionary is the second trait of minor literature, or what Deleuze and Guattari characterise as a politically charged discourse established in the othered fiction of the marginalised: ‘Minor literature is completely different; its cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics’.¹⁹³ As a minor artist, Welsh engages with politics through his use of language as much as in his narration, characterisation, and allegories, all of which gives a voice to those many ‘Leith Heads’ that he knew growing up. Welsh’s literary manifestation of becoming-revolutionary can be described as a disruptive and confrontational decolonial effort to challenge both the British and Scottish States that have long forgotten the marginalised, or actively exploit them for their own cultural or political purposes.

This is where Welsh’s political engagement becomes clear; by unravelling the tropes of Scottishness and of Scottish political life in his novels, Welsh introduces new political bodies that challenge national, religious, and imperial identity. Scottishness is described by Renton as ‘a shite state of affairs to be in’.¹⁹⁴ Note that the self-loathing of Mark Renton in *Trainspotting* is not so much directed at the self, but at the impossibility of escaping the misconception, the violence, the repressed and idealised notion of what it is to be Scottish in the light of the 1979 failed attempts at independence and devolution. In Welsh’s fiction, the dominant discourses are thrown away and Scottishness is something

¹⁹² *ATP*, p. 124.

¹⁹³ *Kafka*, p. 17.

¹⁹⁴ *T*, p. 83.

that is yet to be created. By rejecting one idea of Scottishness, Welsh does not disregard Scottish identity as much as he challenges its current majoritarian iteration. Moreover, in this politicisation of his work, readers may think Welsh is producing a new form of Scottish identity, something punk, cool, and countercultural. However, in my assessment, I think that the revolutionary quality of his work is that he also introduces a process of (un)becoming-Scottish, or at least, becoming-post-Scottish, in which he sees it necessary for Scotland to move beyond its oedipal hang-ups of challenging the political patriarch of England. Instead, Welsh urges Scotland to ‘grow up a bit’, to address an alternative lens for conceiving of a ‘modern western democracy’ outside of the regionalist, religious, and linguistic ‘medieval terms’ that haunt contemporary Scottish identity and its political frameworks.¹⁹⁵

The Welshian assemblages of a Scotland-after-Scotland are often archetypes of Deleuzo-Guattarian nomadism, which we have discussed in the Introduction: the junkie, the hardman, the schemie, the ned, etc. These archetypes experience multiple becomings that challenge the efficacy and authority of the centralised State, its institutions, and its systematic process of subjectivisation through the promotion of nationalistic exceptionalism or victimisation. In this way, this chapter illustrates how Welsh depicts vernacular description of Marxist thought. By giving a voice to the lost souls of Leith, Welsh creates a micro-agitation, challenging the British and Scottish States, thus producing a revolutionary becoming of people and communities that are marginalised by the State. It is a politics of the everyday, of what ‘working class’ means in the post-industrial world. Thus, both language and politics are vernacular, specific to Welsh’s class and therefore are an expression of minor, vernacular Marxism.¹⁹⁶ Welsh has maintained a politically charged fiction through ruminating and philosophising about Scottish politics, always present in his fiction as his own voice frequently emerges in his characters.

In ‘Eurotrash’, a selection from Welsh’s collection of short stories entitled *The Acid House* (1994), Welsh describes the horror of History and its conflicts, how to move on from History, from the scars of History and the State.¹⁹⁷ Welsh is historically aware of the use of historical discourse through a re-reading of Scottish national identity. Welsh views national identity as a means to rewrite, control and maintain a cycle of violence and oppression that is often instigated by baiting identarian differences: the Northern Irish and

¹⁹⁵ Serena Kutchinsky, ‘Irvine Welsh: Scotland Has to Grow Up’, *Prospect Magazine*, (24 April 2015), <<https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/arts-and-books/irvine-welsh-scotland-has-to-grow-up>> [accessed 28/04/15].

¹⁹⁶ Eduardo Pellejero, ‘Minor Marxism: An Approach to a New Political Praxis’, trans. by Pauly Ellen Bothe and Davide Scarso, in *Deleuze Studies* 3 (December 2009): 102-18.

¹⁹⁷ Irvine Welsh, ‘Eurotrash’ in *Acid House* (London: Vintage, 1995): 10-31. Hereafter *AH*.

the Irish Republicans, the Scots and the English, the French and the Germans, the Indians and the Pakistanis, and especially now, the Americans and the rest of the world. Welsh exposes the constraints of national identity, however, modelled through History. The ontology of national identities is forged by a historical process in which the majoritarian power urges towards the assimilation or annihilation of the margins and the minor.¹⁹⁸ Both Scottish and British identities are mocked and rejected throughout Welsh's works, revealing an awareness of the reason why his characters are unable to move on and to escape from poverty and violence. Welsh's anti-imperialism surfaces in this short story as much as his mistrust of nationalism. More importantly, he shows the impossibility of living throughout History that is essentially imperial, majoritarian and hegemonic. As Deleuze and Guattari explain in *A Thousand Plateaus*, there is a *becoming-revolutionary*, lines of flight outside of History, inherent to the experience of minority:

Unlike history, becoming cannot be conceptualized in terms of past and future. Becoming-revolutionary remains indifferent to questions of a future and a past of the revolution; it passes between the two. Every becoming is a block of coexistence. The so-called ahistorical societies set them outside history, not because they are content to reproduce immutable models or are governed by a fixed structure, but because they are societies of becoming (war societies, secret societies, etc.). There is no history but of the majority, or of minorities as defined in relation to that majority. And yet 'how to win the majority' is a totally secondary problem in relation to the advances of the imperceptible.¹⁹⁹

Like Deleuze and Guattari's reading of minor artists, Welsh too engages with scenarios that force his characters to face the violence of History (British or Scottish), which they must either embrace or reject in their quests for affirming life in a world that denies their existence.

Against national identity and party politics, Welsh's political awareness resides in his anti-institutionalism, in his everyday, punk-inflected Marxism. Welsh's *Trainspotting*, for example, created a political and social debate in the U.K. as it answered back to Thatcher-era values carried on by John Major; the rise of individualism and the diminishing importance of communities especially working-class communities who saw

¹⁹⁸ Raymond Williams, 'Base and Superstructure' in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). pp. 75-82.

¹⁹⁹ *ATP*, p. 340.

their way of life breaking down by the massive de-industrialisation of the 1980s. As described by Michael Gardiner, ‘unemployment and de-industrialisation then catalysed a challenge to heritage. Losing the purpose of labour meant losing shared historical meaning’.²⁰⁰ The exclusion and the inability to live and survive in Thatcher’s society is emphasised in the characters’ broken relationships with family and friends, as well as a rejection of social norms and bourgeois values. Throughout Welsh’s novels, there is a detailed description of social and political control; whether it is in the form of the father as the ‘chief’ of the family, the Church or the State, bureaucracy, to leisure, the pub, drug use and football casualties. As he writes in his novella ‘A Smart Cunt’, Welsh begins his assault on the political, social, and economic institutions of Scottish everyday life:

Humans have set up structures, institutions to govern our lives here on this planet. Churches, nations, corporations, societies, and all that shite. One such structure is the council. Within its sphere, leisure and recreation, of which the Parks Service is part. [...] We are paid, in our small way, to maintain the structure of human society.²⁰¹

John Walsh is critical of such social and political commentary: ‘Welsh’s conversation is a compendium of agitprop full of generalisations about “culture” and “society”, like a student tackling Raymond Williams; and of Dave Spart riffs about the State’.²⁰²

As mentioned previously, Welsh’s work is concerned with the consequences of austerity policies in post-industrial Britain and its consequences on the working-class communities, as he explains in a 2005 interview in which he describes the impossible conundrum of unifying a Great Britain:

Another taboo in Blair’s ‘inclusive’ Britain is to talk about the differing status of the constituent national identities that comprise our islands. It’s arrant nonsense to think that anybody in poverty in London or Liverpool is better off than anyone in the same situation in Edinburgh or Glasgow. But the dominant national culture of the UK is ‘England’ and Englishness. The non-English are therefore, by extension, often unwittingly and unintentionally cast in the role of lesser mortals. [...] It’s time we talked about these taboo issues of poverty, social class and national

²⁰⁰ Michael Gardiner, ‘Arcades – The 1980s and 1990s’ in Ian Brown and Alan Riach (eds.) *The Edinburgh Companion to Twentieth Century Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 183.

²⁰¹ Irvine Welsh, ‘A Small Cunt’ in *Acid House* (London: Vintage, 1995), pp. 175-289 (p. 195).

²⁰² John Walsh, ‘The not-so-shady past of Irvine Welsh’, *The Independent*, (15 April 1995), p. 5.

identity. I make absolutely no apology for saying that I don't want the sass and style or urban Scottish culture to be blanded out of existence. But I most certainly do want the soul-destroying litany of stabbings, slashings and slayings to come to an end. I don't like attending the funerals of young people. I really would much rather be going to graduation, award and achievement ceremonies. Perhaps if we had more of these events for disadvantaged young Scots, then we wouldn't be fretting over our embarrassingly high murder rate.²⁰³

Hence, throughout his work, Welsh depicts these violent consequences of not only austerity, but of imperial discourse reminiscent of Shakespeare's *Henry V* where the stereotypes of England (Captain Gower), Wales (Captain Fluellen), Ireland (Captain Macmorris), and Scotland (Captain Jamy) huddle together before battle in Act Three to proclaim their ethnic and cultural difference as the reason for their superiority against their monocultural French enemies.²⁰⁴ Instead, Jamy and Macmorris die in the name of the earliest formation of English history at Agincourt, heaping yet more dead Celtic bodies into the breach once more. In his own modern portrayals of a shattered union, Welsh does not return to the histories of the British Isles to illustrate the imperial failings of England: rather, by issuing a critique of Westminster, he illustrates how intense poverty, growing precarity, decaying housing, mental health, substance abuse, sectarianism, and hooliganism are the ideological glue that maintains a cycle of social violence which rends these communities apart from within. From members of the Ulstermen like Renton's dead brother Billy who die for the glory of a Christian God, to the violent football casuals who die for the pride of their clubs, Welsh depicts how social, religious, and economic divisions have opened the flood gate of young male violence that forecloses all futures for them to get out, to grow up into adults, and to find options of (un)becoming-Scottish, becoming-nomad, if they so wish.

A Scot Against the State: Deleuze, Althusser, and a Leith Head

From the very start of his literary career, Welsh appeared as a figure of opposition to the power of the State, later to be more and more defined by what Deleuze would call a

²⁰³ Irvine Welsh, 'Scotland's murderous heart', *The Guardian*, (20 October 2005), <<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2005/oct/20/penal.crime>> [accessed 25/07/14]

²⁰⁴ Christopher Ivic, "'bastard Normans, Norman bastards": Anomalous Identities in *The Life of Henry the Fifth*', from *Shakespeare and Wales: From the Marches to the Assembly*, ed. by Willy Maley and Philip Schwyzer (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010): 75-96.

‘society of control’.²⁰⁵ One of the first appearances of Welsh in the media in 1993 already testifies of it: ‘In the system under which we live, humans have been objectified to the extent that I could assume the psyche of serial killer and stick any coveted person in this column with justifications’.²⁰⁶ More specifically, Deleuze’s ‘society of control’ is a continuation and complication of Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) and Louis Althusser’s concepts of Ideological and Repressive State Apparatus (1970).²⁰⁷ For Deleuze, societies of control are replacing Foucault’s ‘disciplinary societies’, which were defined by confinement such as the prison but it extended to the hospital, the school and the factory for example. Individuals would move on through various confined milieus. The society of control evolves from the idea of the panopticon prison architecture pointed out by Foucault and Paul Virilio’s study of twentieth century cities and crowd control in which the bourgeoisie controls the flow of people, especially the marginalised. For Welsh, systems of control in Leith begin and end with railroads, as the eponymous name of his first novel indicates. While Deleuze and Foucault do not address infrastructure directly, when we examine Welsh’s allegories of control, we see that Leith is a confined, enclosed environment. The controlling apparatuses throughout Welsh’s work can be immaterial, ideological, institutional, and social in nature, but the most profound symbol of economic desolation and social enclosure is his description of Leith Central Station in *Trainspotting*:

We go fir a pish in the auld Central Station at the Fit ay the Walk, now a barren, desolate hangar, which is soon tae be demolished and replaced by a supermarket and swimming centre. Somehow, that makes us sad, even though ah wis eywis too young tae mind ay trains ever being there.²⁰⁸

In this brief description of Leith Central Station, Renton comments on the ruins of a place that had always been a ruin to him: in this moment, readers learn that the trains never come or go through Leith, simply because austerity measures killed off peripheral train stops, lines, and stations that were deemed unnecessary. As Robert Morace points out:

²⁰⁵ Gilles Deleuze, ‘Postscript on the Societies of Control’ in *October*, Vol. 59. (Winter, 1992), pp. 3-7.

²⁰⁶ Irvine Welsh, ‘Objects of Desire’ in *The Scotsman*, (1993), p. 3.

²⁰⁷ The original French version was published in 1970 and the translation of this essay ‘Ideology and ideological State Apparatuses’ first appeared in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, translated by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971).

²⁰⁸ *T*, p. 385.

Although it appears in the novel only once, Leith Central Station, located at the foot of Leith Walk and closed since the 1950s (and demolished in 1989), is representative of the distressed state of the parts of the city in which the novel is mainly set. Like the novel itself, the station is a gathering place for drunks and addicts as well as the homeless. The disused station not only suggests Leith's dependency on (and socio-economic and cultural distance from) Edinburgh; Leith Central Station anticipates the financially troubled Waterworld that opened on the site the year before *Trainspotting* was published.²⁰⁹

Without work for the people of Leith, the State's austerity policies symbolised its apathy and indifference towards the post-industrial community. Hence, as Renton and Begbie realise in the station in different ways, those who are from Leith, stay in Leith, trapped in the centre of a ghost town, or 'a place of phantoms'.²¹⁰ A society of control that manages where people (and therefore their labour and someone else's capital) go throughout a city designates how minor communities are displaced and isolated by institutional hegemony and economic plunder. Leith Central Station is just one of many places where the State's neglect has left its colonised populous trapped, ranging from all of Wales to Native American reservations across the American West. According to Deleuze,

man is no longer man enclosed, but man in debt. It is true that capitalism has retained as a constant the extreme poverty of three quarters of humanity, too poor for debt, too numerous for confinement: control will not only have to deal with erosions of frontiers but with the explosions within shanty towns or ghettos.²¹¹

Indebted and in chains to austerity, the populace of Leith, for example, is bound to the place that it used to sustain with industrial work. Generations gone by without prospects, Welsh witnesses the tragedies of dislocation and alienation that those trapped in a post-industrial wasteland are overwhelmed by; instead of commuting on the train to work or finding reprieve outside of Leith for the day, Renton and company spend their time trainspotting, escaping Leith one hit at a time.

Deleuze's theories of control (instead of Foucault's theory of discipline) can also be ideologically driven as much as infrastructurally engineered. As Deleuze argues, 'we are in

²⁰⁹ Robert Morace, *Irvine Welsh*, p. 41.

²¹⁰ *DMT*, p. 343.

²¹¹ Deleuze, 'SoC', pp. 6-7.

a generalized crisis in relation to all environments of enclosure – prison, hospital, factory, school, family’.²¹² Welsh identifies many institutions that he views as failed minor communities, including all five that Deleuze mentions. Welsh takes on the Scottish State literally in his political writings outside of his already politically charged novels, often criticising the way Scottishness is often the centre of problematised ideologies and institutional apparatuses, or what Louis Althusser calls the ‘Ideological State Apparatus,’ which includes religion, education, family, law, political parties, and cultural expressions (sport, art and literature).²¹³ The State replicates the means of production through a deployment of ideologies that control and institutionalise citizens and consumers. According to Deleuze and Guattari, ‘the State is not defined by the existence of chiefs; it is defined by the perpetuation or conservation of organs of power. The concern of the State is to conserve’.²¹⁴ Hence, a State Apparatus makes people responsible individuals, individuals who will, from their own initiative and without realizing it, want to conform to the given social norms, established by the dominant class the bourgeoisie. This idea is tied to what Althusser calls *ideological interpellation*.²¹⁵ Interpellation is connected to the social imperative to reproduce these social norms, like the nuclear family, religion and politics for example. Philip Barnard and Stephen Shapiro explain:

Since the conditions, forces, and rules that construct the subject are not of its own making, the subject paradoxically must accept and internalize an external system in order to articulate an internal sense of selfhood. [...] To be a subject is to be subjugated, (subject to authority and experiential identity (to be a subject is to have a sense of self, of subjectivity). Even performativity, in which subjects demonstrate or re-represent the act of naming and shaming, accepts the wider logic of Althusser’s account of identity-formations.²¹⁶

Thus, individuals define their personal and political subjectivity by an ideology, and according to Althusser, capitalism reproduces its logic through these said ideologies and the State institutions.

²¹² ‘SoC’, pp. 3-4.

²¹³ Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (London: Verso, 2014), p. 243.

²¹⁴ *ATP*, p. 416.

²¹⁵ Althusser, p. xxvi.

²¹⁶ Philip Barnard and Stephen Shapiro, ‘Introduction’ in Didier Deleule and François Guéry’s *The Productive Body*, trans. and ed. by Barnard and Shapiro (Zero Books: Alresford, 2014): 1-40 (pp. 16-7).

The purpose of reading Welsh through Deleuze and Althusser is to illustrate how impossible it is to conceive of any liberation discourse regarding the minor when the Majoritarian voice of the State is consistently realigning the identities of its constituents and subjects. In Welsh's case, then, the only revolution Scotland will see is when its national identity is confronted as a British product and rejected wholesale as such. Unbecoming-Scottish, as this thesis will indicate throughout Chapters Four, Five and Six, is a process of deterritorialising the image of the Scot, moving him or her beyond the confines of emptied districts like Leith, so that they might finally escape the Scottish State's means of capture, enclosure, and exploitation. It is this sense of control that Welsh's characters are desperately trying to escape, as mentioned previously regarding the train-less Central Station of Leith. Renton, often the voice of Welsh, articulates clearly the necessity to confront and reject State-manufactured ways everyday 'life':

Society invents a spurious convoluted logic tae absorb and change people whae's behaviour is outside its mainstream. Suppose that ah ken aw the pros and cons, know that ah'm gaunnae huv a short life, am ah sound mind, etcetera, etcetera, but still want tae use smack? They won't let ye dae it. They won't let ye dae it, because it's seen as a sign ay thir ain failure. The fact that ye jist simply choose tae reject whut they huv tae offer. Choose us. Choose life. Choose mortgage payments; choose washing machines; choose cars; choose sitting oan a couch watching mind-numbing and spirit-crushing game shows, stuffing fuckin junk food intae yir mooth. Choose rotting away, pishing and shiteing yersel in a home, a total fuckin embarrassment tae the selfish, fucked-up brats ye've produced. Choose life. Well, ah choose no tae choose life. If the cunts cannae handle that, it's their fuckin problem.²¹⁷

The mind-numbing sense of control is the same described by Deleuze and Althusser which serves to reproduce ideological maintenance of the working-class, and more importantly for Welsh, it helps to divide minor populations that are pitted against themselves. Here, not only the consumption society is exposed and rejected, but through it, the nuclear or bourgeois family and the new cycle of control through indebts pointed out by Deleuze. Beyond this simple, yet profound declaration of anti-consumerism, Welsh's politics goes much further. Throughout the rest of the chapter, I argue that his critiques of British and Scottish politics tackle the rote clichés that the State deploys to undermine and demonise

²¹⁷ T, p. 237.

the working class, which reveals a true lack of democracy in the U.K. Thus, from this point on, we will examine Welsh's political oppositions to austerity measures in *Skagboys* (2012), to populist political movements in *A Decent Ride* (2014) and conclude with Welsh's view of the neoliberal capitalism of Britain and Europe in *Dead Men's Trousers*.

Welsh Against Austerity, Renton Against Thatcher

Skagboys was published in 2012, the year The Scottish Parliament and Westminster came to an agreement to have a referendum on Scottish independence. The novel is the prequel to *Trainspotting* and acts as a historical background to Welsh's first novel. The first chapter is a 'prologue' which opens with Renton's journal detailing his taking part in the 'Battle of Orgreave' in 1984-5 in South Yorkshire. In the battle, Renton describes him and his dad joining a group of Scottish strikers and picketers from various labour unions in support of the Great Miners' Strike of 1984, which the National Union of Mineworkers organised. The novel opens with pages of Renton's journal, typographically mimicking his handwriting. In Renton's account, he describes the actions in first-person, as if he is a 'war witness': we see a recollection of the climax of the miners' strike which marks a turning point in the relations between the working-class and the State. In his telling, he explains that the police prepared to charge the workers:

Ye cannae miss the plant we intend tae blockade; it's dominated by two huge phallic chimneys, risin out ay a series ay industrial Victorian buildings. It looks ominous, but the polis have goat us aw herded intae this big fiel on its north side. Then thaire's a sudden stillness in the air as the chants fade away; ah look at the plant and it feels a bit like Auschwitz and for a second ah get the queasy notion that we're gonnae be corralled *intae* it, like thaire's gas ovens thaire, because no only are the polis outnumberin the pickets, they're now positioned oan three sides ay us, and we're cut off oan the fourth perimeter by this railway line.²¹⁸

According to Roberto Del Valle Alcalá, the Auschwitz reference in this scene serves to describe the violence on the side of the State 'fully rediscovered' through the use of paramilitary measures, described later by Renton as a war, rather than a mere labour dispute.²¹⁹ Again, returning to *Skagboys*, Welsh affirms Renton's war against the State as

²¹⁸ *S*, pp. 11-2.

²¹⁹ Del Valle Alcalá, p. 116.

such: ‘This isnae about policing or containment, this is a war against civilians. War. Winners. Losers. Casualties’.²²⁰ The note on the railway line is not trivial either, as here it serves to control the space where the working-class men are contained between the police and the railway. Therefore, trains are no longer viewed as a form of social movement but as means of seclusion, as I previously mentioned when describing the enclosure of the abandoned Leith Central Station. From this cinematic opening in the middle of the miners’ strike, Renton compares the Scottish police with Waffen-SS soldiers, which emphasises the repressive characteristic of the State that has always been known to the working class and the poor:

Ah sees Sick Boy, standin at the bus stop. There’s a dude whae never does a day’s George Raft but seems tae ey have poakits fill ay pretty green, ken? Bet yir life thit it aw comes ootay some chick’s purse, but. Ah follay his line ay vision ower the road tae this big poster, one ay the yins the government’s pit up tae git people tae grass each other up, like in Nazi Germany, whaire they encouraged the bairns tae gie away their mas n faithers:

CALL US UP BECAUSE WE’RE DISCREET...AND WE’LL CALL TIME ON THE BENEFITS CHEATS!²²¹

Just like the analogy of Roy in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* that links the working-class of Leith and the Kaffirs of Johannesburg, here the reference of Nazi Germany conveys the violence of the State. Rather than ask the reader to compare the fate of Jews in Nazi Europe, or the black South Africans during Apartheid with the British working-class, Welsh highlights the repressive nature of a so-called ‘modern western democracy’. The ending of the prologue signals the defeat of the miners’ strike, which is more importantly described as a win for the capitalist State that will ensure its power throughout the Welshverse.

This sense of defeat that Renton describes in his first entry reflects a pessimistic realisation that capitalism is here to stay, even after industrialism. Fisher refers to this as an awareness of ‘capitalist realism’, which is further explored by Welsh throughout the novel. *Skagboys* is a novel about Thatcherian Britain, making the scene of the strike a seminal battle that would mark Renton’s experience of the State’s war against the poor in Great

²²⁰ *S*, p. 18.

²²¹ *S*, p. 141.

Britain.²²² Fisher explains that this very scene was a flashpoint of capitalist realist discourse, whereby the Thatcherian State led to the obliteration of the British proletariat:

What we are dealing with now, however, is a deeper, far more pervasive, sense of exhaustion, of cultural and political sterility. In the 80s, ‘Really Existing Socialism’ still persisted, albeit in its final phase of collapse. In Britain, the fault lines of class antagonism were fully exposed in an event like the Miners’ Strike of 1984-1985, and the defeat of the miners was an important moment in the development of capitalist realism, at least as significant in its symbolic dimension as in its practical effects. The closure of pits was defended precisely on the grounds that keeping them open was not ‘economically realistic’, and the miners were cast in the role of the last actors in a doomed proletarian romance. The 80s were the period when capitalist realism was fought for and established, when Margaret Thatcher’s doctrine that ‘there is no alternative’ – as succinct a slogan of capitalist realism as you could hope for – became a brutally self-fulfilling prophecy.²²³

Welsh’s own vulgar Marxist position is inscribed in his writings, as we see in this scene, establishing a critique and an acknowledgement of the pervasiveness of capitalist realism and the pursuit of austerity. According to Del Valle Alcalá:

His [Mark Renton’s] account – which is a faithful and detailed transcription of the historical event – makes it clear that this was no ordinary occurrence within the strike, or, rather, that it traumatically established a new logic of the ‘ordinary’ in the relations between the State and the institutions of the working class.²²⁴

Welsh follows Kelman in his exploration of ‘hyper realism’ as described by Alan Freeman.²²⁵ In *Skagboys*, however, Welsh makes it clear that the world he depicts is one caught in the horrors of capitalist realism. When asked in 2009 whether Welsh is reacting to what has gone before, Welsh answered:

²²² Andrew Gamble, *The Free Economy and the Strong State: The Politics of Thatcherism* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 1988), pp. 116-7.

²²³ Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is there no alternative?* (Ropley: Zero Books, 2009), pp. 7-8.

²²⁴ Del Valle Alcalá, p. 113.

²²⁵ Alan Freeman, ‘Realism Fucking Realism: The Word on the Street - Kelman, Kennedy and Welsh’, *Cencrastus* 57 (1997), p. 7.

To an extent you're always reacting against what's gone before, trying to establish your own identity. With Kelman and Alasdair Gray, you see how they were reacting against that Kailyard tradition. With Rebel Inc, we were reacting against them. In their fiction, they had those seventies ideas that there was still a socialist aspirational element to society, a radical working class. We were looking at how people had adapted to the new order.

Our fiction wasn't about challenging the state, the state had won, you just had to find a way to live with it. What happens next? Do we lie down in our ghettos or do we get out and fucking party and try to live? ²²⁶

First, Welsh's response demonstrates a clear opposition to the State's violence and a mourning of the failure of the 60s and 70s, the last opposition to the State with the workers' strikes, which marked the beginning of what Welsh would call 'the long dark night of late capitalism' in *The Acid House*.²²⁷ For Welsh, there is a need to move toward a much more vitalistic, iconoclastic way of undermining the logic of late capitalism. For Welsh, the act of 'choosing life' over a slow institutional death has therefore retained a much stronger resonance, especially in a world which could only offer a very bleak future for the working class. The sense of failure marks the ending of the prologue, part of Renton's 'Rehab Journal', as he leaves the cars bringing him back to Glasgow with his father, his patrilineal hometown:

The sun's pummelling doon and it's still as warm as fuck, a really beautiful summer's day. The cars shoot past us headin north, as ah rip the COAL NOT DOLE sticker fae ma denim jaykit. The tear oan the sleeve isnae too bad; it kin be stitched nae bother. Ah lift ma airm, stretchin it oot through the nagging ache in my shoodir. Ah climb up the bankin oantae this overpass, n look ower the railins doon the motorway at the cars n loories ripping by underneath me. Ah'm thinkin that we've lost, and there's bleak times ahead, and ah'm wonderin: what the fuck am ah gaunny dae wi the rest ay ma life?²²⁸

²²⁶ Irvine Welsh in Doug Johnstone, 'Scottish Books - Irvine Welsh, Alan Bissett and Ewan Morrison', *The List*, (9 July 2009), <<https://www.list.co.uk/article/18765-scottish-books-irvine-welsh-alan-bissett-and-ewan-morrison/>> [accessed 15/02/15].

²²⁷ *AH*, p. 240.

²²⁸ *S*, p. 21.

In this scene at the end of the prologue, Renton contemplates the futurelessness of his generation, which exposes a historical shift between his father's generation and his own. Renton anticipates a massive generational gap, where the older generation of Scotland's proletariat will never be able to accommodate, and the younger generation must confront the terrors of a new formulation of post-industrial capitalism.

Beyond this capitalist realist reminder in his pseudo-fictional universe, Welsh structures most of *Skagboys* as a bricolage of fiction and political journalism, offering his reader a gritty, realistic picture of the violence of the State, as if he is a war reporter. In 'Notes on an Epidemic 2', Welsh becomes explicitly political, writing:

Under the Labour government of James Callaghan (1976-79), inflation and unemployment began to rise to post-war record levels. The Conservative Party produced a zeitgeist election poster, featuring semi-dejected people waiting in a dole queue, with the slogan 'LABOUR ISN'T WORKING.'

Following the election of Margaret Thatcher, in the spring of 1979, unemployment levels tripled from 1.2 million to 3.6 million in 1982, and would stay over the three million mark till 1986.²²⁹

The Winter of Discontent of 1978 to 1979 marked a turning point as a general strike in the public sector resulted from trade unions fighting the austerity policies which froze or lowered pay due to the effort of the Labour government led by James Callaghan to control inflation. The creation of the myth of the Winter of Discontent as re-establishment of social order:

In the view of Colin Hay (2009) who has also critiqued the 'crisis' of the late 1970s as a highly constructed one which sustained various myths about the nature of the power of unions and the public sector, the Winter of Discontent was thus a significant landmark in contemporary British political history. This was because it marked the 'symbolic point of transition' which shifted Britain 'from then to now': 'From the postwar consensus to Thatcherism, from Keynesianism to monetarism, from corporatism to austerity'.²³⁰

²²⁹ S, p. 139.

²³⁰ Anita Biressi and Heather Nunn. *Class and Contemporary British Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 175-6.

The Conservatives and the press in general used the strike to convey the idea that the trade unions function as a ‘State within the State’ with the Labour government being at the origins of the social and political chaos, with the advertising campaign *Labour Isn’t Working* (see below), showing an endless queue in front of employment offices.

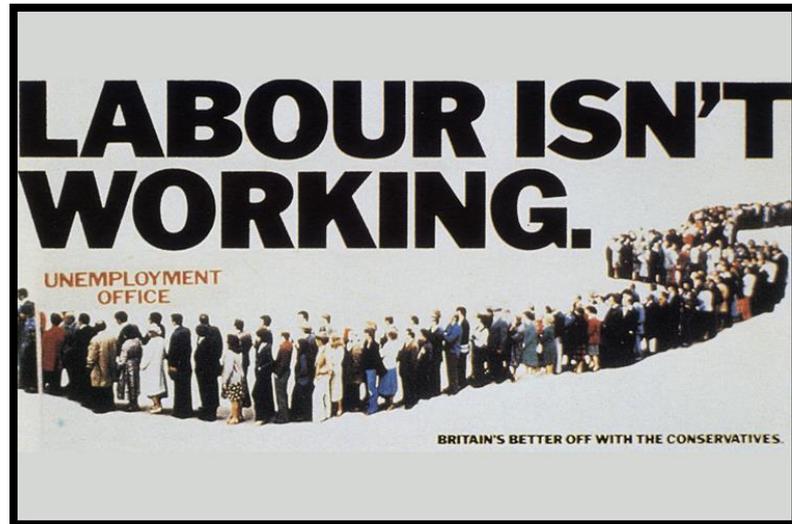


Figure 2

The election of Margaret Thatcher as leader of the Conservative Party was also an ideological turning point: as Edward Heath’s one-nation conservatism became minoritarian, the Conservative party became more and more robustly right-wing with Thatcher’s ascendancy alongside the rise of the *National Front*, exploiting tensions around British identity and multiculturalism in the country. Welsh’s description of the housing schemes of Edinburgh reflects these statistics and more importantly expresses the feeling of destitution and imprisonment of its inhabitants.²³¹ The scheme is seen here as a custodial sentence, a social and economic incarceration:

We git oaf at Muirhouse, cutting through the deserted shopping centre past units that exhibit only graffiti oan their steel shutters, n headin for this five-storey block at the back ay the prefabricated library. Schemes like this, Wester Hailes or Niddrie, thaire’s nowt roond thum but mair scheme. Mibbe a wee patch ay crap shoaps selling tinned goods and some rotting, overpriced veg and a murderous

²³¹ For more on the impact of the Conservative party’s housing policies on granting the right for tenants to buy their council houses with substantial discounts as ‘a property-owning democracy’ instead of investing in public housing, see Peter Jenkins’ *Mrs Thatcher’s Revolution: The Ending of the Socialist Era* (pp. 372-373) and for the direct impact on Scottish housing estates, see Duncan McTavish’s *Politics in Scotland* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 13-15.

pillboax ay a bar. At least in Leith, if ye live in a scheme, yir surrounded by pubs, bookies, cafes, shoaps n loads ay shit tae dae.²³²

The consequences of austerity policies are therefore visible to the reader. Welsh plays with the statistics and the lives of his characters, the journalism and the fiction, History and the vernacular history. In the same way, Welsh traces the origins of the flood of heroin in Edinburgh, from pharmaceutical companies established in the mid-1800s as explained in the third ‘Notes on the Epidemic’ in the novel:

Both businesses continued to develop through takeovers and acquisitions, and in 1960, they merged to form Macfarlan Smith Ltd. The company was taken over by the Glaxo group in 1963. It still employs over two hundred workers at its plant in Wheatfield Road, in the city’s Gorgie district.

The heroin that flooded the streets of Edinburgh in the early 1980s was widely believed to have been sourced from opiate-based products manufactured at the plant, through breaches of security. When these security issues were resolved, the huge local demand for heroin was satiated by cheap Pakistani product, which by this time had flooded into the rest of the UK. Conspiracy theorists point out that this glut of heroin importation occurred shortly after the widespread rioting of 1981, in many poorer areas of Britain, which was given most notable media attention in Brixton and Toxteth.²³³

This historical brief contrasts with the slow descent of Welsh’s characters into heroin addiction, seen first as a way ‘not to choose life’ or rather escape the consumer’s society. For Renton, using drugs is a way to reject the life under control, and shows the beginning of Renton’s *becoming-other* as he starts rejecting ISAs as described in the following quote:

A few weeks ago, while on ma wanderins, ah’d clocked her meetin a bunch ay them outside the Lemon Tree. She looked happy; she was a straightpeg. She’d talked about us findin a flat together next year. Then graduation, nine-to-five jobs and another flat wi a mortgage. Then engagement. Then marriage. A bigger mortgage on a house. Children. Expenditure. Then the four Ds: disenchantment, divorce, disease and death. For aw her protestations tae the contrary, that’s who she

²³² S, p. 80.

²³³ S, p. 151.

was. That's what she expected. But ah loved her and thus fought tae conceal the ugliness she brought out in me.²³⁴

The contract is therefore established by Welsh as Renton's idea of escaping the life of debt, the life deemed necessary in societies of control. Renton's relationship with drugs also signals an apparent detachment from and awareness of State's control: 'But ah've done this tae masel. Naebody else has fucked me; neither God nor Thatcher. Ah've done it; destroyed the sovereign state ay Mark Renton before those cunts get anywhere near it wi their wrecking ball'.²³⁵ However, Welsh exposes the victims of the State's negligence in the following Note of the Epidemic 6, where Renton's will to escape is suddenly rendered numb facing the HIV victims' list:

Lothian Health Board
Private and Confidential
Instances of Reported HIV+ Cases in February
Gordon Ferrier, 18, Edinburgh North, window cleaner, intravenous drug use.
Julie Mathieson, 22, Edinburgh North, drama student, mother of one, intravenous drug use.
Philip Miles, 38, Edinburgh North, unemployed chef, father of three, intravenous drug use.
Gordon Murieston, 23, Edinburgh North, unemployed welder, intravenous drug use.
Brian Nicolson, 31, West Lothian, unemployed civil engineer, intravenous drug use.
George Park, 27, Edinburgh South, unemployed labourer, father of one, intravenous drug use.
Christopher Thomson, 22, Edinburgh North, unemployed baker, intravenous drug use.²³⁶

Drug and substance abuse cannot be only seen through the lens of counter culture or subculture. If drugs allow forms of becoming, they are also rationed by the State and these becomings will eventually be sold and controlled. With this list, Welsh exposes the State's war victims, civilians who were no longer useful in the eye of the State. Through Renton, Welsh highlights the creeping sense of destitution, powerlessness and apparent sense of control guided by the State.

The novel, as said before, is one of Welsh's most politically charged to date of its publication. Welsh, in navigating between journalism and fiction, always brings back familiar characters, and does not just write about the consequences of austerity in Scotland,

²³⁴ *S*, pp. 171-2.

²³⁵ *S*, p. 378.

²³⁶ *S*, p. 377.

in Leith; rather, as we have seen in the Introduction, Welsh wants to build a vernacular history of Leith that not only describes how austerity and systematic neglect created it as it is, but that Leith is just one of many places that has become the centre of both decay and of the rise of a postmodern capitalism. The last chapter of the novel, ‘Trainspotting at Gorgie Central’, sees Renton, Sick Boy and the rest of their friends walking from Leith to Gorgie, South of Edinburgh with the purpose of reaching the pharmaceutical company that some employees stole heroin from in order to resell it in Edinburgh. As they walk and enter Gorgie, they decide to reach the company following the railway: ‘The opium factory. Those railway lines seeming to define the place, one set dividing the plant from the distillery, the other bisecting it’.²³⁷ However, in order to squeeze through the factory without being seen, Renton decides to follow a road which used to be a railway:

Still slowly circumnavigating the edge of the plant, they move round to the busy, submerged Western Approach Road, watching the cars shoot into the city. It was once yet another old railway line, which led to the now defunct Caledonian Station at the West End of Princes Street. *I’m a fuckin trainspotter*, Renton thinks, as he looks up and watches a goods train pass overhead. The two lines that go through the plant must be part of the old Edinburgh suburban system, now just freight rather than passengers. This part of the line, though, hadn’t been made into a public cycle path, nor did it house a new development of the flats like most of the old Edinburgh rail network. And the embankments were fortified. Why did the circular south suburban line remain intact while the rest of the local Edinburgh urban railway had been ruthlessly ripped up under the infamous Beeching cuts of the sixties? It had to be the skag plant. They wanted people kept away from it.²³⁸

Renton’s experience of trainspotting at Leith Central Station changes in Gorgie Central. From the disaffected central station littered in ruins and decaying wagons, here Renton has to find out the line to follow, the trains to avoid in order to pursue his *becoming-skag*. Trainspotting here is not only following a line of flight but choosing one. Renton’s understanding of the railway system is thus a broader understanding of how the Scottish State works. Renton maps out and traverses the railway system, flattening the area for its own vision, as he now sees for the first time the extent of the rhizome they live in, or

²³⁷ S, p. 525.

²³⁸ S, pp. 525-6.

rather, how the State is itself rhizomatic, quietly dehierarchising as its citizens are dying slowly from neglect:

The edge of the world turns dark as the sun sinks behind the broken tenements and the ancient castle, the chilling air now slightly ozone, but augmenting those fumes that the oncoming chemical plant and distillery boak constantly skywards in hazy, almost phantom, tendrils. Ahead is the plant. Why here, Renton asks himself, why in this city? The Scottish Enlightenments. You could trace the line from that period of the city's global greatness, to the Aids capital of Europe, going straight through that mix of processing plants and warehouses within those security fences. It was a peculiarly Edinburgh brainchild of medicine, invention and economics; from the analytical minds of the Blacks and Cullens, filtered through the speculations of the Humes and the Smiths. From the deliberations and actions of Edinburgh's finest sons in the eighteenth century, to its poorest ones poisoning themselves with heroin at the close of this one. A shiver in his eye. *We in Scotland...*²³⁹

Renton sees the connection between the Scottish Enlightenment, which made Edinburgh not only the 'Athens of the North' but through Adam Smith and David Hume's contribution, the base of the free market economy, and the State's neglect of the people around him dying of AIDS and heroin addiction. With this powerful parallel, Renton understands that if centuries ago Scotland's language and culture has been colonised by another nation, it also established the means for its own internal colonisation. Renton's mapping of the skag rhizome reveals a Scottish history of internal colonisation by not only the English, but of a perfected system of global capitalism that was originally created as a liberal and humanist moral project by the Scots at home in Glasgow and Edinburgh in the seventeenth century. Renton's notorious rant in *Trainspotting* about being 'colonised by wankers' are not the English, but the Humes and the Smiths, as the next section reveals about the pseudo-Scots like Donald Trump and Ronald Checker in *A Decent Ride*. Del Valle also articulates that Welsh's most profoundly clear political arguments throughout *Trainspotting* and *Skagboys* highlight the evils of neoliberalism as a form of existential colonisation:

Irvine Welsh's fictional exercise in *Skagboys* and *Trainspotting* presents us with the challenge of imagining, against the social debris field left behind by neoliberalism,

²³⁹ S, pp. 533-4.

the possibility of a life without identity, of a life without transcendence, or simply – as Deleuze puts it – of ‘a life’. What is at stake in Welsh’s presentation of intoxication, of the drug addict, as the possible paradigm of the proletarian exodus is thus the search for a singularity that may not be reappropriated by the universal machine of reappropriation that is postmodern capitalism; the search for a mode of individuation that may not fall prey to the instrumental/productivist rationalities of subsumed life or to any of its constituent categories. In other words, the junkie confronts us with the possibility of undoing the contrived discourse of free choices and decisions, the ideological texture of subjective interpellation on which capitalism rests.²⁴⁰

Renton’s journey through the minor Marxist avenues of contemporary rhizomatic capitalism is the greatest terror of all: while I am aware that I am using Deleuzian theory to express the radical and accessible nature of Welsh as minor literature, I also must note that Welsh, like Deleuze and Guattari, does not identify pure liberation and freedom with these becomings or ruptures. He instead explains how quickly post-industrial capitalism has become rhizomatic as well, and that the only way to fight Deleuzian or neoliberal capitalism is to learn its moves and deny its most seductive illusion: the production of a cohesive sense of individuation (of living intensely) through the consumption of not only products, but through affective experiences.

Hard-On or *Braveheart*?: The Failure of Phallic Freedom in *A Decent Ride*

A Decent Ride is Welsh’s tenth novel which follows the return of Terry (Juice) Lawson back in Welsh’s universe who made his first appearance in *Glue* (2001), in the *Trainspotting* sequel *Porno*, and most recently in the short story ‘I am Miami’ in the collection *Reheated Cabbage* (2009). The novel goes back to an Edinburgh set in 2012-2013 and the reader can reconstitute a timeline as the hurricane baptised ‘Bawbag’, which is about to hit Scotland in the novel, can be easily recognised as the cyclone from December 2012. The novel therefore brings its reader back to 2012, a year in which Alex Salmond, then Prime Minister of Scotland, announced that a referendum for Scottish independence was going to be held in September 2014. The novel becomes an aftermath of the 2014 referendum as it takes the reader back to its premises, where the possibility of an independent Scotland was still to be imagined, as the first part of the novel suggests: ‘Pre-

²⁴⁰ Del Valle Alcalá, p. 126.

Bawbag Innocence’. Welsh was supportive of the Yes campaign, quoted in SNP’s leaflets, on TV and newspapers, and was considered as a key Scottish personality at home and abroad (*TIME* quoted Welsh among most known British figures).²⁴¹ Welsh was equally critical of the campaigns (Yes and No Thanks), commenting on the referendum and its results from an external eye as he was not able to vote since he was living in Chicago at the time.

A Decent Ride is also a novel about the emasculation and impotence as political metaphors for the Scottish State during the referendum. The second half of the book is the satirical journey of Terry as he reconstructs his identity after his doctor warns him about a serious heart condition that could be fatal if he continues having sex. In an attempt to save his life from his favourite act, Terry goes cold turkey, and swears off sex. Welsh’s raucous comedy is aware of the competing tropes and caricatures of Terry’s emasculation and his attempt at paternal redemption, in which he must return to his family during his hiatus as a prolific shagger, as Welsh describes him. Unlike most of his distraught characters, Terry is a flat character, one-dimensional in most respects: a pale copy of his former partner Nikki in *Porno* (to be discussed in Chapter Four). While even his most problematic characters like Roy, Bruce, or Begbie are unrelenting in their violence, there are brief moments of change, flux, and becoming; Terry, however, never changes at all, nor does he have any existential crises. Rather, Terry’s penis becomes a character throughout a few chapters, motivating Terry to release him, to fight for him and his God-given gift. Welsh personifies Auld Faithful in such a way that it mimics the most famous scenes from the American film *Braveheart* (1995), where William Wallace, played by Mel Gibson, gives a speech about life and liberty before his final battle, and most importantly, dies screaming the word ‘freedom’ after his capture by the English, which is curiously shot and framed as if he is ejaculating the spirit of Scottish independence itself.



Figure 3



Figure 4

²⁴¹ Catherine Mayer, ‘Leap of Faith’, *TIME*, September 8-15, (2014), pp. 18-21.

Just as Terry braves his heart condition and the possibility of death like Gibson's *Braveheart*, he is forced to reflect on his life and the nature of liberty, only until his penis – which has a mind of its own – demands for freedom: 'Death has scared him. But cheating it has frustrated and tormented him'.²⁴² This scene resembles Mel Gibson's popularised phrase for Scottish independence that is less Highlander and more Hollywood, less medieval Caledonian and more American Revolutionary, less William Wallace and more Patrick Henry: 'They may take our lives, but they will never take our freedom!'²⁴³

While this novel appears on the surface to be a male-centric version of *Porno*, which grapples with sexual liberation from repression, as well as with the possibilities and limitations of becoming-woman, I argue that the sexual narrative is a carnivalesque metaphor for the political campaign for independence.²⁴⁴ Terry, like Mel Gibson's William Wallace or an Alex Salmond-led SNP, showcases the phallogocentric urges for establishing the molar composition of the benevolent, progressive, and seemingly inclusive Scottish State as a populist revolution against the British Empire like their American cousins. As if reconstructing the Scottish body-politic, Welsh does not address the head of state, the appendages like the military or economy; rather, he defines the rise and fall of the Scottish State with the rise and fall of the phallus, the centralised heart of the State. Hélène Cixous writes similarly that the centralised State is always determined by its intense expressions and eruptions of masculinity, which stands in contrast to feminine sexual politics, which I will explain in more detail in Chapter Four is decentralised, nation-less:

Let masculine sexuality gravitate around the penis, engendering this centralized body (political anatomy) under the party dictatorship. Woman does not perform on

²⁴² Irvine Welsh, *A Decent Ride* (London: Vintage, 2015), p. 473. Hereafter *ADR*.

²⁴³ *Braveheart*, dir. by and starring Mel Gibson, written by Randall Wallace (MGM, 1995). For more on the 'Braveheart effect' throughout Scotland, see Willy Maley's seminal article 'Braveheart: Raising the Stakes of History', in *The Irish Review* 22 (Summer, 1988), pp. 67-80. It is important to remind the reader that the Brechin-born artist Tom Church designed and constructed the William Wallace statue in front of Stirling Castle (called 'Freedom') from the likeness of Mel Gibson's portrayal of William Wallace in *Braveheart*. It stood in Stirling between 1996 and 2008, and as *The Scotsman* put it in 2004, it was been described as 'among the most loathed pieces of public art in Scotland', having been stolen and vandalised numerous times: <<https://www.scotsman.com/news/they-may-take-our-lives-but-they-won-t-take-freedom-1-1397766>> [accessed 15/01/2019]. Most intriguingly, Tom Church offered the statue to no other than Scotland's most reviled wayward son, Donald J. Trump, to commemorate his new golf course constructed near Aberdeen in 2008: <<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/donald-trump-to-be-given-controversial-william-975199#HEsljLcqvdHRULO.99>> [accessed 15/01/2019].

²⁴⁴ Sam Parker, 'Irvine Welsh: "It's Time to Let Women Run the Show"', *Esquire*, (24 Avril 2015), <<https://www.esquire.com/uk/culture/news/a8221/irvine-welsh-interview-a-decent-ride/>> [accessed 13/05/15].

herself this regionalization that profits the couple head-sex, that only inscribes itself within frontiers. Her libido is cosmic, just as her unconscious is worldwide.²⁴⁵

As we can see then, gender expectations are often reversed in Welsh's novels. Berthold Schoene-Harwood in *Writing Men* begins his chapter by saying: 'In *Marabou Stork Nightmares* Irvine Welsh graphically portrays the impact patriarchal imperatives, norms and ideals exert on the psychological disposition of the underprivileged working-class youth'.²⁴⁶ As the emasculated anti-heroes, Roy in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* and Terry in *A Decent Ride*, attempt to assert themselves as sovereign masculine subjects by overcompensating with physical violence or, in Terry's case, an addiction to sex, as suggested by Schoene-Harwood: 'Within patriarchy, social deprivation connotes much more than the general stigmata of poverty, inferiority and failure. To men specifically, it signifies a state of emasculation, of violation and shameful impotence'.²⁴⁷ If the pathology of poverty may be more complex than this suggests, emasculation in Welsh's novels, and generally speaking in Scottish literature, is a strong symbol of the political emasculation associated with Margaret Thatcher at the centre as a female castrating figure, as described by Duncan Petrie:

The dominant image of Thatcher is as a castrating virago, ruthlessly lording it over her cabinet of sycophantic public schoolboys and systematically trampling underfoot all who dared to oppose her. In the Scottish context, the figure of the right-wing, patrician "Iron Lady" is doubly threatening precisely because she was both female and tough – the contempt which oozes from William McIlvanney's description of 'the woman in Downing street' as a 'cultural vandal' threatening the very essence of Scottish cultural identity in her wilful destruction of 'hard-earned tradition' speaks volumes.²⁴⁸

The imperial-maternal image of Britain has had a long tradition in its colonial history in the Celtic-speaking regions of Wales, Ireland, and Scotland. In the decolonial imagination of the British Celts, the enemy that they faced was always framed by the masculine identity of

²⁴⁵ Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. by Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. 87-8.

²⁴⁶ Berthold Schoene-Harwood, 'The Dark Continent of Masculinity: Irvine Welsh's *Marabou Stork Nightmares*' in *Writing Men: Literary Masculinities from Frankenstein to the New Man* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 145.

²⁴⁷ Schoene-Harwood, p. 146.

²⁴⁸ Petrie, *Contemporary Scottish Fiction*, p. 19.

foreign kings, from the Romans (Julius Caesar) to the Vikings (Harald Fairhair) to the Normans (William the Conqueror and Richard the Lionheart). Even after their victory of Bannockburn in 1314, the Scots faced repeated historical experiences of emasculation by the likes of maternal colonisers and rivals later in their fight for national independence, ranging from the virgin-goddess (Elizabeth I), the empress of Hanover (Victoria), and the Iron Lady (Margaret Thatcher).²⁴⁹ While this gendered discourse of colonisation can be problematic to Welsh's readers, he continually emphasises a gender-political mythos in his reservations with Scottish independence by showing how Roy or Terry, for example, are characters ripped straight out of the history books, martyrs of a persecuted and repressed Scotland who function as a symbol for the sexually frustrated man, as Welsh describes Terry's new life 'ay impotence, resentment, anger, and frustration' after his diagnosis.²⁵⁰

However, Welsh plays with these gendered and political expectations by making Terry a much more palatable and relatable character than Roy or Begbie. Terry is not the relentless hardman with unresolved issues of power and identity, but rather, an anxious yet carefree soft man, a modern everyman. Terry is a populist icon for the new way forward in Scotland, which embraces the neoliberal winds of change throughout Scotland, signalled by the coming Hurricane Bawbag and the arrival of the Trumpian American entrepreneur Ronnie Checker. For example, Terry's sexuality and gender politics is described as feminist and libertine, his politics are liberal, and he moves away from his role as a brutal patriarch like his father, and instead is a casual friend to his boys, Guillaume and the Ginger Bastard. As a 'modern tour guide, the taxi driver-slash-drug-dealer-slash hustler', Terry is described by Welsh in an interview as a gig-guy, a member of the precariat, a nomad, a Scot after industry, a character that Welsh explains is in between the old and new worlds, always attempting to 'interphase all these kitschy worlds with the kinda reality of an urban centre in a country that is in a kinda stasis – a stagnation, where we've not worked out how we get past this crippling neo-liberalism that's got a grip on us all'.²⁵¹ Terry is additionally described as the post-industrial man who adapted to the harsh changes in a post-Thatcher Scotland as a kitschy, self-proclaimed amateur artist and muse: he appears in Sick Boy's pornography films as an accomplished 'actor' in *Porno*, and he is

²⁴⁹ See Jackie Hogan's *Gender, Race and National Identity: Nations of Flesh and Blood* (New York: Routledge, 2009) and Sian Reynolds' essay 'Scottishness and Gender History in a Cross-border/International Context: Reinventing the Border?' in *Gendering Border Studies*, ed. by Jane Aaron, Henrice Altink and Chris Weedon (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010): 192-208.

²⁵⁰ *ADR*, p. 383.

²⁵¹ Irvine Welsh in David Whitehouse, 'Irvine Welsh: "Alex Salmond Asked me to Join the SNP"', *Shortlist Magazine*, (10 April 2014), <<https://www.shortlist.com/entertainment/books/irvine-welsh-alex-salmond-asked-me-to-join-the-snp/97159>> [accessed 27/07/14].

the main character in a play written by his lover, Sara-Ann, who debuts a play called ‘A Decent Ride’ at the Edinburgh Festival later in the novel. Like Nikki in *Porno*, who is Terry’s partner in Sick Boy’s films, Terry is commodified constantly as his body is consumed not only in his freelancing labour as a taxi driver or as Ronnie Checker’s personal assistant, but specifically, by what can be referred to as the Welshian *wanker economy* of writers and artists who attempt to transcend capitalism, as he explains in the chapter ‘Wankers at an Exhibition’ in *Dead Men’s Trousers*.

If Terry functions as a sign of a changing Scotland, Hurricane Bawbag is a metaphor for the Scottish referendum, as Welsh concedes in an interview: ‘I had the idea for *A Decent Ride* about two years ago. Hurricane Bawbag is a metaphor for the referendum—this big national event which was supposed to shake everything up forever’.²⁵² Bawbag divides the book in five parts ‘Pre-Bawbag Innocence’, ‘Hurricane Bawbag’, ‘Post-Bawbag Panic’, ‘Post-Bawbag Reconstruction’ and ‘Post-Bawbag Society’ making it clear that Welsh’s novel is centred around the referendum. And with the coming of the hurricane, so too does Welsh include another political allegory: the arrival of the American capitalist, Donald Trump. Trump makes his appearance through one of Welsh’s characters, Ronald Checker, in order to remind Scotland of its links and even origins with global capitalism. While *Marabou Stork Nightmares* marked the beginning of Welsh’s interest in Scotland’s relationship with the world, Welsh returns to one of his most important themes in *A Decent Ride*: Scotland’s role in the historic complicity in capitalism’s origins and its transformation into its current state as both a doppelganger of Britain and its new ally, the United States.

In short, Welsh opens the novel with a scene in which the lumpen-proletariat character Jonty is reading the front page of *The Scotsman*, describing what the literal and metaphorical storm taught Scotland:

The lessons of Bawbag were that Scots, once again, realised they were back at the centre of the world, which would look to us to provide appropriate behavioural response to this sort of natural calamity, though within the context of a strong, free Britain, and with a powerful military presence to assist our American allies in their selfless quest in maintaining peace throughout the globe.²⁵³

²⁵² Irvine Welsh in Serena Kutchinsky, *Prospect Magazine*, (24 April 2015).

²⁵³ *ADR*, p. 131.

Furthermore, as if the political satire is not clear enough, Welsh further highlights the absurdity of Ronnie Checker, and as a Trumpian analogue, how much worse Scotland is for not accepting that Ronnie is no outsider, but a product of an evangelical, Calvinist theorisation of capitalism, as Renton explains at the end of *Skagboys*. In the first scene of Ronnie's entrance, Terry picks up Ronnie to drive him to the Balmoral Hotel on Princes Street. The hustle of Terry's cab and the driver's unfamiliar speech leaves Ronnie bewildered; the cultural shock is too violent to process. It is quite clear Welsh's Ronald Checker is Donald Trump in the novel:

Ronald Checker is not used to being unrecognised. An influential property developer, he is also a reality-TV star, known widely for his successful show *The Prodigal*. The scion of a wealthy Atlanta family, the Harvard graduate had followed his father's footsteps into real estate. Ron Checker and his father had never been close, this fact making him utterly mercenary at utilising the old man's extensive contacts. Thus son became more successful than father, breaking out of America's sunbelt states to go global. Ron decided that he would pitch a TV show to the networks, posing himself as a Southern, youthful, punkish version of Donald Trump, who had enjoyed success with *The Apprentice*.²⁵⁴

Ronald Checker, not only a Welshian version of Trump, also reflects the dark embodiment of the Scot abroad: the American businessman who has distant familial links to Scotland returning home to play a golf tournament in order to win rare bottles of whisky and ultimately, to make profit out of Scotland's export.²⁵⁵ With Ronnie, Welsh exploits the links between Scotland and America as well as the clichés that serve as a shorthand for both nations. These (mis)representations of Scotland and the selling of its idealised national history prevents Scotland from taking control of its own cultural image, as well as its own political agency and destiny. The arrival of Ronnie coincides with the surge of the hurricane Bawbag which signals a change in the nature of Bawbag, revealing the appeal for the shifts of political populism, which rises from the continual hiccups of global disasters indicative of capitalism run-amok. In chapters entitled 'In God We Trust' Welsh shows how Ronnie's use of religion (reminiscent of Robert Burns' Holy Willie's Prayer) is a

²⁵⁴ *ADR*, pp. 5-6.

²⁵⁵ For more on the relationship between Donald J. Trump and his claim to Scottishness, see: 'Donald Trump's mother: From a Scottish island to New York's elite', *BBC*, (12 January 2017), <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-38648877>> [accessed 30/01/19].

disguise for a justification of capitalism and the State's neglect of population, blaming the sinners of New Orleans for Hurricane Katrina. During the storm, Ronnie is found in panic locked in his hotel room, praying God to spare him, seeing the hurricane as a divine punishment, until Terry saves him from the hotel. During this scene, Welsh highlights how the religion of the capitalist is not only profit, but attention, news coverage, and the spectacle of power.

Beyond the cliché of Donald Trump's crass arrival, Welsh is interested in highlighting the aftermath of an unimaginable crisis, primarily targeting the failure of the State to protect its most vulnerable during the literal hurricane and its political analogy, noting that the consequences of Thatcher's government are still felt today — and most likely for generations to come after each political cyclone hits. However, just like most of Welsh's novels, there is no sense that the storm will get better before it gets worse, tracking how the political dimensions of its devastation are inherently 'generational and geographical'.²⁵⁶ From *Trainspotting* to *A Decent Ride*, the theme of a sacrificed generation and minoritarian populace features in his novels as a reminder of the failure of the present and their consequences on future generations. The inability of the Scots to confront their history and ties with global capitalism and make the most of their opportunities to ensure a better future for themselves condemn Welsh's characters into stagnation and complicity, as we will see in more detail in Chapter Five.

Note that no attempt at change or unbecoming takes place in the novel, especially marked by Terry's inability to address his sex addiction not as a form of liberation, but a compulsive loop of self-destruction. While Terry had disregarded his children, he did try to reconnect with his sons, daughters and grandchildren during his sexual hiatus: 'Ah realise that ah've goat three great sons n a barry daughter, n that's only the yins the CSA would ever be able tae pin oan ays, so ah've plenty tae live fir. Ye kin live without a ride'.²⁵⁷ However, Terry does not learn from his impotence. As soon as Terry is 'free' to resume his sex-life and release Auld Faithful, Terry remains reduced to his genitals:

As his keks drop and Auld Faithful springs from his pants like the one o'clock gun, he's happy to endorse the playwright's plea: – Give it to me...

²⁵⁶ Morace, *Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting*, p. 23.

²⁵⁷ *ADR*, p. 311.

– For sure, Terry says, easing home. He’s thinking it’s not about Henry Lawson or Post Alec, reflecting that this is the only identity he ever really needed, as Juice Terry.²⁵⁸

Welsh points at the inability of the Scots to make the most of their opportunities to ensure a better future for themselves, but also at the inability of politicians to make Scottish voices heard, which condemns Welsh’s characters. Here, it is quite clear that Terry embodies Scotland in this novel as life before and post-Bawbag stays the same: ‘Terry Lawson drives through an Edinburgh that seems to him tawdry and second-rate. A city crushed by its own lack of ambition, grumblingly miserable about its status as a provincial north British town, yet unwilling to seize its larger destiny as a European capital’.²⁵⁹

Welsh shows how the media and the government appealed to populism, manipulating people either through fear or ultranationalism. The fear described by Welsh in his novel is the one of Scotland’s collapse as Welsh explains ‘everything in Scotland – whether you’re Yes or No – it’s all defined in these cataclysmic terms. [...] Either way, life would have gone on much the same’.²⁶⁰ As Welsh articulates in his novel, the referendum was still governed by a fear of democratic changes and media’s manipulation: ‘This was bad. You didn’t get hurricanes in Scotland. Maybe they would help us down in England, he fretfully considered. Surely the English wouldn’t let anything bad happen to us’.²⁶¹ This echoes the position of news broadcast such as the British Broadcast Corporation which was criticised at the times of the referendum for taking the side of the No Thanks Campaign led by former Chancellor of the Exchequer Alistair Darling. Fears of economic collapse, pensions and EU Membership were daily concerns which became tragically ironic with the result of the Brexit referendum in June 2016, also dealt with by Welsh in *Dead Men’s Trousers*. However, Welsh shows that this kind of populism prevents these referenda from being democratic, especially when the people it excludes from its discourse are always the poor and disenfranchised that populists like Salmond or Trump speak to.

Indeed, for Welsh, the referendum-as-Bawbag leaves people outside in the rain. Welsh uses the image of the storm to illustrate how ‘Scotland’s smokers are again being discriminated against by this patently bad steer from the government’.²⁶² The smokers in Edinburgh represent the more precarious: ‘Scotland’s smokers urnae extended the same

²⁵⁸ *ADR*, p. 482.

²⁵⁹ *ADR*, p. 462.

²⁶⁰ Irvine Welsh in David Whitehouse, *Shortlist Magazine*, (10 April 2014).

²⁶¹ *ADR*, p. 54.

²⁶² *ADR*, p. 54.

rights! Naw, we huv tae go outside in the rain, while drug addicts, jealous drug addicts, are free tae brek the law any time they like in the toilets!’²⁶³ Out of context, Welsh’s victimising of smokers is bizarre and even juvenile; in this case, however, it should be read as an ironic understatement about those who are forced to be outside amidst the chaos. This is Welsh’s list of the minoritarian, those who feel the most emboldened by populism and yet are the first forgotten by it, especially immigrants, the homeless, the unemployed, sex workers, junkies and those who rely on the State for support. While Terry and Ronnie espouse populist discourses for liberation and freedom, neither of them actually witnesses the damage of a free-flowing storm like Bawbag that entirely upends the poor, marked symbolically and in gratuitous detail by Welsh in the rape, death, defilement, and burial of Jinty Magdalen, a sex worker who is described as the girlfriend to Jonty. For Terry, the foundations of a new Scotland are in Auld Faithful, a revived masculinity in the wake of historical emasculation. For Ronnie, the foundations of a profitable Scotland are in golf and whisky, in leisure and consumption for the superrich. And yet for Jonty, the foundations of a new Scotland can only be built by the bodies of those it neglects, consumes, or destroys, as indicated by his burial of Jinty’s body in the empty pillars of a tramway bridge, as Jonty regrets: ‘*Oh my God, thuv buried ma wee Jinty intae the huge pillar. It’s no fair*’.²⁶⁴ Like the imperial symbol of the Great Wall of China that built on the labour and dead bodies of its peasant class, the new tramway that Jonty dumps Jinty’s body in is just another imperial site that functions as an unmarked grave for the poor.

I want to conclude by admitting that like the eponymous play in the novel, *A Decent Ride* is not good. Its political allegories are just as chaotic as the hurricane that Welsh argues is a symbol for the 2014 referendum. The novel, like Terry, is undefined, flat, and at times excessively cruel and crass in its description of the poor and of minoritarian voices that Welsh attempts to humanise throughout his other novels. Moreover, as a reader, I am often disturbed by the way he combines clichéd metaphors with the real suffering of those he claims he writes for, leaving them undeveloped and caricatured. This, however, is the reason it is an important novel in his oeuvre: it is as conflicted, angry, disinterested and immature as Welsh describes Scotland after the failed referendum, as mentioned earlier. Steeped in its own seething political disappointment and a consumer’s nihilistic dream, *A Decent Ride* is not so decent to its readers or its subjects. It is, however, oracular and politically prescient in the way it anticipates the growing storm of populist politics across the world, starting and ending with Terry’s empty phallus and

²⁶³ *ADR*, p. 133.

²⁶⁴ *ADR*, p. 285.

Donald Trump himself as Ronnie Checker. At least Welsh's other novels like *Trainspotting*, *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, *Skagboys*, and *Dead Men's Trousers* say something direct about the politics of the poor, enunciated by a human cry for some type of communal model of living beyond capital. *A Decent Ride* is not that type of a novel. Unfortunately, it is that which Welsh mocks entirely in his allegories of an impotent independence: a popular American playing a legendary Scot, simply ejaculating the words 'freedom' all over the page.²⁶⁵

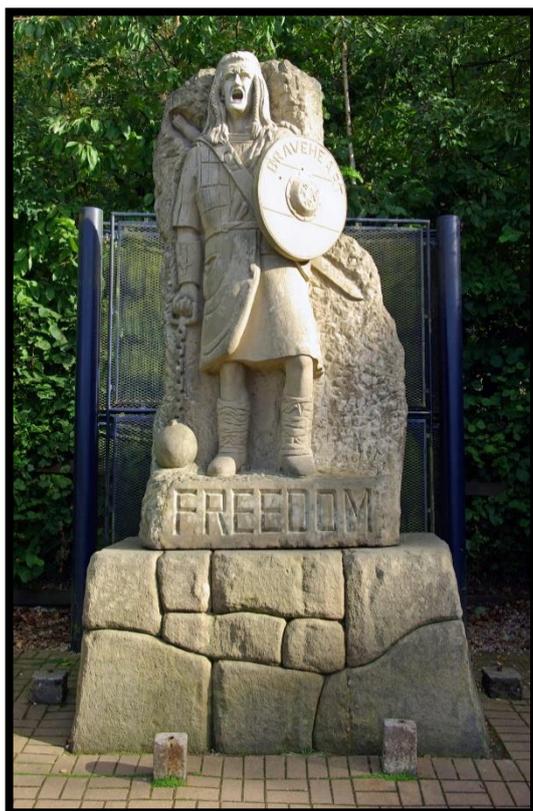


Figure 5

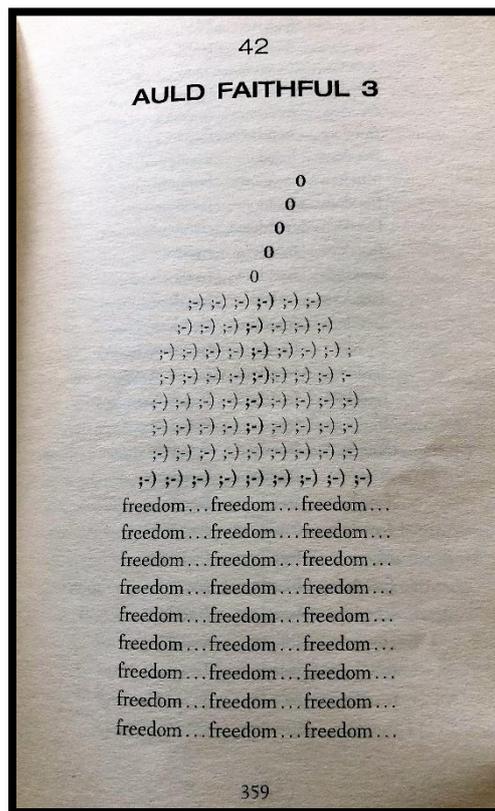


Figure 6

A Dead Politics: The End of Spud as Welsh's Marxist Lament

This chapter has extensively examined the radical and contradictory elements of Welsh's political ideologies throughout his minor literature. Drawing from some sort of Generation-X minor Marxism, this chapter began by exposing Welsh's distrust of State institutions, and his desire for finding the possibilities of revolutionary outcomes for his Leith Heads. Through *Trainspotting* and *Skagboys*, Welsh indicates how the poor of the post-industrial

²⁶⁵ I am aware that my analysis of Welsh's *A Decent Ride* is psychoanalytic and that it contradicts my Deleuzian method. However, my purpose here is to illustrate the limitations of Welsh's gendered discourse and imagery which Deleuze would call 'plastic representations' or in other words cliché representations such as Welsh's phallic imagery. See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), p. 183.

world are simply bargaining chips in a global game for domination. Welsh confirms that the concept of Scottishness as a *political* entity is not only an illusion, but the identitarian attempts of describing a cohesive Scottish politics provides a very conflicted and paradoxical historical record for the opportunities of revolution, reform, or independence. Even so, it would appear that while Welsh fears the rise of the new societies of control, the post-industrial gig-economies, and the death of the industrial working-class, he too mourns the foreclosure of revolution in a region of Britain that has spent far too long cultivating some sense of self-othering in its cultural production, rather than binding together its broken communities to have an actual workers' coalition, as mentioned at the beginning of *Skagboys*.

While *A Decent Ride* is a difficult novel to politically analyse, it blatantly shows that Welsh has seen the writing on the walls: rhizomatic or global capitalism is mutable, omnipresent, and incredibly divisive. If Welsh's work on the 2014 referendum only uttered a sigh of disgust and disappointment, his political reading of Brexit enunciated a bellowing wail of pessimism. In *Dead Men's Trousers*, Welsh titles a chapter 'Brexit', which describes themes of revenge and reconciliation, of family reunion and murder as Begbie comes back to Leith to kill Spud's 'murderer'. In the novel, Spud is the victim of the black market of organ-harvesting, targeted by Mikey Forrester, Renton's rival. Earlier in the novel, Spud is coerced by Mikey to transport a kidney to Istanbul, and on the way, Spud's dog eats the kidney. Mikey's boss, a pimp named Victor Syme, orchestrates a brutal hit on Spud, almost killing him in the process. Sick Boy negotiates with Victor to let Spud live after a horrific beating only if Spud gives his kidney up as a replacement for the one his dog ate. Spud dies shortly after due to an infection after the speedy and vicious surgery. During Spud's funeral, Begbie hunts down Victor, and kills him with the same blades he uses in his new sculptures, mentioned in the chapter 'Wankers at an Exhibition'. As Begbie leaves Victor's murder, he thanks a Romanian sex worker who worked for Syme for helping him find and trap the pimp. As Begbie pays her, he finds out she is going back to Bucharest. The next morning, as he hears about the result of Brexit, he reflects: 'One thing ye can guarantee is, whatever happens, things'll be shite for maist cunts. The wey ah look at it is that it's a short life, look at poor Spud, so ye might as well just dae what makes ye happy!'²⁶⁶ Begbie's ruthless retaliation is symbolic of the world of violence that the poor and the most precarious are always facing, a cyclical type of violence that grinds down communities and obliterates populations. Most importantly, however, the death of Spud is the death of the Scottish working-class generation that Welsh witnessed throughout his life.

²⁶⁶ *DMT*, p. 363.

While Begbie's cathartic act of vengeance feels intimate and personal for Welsh and the reader, it is also highly anticlimactic. After the chapter, Begbie, Renton, and Sick Boy return to their separate lives reminiscing on not only Spud, but the early days of the end of the proletariat, and the rise of the precariat. In the terrified face of the Romanian sex worker, however, Begbie sees a more disturbing image: the image of the displaced, the precarious, the vulnerable, and the minor voices most susceptible to violence beyond the confines of Leith and Scotland, beyond the winds of Hurricane Bawbag: 'The punishment, however, as it always is for those who suffer from the disease of poverty, is very excessive'.²⁶⁷ Welsh's chapter on Brexit is not a tirade against those Remain or Leave voters; it is not a policy-ridden opinion piece that explains why Britain should or should not remain economically and politically independent of the European Union. Unlike his snide reading of *Scottish Independence*, Welsh's reading of Brexit is entirely melancholic and ridden with anxiety. Brexit is also, sadly, just another political experience of global capitalism that is reduced to a sign, a cipher, an utterance, a buzzword, and mere narrative information in the novel. In this way, Brexit, like any political experience in this era might be more akin to what Deleuze would redefine as a collection of 'order-words', and, therefore, the political charge is a process of facing the all-consuming capitalist machine, not the secondary effects like Trump in the U.S. or Brexit in Britain.

²⁶⁷ *DMT*, p. 221.

Chapter Three

Becoming-Skag and the Collective Value of Irvine Welsh's Fiction

As Chapter Two has distinctly outlined, Welsh's fiction has had a concrete impact on local communities, describing the lives of the victims of late capitalism. As Angus Calder observed:

there will be political, social and ethical consequences to an unimaginable future Scotland where Scottish identities, surviving, as I am sure they will, are constructed in ways which I cannot foresee, through language in its habitual state of flux and new songs transforming old ones.²⁶⁸

The need to break with the past, to become free from national categorisation, or the refusal to conform to an identity, is vital in Welsh's fiction, whether political or social. Welsh's oeuvre is 'rhizomatic', and in this nature, it redefines Scottishness through a refusal to identify characters with fixed identities, which allows them to move towards creating new possibilities and communities outside of family, work, and religion. According to Jeffrey Karnicky, 'Welsh's fiction is oriented toward the future, toward the creation of these new forms of identity'.²⁶⁹ Welsh does not write against *an* identity, but against identity itself; Welsh writes against being Scottish or defining Scottishness because Scottishness is problematic and calls for either assimilation or rejection. Welsh's rhizomatic writing distances itself from any form of moralising by departing from the recurrent scope of analysis that separates 'what is Scottish from what is un-Scottish'.²⁷⁰ Instead, his tangled and mangled storytelling and minor use of language stitches together a post-Scottish picture of his characters from Leith, the eponymous Leith Heads, who expose the failures of traditional forms of reifying Scottish national identity and working-class subjectivity.

Returning to language, as Chapter One first introduced, Jennifer Jeffers suggests that Welsh's minor literature

has not rejected the English because their schooling, television, music, and other forms in the symbolic are in English; what Welsh forces upon the reader in terms of

²⁶⁸ Angus Calder, *Scotlands of the Mind* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2002), p. 40.

²⁶⁹ Karnicky, p. 137.

²⁷⁰ Berthold Schoene-Harwood, "'Emerging as the Others of Our Selves" – Scottish Multiculturalism and the Challenge of the Body in Postcolonial Representation', *Scottish Literary Journal*, 25:1 (1998), p. 55.

language is ‘understanding’ a Leith-speak vernacular which is phonetically accurate and consistent.²⁷¹

Hence, Welsh’s language is both visual (*affect*) and musical (*percept*), new and foreign and yet incredibly local, part of a specific community in constant flux and transformation. The language of *minor literature*, according to Deleuze and Guattari, ‘vibrate[s] with a new intensity’.²⁷² Thus, the purpose of a minor literature is to stay minor, as Emily Apter explained in the ‘Introduction’. Minor literatures are revolutionary, anti-institutional, loud, intense, and rhizomatic: ‘That is the glory of this sort of minor literature – to be the revolutionary force for all literature’.²⁷³

Deleuze and Guattari’s last category for identifying *minor literature* is that after the language is identified as both minor and politically charged, it must explore ‘the collective assemblage of enunciation’, to establish a collective value for a new peopling.²⁷⁴ While Welsh’s fiction engages with political history and political discourse, which I established throughout Chapter Two, Welsh’s fiction is also deemed *political* in that its free-indirect style of writing deterritorialising language, bringing forth a multitude of voices, intensities that force the speaker into witnessing themselves as part of a larger, nomadic band, as an integral part of a collective, transcultural assemblage: the Leith Heads.²⁷⁵ Therefore, the literature becomes collective in the Marxist mode, revolutionary in that it universalises the nomadic travails of the minor voices left out of the majoritarian experience of History, nation-building, or representative democracies.

Deleuze and Guattari reminds us that minor literature focuses its political energies not only on critique, but on imagining communities yet imagined by the State or by capitalism’s reach:

It is literature that produces an active solidarity in spite of scepticism; and if the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible

²⁷¹ Jennifer M. Jeffers, ‘Rhizome National Identity: “Scatlin’s Psychic Defense” in *Trainspotting*’, *Journal of Narrative Theory* 35: 1, (2005), p. 95.

²⁷² *Kafka*, p. 19.

²⁷³ *Kafka*, p. 19.

²⁷⁴ *Kafka*, p. 18.

²⁷⁵ These Leith Heads, from Jim Francis aka Francis Begbie’s *Leith Heads* which is a set of head sculptures of his (former) friends, Spud, Sick Boy, Renton, including himself, describe the journey they have shared together, see *DMT*, p.135.

community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility.²⁷⁶

Thus, Welsh writes his minor literature, first with *Trainspotting*, primarily to describe what communities look like in post-industrial Scotland: divided, wayward, transient, and in another way, *becoming-nomad*. This decentred, networked, and rhizomatic way of living is *minor* and calls for a revolution, a *smoothing* of space, a webbing of experience between coalitions of the minor. This chapter seeks to illustrate how Welsh's rhizomatic writing style establishes a framework for understanding new ways of conceiving post-Scottish communities.

Enter the Welshverse: A Rhizomatic Reading

Alongside the use of the vernacular Scots, Welsh also experiments with narrative structure in *Trainspotting*. At first, the novel does not appear to have a main character and for the first half of the novel it is sometimes hard to identify which character is the narrator. The book reads at first as a collection of short stories, but as it progresses, the narration connects and disconnects the characters, the places and the situations and an overall structure emerges told by a variety of voices and subjectivities.²⁷⁷ Jeffers reflects on the rhizomatic narrative forms of *Trainspotting* in her article, 'Rhizome National Identity: "Scatlin's Psychic Defense" in *Trainspotting*', writing:

Welsh's interaction with the *lack* of an indigenous literary tradition is to further its lack of coherence and presence. The novel accomplishes this through its rhizome non-hierarchical, narrative structure: narratives begin, splinter, connect to a new narrative, the first narrative re-attaching perhaps later in the narrative, perhaps not, all seemingly random and non-hierarchical.²⁷⁸

The rhizome is a concept developed by Deleuze and Guattari in the Introduction of *A Thousand Plateaus*, which describes a webbing of connections and relations that offer non-linear expressions of existence and thought. Moreover, the rhizome consists of six parts: the first two characteristics include connections and heterogeneity. As Deleuze and

²⁷⁶ *Kafka*, p. 17.

²⁷⁷ Robert Morace in *Irvine Welsh* also identifies *Trainspotting* 'as part of a "broader network" of narrative and of material culture' functioning as 'a carnivalesque ensemble novel', p. 56.

²⁷⁸ Jeffers, p. 95.

Guattari insist, ‘any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order’.²⁷⁹ The rhizome is antagonist to structure, linearity and hierarchy. The third principle is multiplicity: ‘Multiplicities are rhizomatic, and expose arborescent pseudo-multiplicities for what they are. There is no unity to serve a pivot in the object, or to divide in the subject. There is not even the unity to abort in the object or “return” in the subject’.²⁸⁰ There is never an attempt in the novel to unify itself around a certain character, plot or discourse.

The multiplicity of voices of the novel never ends, which brings us to the fourth characteristic: the rhizome is an asignifying rupture, it keeps connecting and disconnecting relentlessly: ‘against the oversignifying breaks separating structures or cutting across a single structure. A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines’.²⁸¹ Indeed, Jeffers points out that the novel never ends. It appears to do so, as it centres on Renton and his departures for Amsterdam, but it is an illusion. As Renton departs for Amsterdam, there is no real sense of closure but rather a new connection. The narrative continues indefinitely with or without Renton as the main character or whether he even appears on the page. If *Trainspotting* is its own rhizome, the novel is part of a bigger rhizomatic narrative, more akin to the *Marvel* or *Star Wars* extended universes, rather than a mere literary deluge of sequels, prequels, and spin-offs, producing what I call, the rhizomatic ‘Welshverse’. As the novel does not end, we see many narrative connections between it and other novels. *Trainspotting* is followed by *Glue*, which tells the story of four friends growing up in Leith. Divided into four temporal ‘windows’ designating the years and decades between 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000, the novel sets up a generational story characterised by an intensely Marxist social realism that grounds each narrative in the vivid histories of Leith and the surrounding districts of an impoverished Edinburgh. Among these characters, Terry ‘Juice’ Lawson will reappear in the *Trainspotting* sequel *Porno* as the main actor in Sick Boy’s amateur pornographic film. Terry comes back in one of the short stories in the collection entitled *Reheated Cabbage*, ‘I am Miami’, and as a main character in *A Decent Ride*. Finally, *The Blade Artist*, published in 2016, is focused on Francis ‘Franco’ Begbie who, after serving his prison sentence, has emigrated to California and built a new life as a sculptor and father of two young girls. We are presented with a ‘single-character’ novel as opposed to the group portraits of *Trainspotting* or *Glue*.

²⁷⁹ ATP, pp. 5-6.

²⁸⁰ ATP, p. 7.

²⁸¹ ATP, p. 8.

Filth (1998) and *Crime* (2007) are also linked, telling the story about Detective Bruce Robertson's partner, Ray Lennox, who goes to Miami with his wife as a recovery journey after a tough case involving paedophilia back in Leith. Spud is often the central node of all connections back to Leith, which makes sense considering he is supposed author of *Trainspotting* and his vernacular history of Leith. In *Acid House*, in the closing novella 'A Smart Cunt', we encounter Spud:

I started talking to Spud Murphy, a mate of Raymie Airlie's. I like listening to Spud and Raymie. They've got a few years on me, they've been there, and they're still around. Survivors. You can't really learn anything from people like that, but their patter's okay. Spud's still lamenting getting ripped off by his best mate ages ago. It was a junk deal, and his mate absconded with the loot. – Best mates, likesay, man, best mates, ken? Then the cat goes n pills a stunt like that. Completely doss, likesay. Ken?²⁸²

Mentioning Spud, Renton or Sick Boy becomes a sort of signpost to alert the reader to the fact that this novel, novella or short story does not stand alone, but is part of a cycle or series. As a rhizome, Welsh's narrative can be broken off at any point but will always start up again. A new narrative can always join the journey at any point. Similarly, in *Ecstasy*, in the novella 'The Undefeated' Spud reappears: 'Monts was there, totally wasted, too wasted to even speak to me, while ah picked out Paul Somerville, Spud Murphy and some other cunt ah vaguely recognised'.²⁸³ In 'Fortune's Always Hiding', Mark reappears 'In the kitchen, a painfully thin, red-haired young Scots punk with bad spots'.²⁸⁴ The novel *Glue* introduces a new set of characters but they keep being connected to Welsh's world as we find Spud: 'Then behind um, thir's this shambling, shivering, sweating figure who looks familiar. – Terry, eh gasps, – Terry Lawson... what the fuck are you daein here, catboy? – Spud... for fuck sake, what's the story? This wis oor fuckin joab man, we've been casin this joint fir months! It's Murphy. Spud Murphy, fae Leith'.²⁸⁵ These landmarks, whether characters or places, are distributed throughout Welsh's novels, novellas, and short stories and effectively to connect them all. This signals the multiplicity of entry into Welsh's oeuvre in which there are no beginnings nor endings. In the novel *The Blade Artist*, readers would be tempted to see another attempt at an individual-based revenge story but are

²⁸² *AH*, p. 246.

²⁸³ Irvine Welsh, *Ecstasy* (London: Vintage, 1997), p. 232. Hereafter *E*.

²⁸⁴ *E*, p. 107.

²⁸⁵ *G*, p. 264.

perhaps surprised that the novel represents an extended chapter or vignette of Begbie as it is connected to *Dead Men's Trousers*. For example, the relationship between Renton and Michael Forrester is only alluded to in *Trainspotting*:

It gies us some satisfaction remembering why he hates us. Mike was once infatuated wi a woman who despised him. A woman ah subsequently shagged. It hadn't meant a great deal tae either masel or the woman concerned, but it certainly bugged the fuck oot ay Mike.²⁸⁶

In *Skagboys*, the story of Mike's misadventure is narrated at length: 'Ah ken she is just flirtin wi us tae wind up Forrester, whae's takin aw this in, but ah get intae it. Effir a bit ay wasted small talk we start snogging'.²⁸⁷ In *Dead Men's Trousers*, the past animosity between Renton and Forrester arises once again in the plot line:

Historically, Mikey Forrester hadn't got on with Mark Renton. The reason was trivial enough. Mikey had long fancied a woman, who had been stringing him along for free drugs, and whom Renton subsequently enjoyed a meaningless copulation with. This bugged the shit out of Mikey, and he had made his hostility apparent down the years.²⁸⁸

As both examples highlight, the Welshverse is connected, interwoven, and collectively integrated in the lives of the Leith Heads; characters cannot escape from one another, and in this web, there are often battles between rivals, doppelgangers, and mirrorings.

The last two characteristics of the rhizome include mapping and enfoldment, or in Deleuze and Guattari's words 'cartography and decalcomania'.²⁸⁹ The rhizomatic process of thought has multiple ontological entries without any starting or end. By mapping out a rhizome, unlike its antipode that Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the root or the tree, we must not try to dig deep into the earth to find the origins of the thing. Rather, we must mark boundaries, destinations, and places on a map: 'The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or

²⁸⁶ *T*, p. 26.

²⁸⁷ *S*, p. 84.

²⁸⁸ *DMT*, p. 290.

²⁸⁹ *ATP*, p. 11.

social formation'.²⁹⁰ Specific places represent connections, whether it is Leith, Amsterdam, Los Angeles or Miami in the Welshverse. As each character crosses these thresholds, Welsh maps out their transversal as they cross paths. There is not just one thread of connection but many, not just one entry point but a multitude of burrows. According to Deleuze and Guattari,

Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways; in this sense, the burrow is an animal rhizome, and sometimes maintains a clear distinction between the line of flight as passageway and storage or living strata (cf. the muskrat). A map has multiple entryways, as opposed to the tracing, which always comes back 'to the same'.²⁹¹

According to Réda Bensmaïa, the rhizome is a network of intensities, writing that it is 'an entangled knot of movement and stops, of impulses and immobilizations to experience interminably'.²⁹² Bensmaïa's definition expertly characterises Welsh's fiction which is an oeuvre consisting of connections, disconnections, sections, windows, vignettes, complicated by History repeating itself while simultaneously threatening historical ruptures that shatter the Whole, as we will cover in more detail in Part II. Furthermore, as Welsh's engagement with immediate social and political questions becomes pressing and prominent, the centre of Scottish identity, proletarian subjectivity and individualised selfhood, is consistently challenged through this rhizomatic narrative structure. As described above, each voice and each novel is part of a bigger narrative, rejecting the role of the narrator and the form of the Scottish novel itself.

The Destruction of Community and the Rise of the Individual

Welsh's novels reject the individual narrative and prefer merging or as Deleuze and Guattari put it 'to melt into the collective enunciation'.²⁹³ The central character of *Trainspotting*, Mark Renton, quickly realises that his world is a succession of myths and realities, always caught between the veiled and the unveiled, illustrated by several layers of narration, notably including internal monologues. Especially when looking at the nature of

²⁹⁰ *ATP*, p. 12.

²⁹¹ *ATP*, p. 12.

²⁹² Réda Bensmaïa, *Gilles Deleuze, Postcolonial Theory, and the Philosophy of Limit* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 86.

²⁹³ *Kafka*, p. 18.

his relationship with others, Renton might be described as individualistic, selfish and uninterested (unless it involves acquiring heroin): ‘Ah love nothing (except junk), ah hate nothing (except forces that prevent me getting any) and ah fear nothing (except scoring)’.²⁹⁴ Renton demonstrates the effects of individualism on British society and capitalist society, where he is nevertheless highly astute, critical and socially engaged with his situation and his friends. Welsh’s human relationships are always already disintegrating, as Renton describes the unusual type of relationship he has with Begbie, the prototype of the ‘hardman’ who holds his friends together through the fear of violence:

Myth: Begbie’s mates like him.

Reality: They fear him.

Myth: Begbie would never waste any ay his mates.

Reality: His mates are generally too cagey tae test oot this proposition...

Myth: Begbie backs up his mates.

Reality: Begbie smashes fuck oot ay innocent wee daft cunts whae accidently spill your pint or bump intae ye. Psychopaths who terrorise Begbie’s mates usually dae so wi impunity, as they tend tae be closer mates ay Begbie’s than the punters he hings about wi. He kens thum aw through approved school, prison n the casuals’ networks, the freemasonaries that bams share.²⁹⁵

In *Trainspotting*, the relationship between Renton and Begbie is based on fear, submission and violence, as Renton does not yet suspect that it may also involve respect, admiration, sympathy, pity or sorrow. For Renton, Begbie represents the success of subjective interpellation which in Begbie’s case means perpetuating a world of violence and division for the working class that has a propensity for exercising hyper-destructive masculinity, football violence and sectarianism. Therefore, as we will see in Chapters Five and Six, for Renton, if Begbie is the key for his escape, it is only because it will ensure a safeguard for his non-returning to Leith and Scotland altogether as it is the place in which the question of identification and subjectivation is the strongest, as Renton explains:

Ironically, it was Begbie who was the key. Ripping off your mates was the highest offence in his book, and he would demand the severest penalty. Renton had used Begbie, used him to burn his boats completely and utterly. It was Begbie who

²⁹⁴ *T*, p. 21.

²⁹⁵ *T*, p. 106.

ensured he could never return. He had done what he wanted to do. He could now never go back to Leith, to Edinburgh, even to Scotland, ever again. There, he could not be anything other than he was. Now, free from them all, for good, he could be what he wanted to be. He'd stand or fall alone. This thought both terrified and excited him as he contemplated life in Amsterdam.²⁹⁶

It seems that Renton is acting entirely selfishly as he had to break the old links that his circle of friends takes for granted, and abandon friendships, family, nationality and community to finally be free. Leaving everything behind demonstrates the impossibility to resolve and to survive the state they are in but also to help such characters as Begbie, as Cairns Craig describes:

Fearful and fearless are tied together in a fatality from which there is no escape: Begbie thrives on a sense of injustice that is entirely fictional, but which provides 'him with the spurious moral ammunition he needed tae justify one ay his periodic drink and angst fuelled wars against the local populace'. Renton, the failed intellectual who is able to expiate on Kierkegaardian notions of freedom in court – 'when such societal wisdom is negated, the basis for social control over the individual becomes weakened' – but is fearful of law-abiding conformists – 'Such people really scared the fuck out of Renton. They looked to him as if they hadn't done anything illegal in their lives' – is incapable of any freedom in his relation with Begbie, the terrorizing 'hard man' of their group.²⁹⁷

Craig's description of Begbie's 'sense of injustice' as 'entirely fictional' begs a larger question about his motivations and ideologies. Renton shows the injustice in his world whether it is with Begbie's addiction to violence, which comes from his tough upbringing revealed in the chapter 'Trainspotting at Leith Central Station' and later developed in *The Blade Artist*, or with Spud receiving a custodial sentence, or Matty dying of AIDS. With Welsh's writing, we experience trauma and its consequences; behaviour disorders, petty crimes, sexual violence, drug use and economic insecurity. Begbie's lack of empathy also underlines a major theme in Welsh's fiction: the conflict between social mores (morality) and a communitarian ethics. If empathy is fundamental to an ethical challenge to violence, Welsh asks through his characters how a society can produce an absence of empathy

²⁹⁶ *T*, p. 430.

²⁹⁷ Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, p. 55.

throughout a society of control. Welsh writes about groups and social relations, which makes a radical ethics central to his novels; not as a way to give them a moral justification but on the contrary to challenge society's moral ground. Welsh's characters do not think in terms of right and wrong, moral or amoral, they think in terms of survival: 'The *raison d'être* of our class was simply to survive. Fuck that; our punk generation, not only did we thrive, we even had the audacity to be disillusioned'.²⁹⁸ Injustice is not 'fictional' for any of these characters. This is made even clearer in the novel's sequel *Porno*. In the sequel, Renton finally returns after five years, having to face the rage of those he betrayed in the past and each of these characters has their own stories to tell. Where these stories come from is further explored in *Trainspotting's* prequel, *Skagboys* and later in *Dead Men's Trousers*.

Returning to the Pack: Becoming-Animal as Becoming-Skag in the Welshverse

Minor literature is also characterised by the process of *becoming-other*. Through the deterritorialisation of language, the politically charged fiction, something else emerges from minor writings: becoming. For Deleuze and Guattari, becoming can be political but it is primarily ontological. Deleuze and Guattari describe Kafka's *Metamorphosis* as becomings instead of metaphor or real transformations:

The image is this very race itself; it has become becoming – the becoming-dog of the man and the becoming-man of the dog, the becoming-ape or the becoming-beetle of the man and vice versa. We are no longer in the situation of an ordinary, rich language where the word dog, for example, would directly designate an animal and would apply metaphorically to other things (so that one could say 'like a dog').²⁹⁹

There is a *becoming-animal* to Welsh's oeuvre, to *minor literature*, as a writing motivation to bring the limit of humanity:

For if becoming animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating an animal, it is clear that the human being does not 'really' become an animal any more than the

²⁹⁸ *P*, p. 365.

²⁹⁹ *Kafka*, p. 22.

animal ‘really’ becomes something else. Becoming produces nothing other than itself.³⁰⁰

Becoming-animal means that subjectivity transcends non-human experiences, gives new possibilities, collective and individual, new intensities or affects: ‘For the affect is not a personal feeling, nor is it a characteristic; it is the effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel’.³⁰¹ For Deleuze and Guattari, *becoming-animal* is the main element of fragmentary, brief and heterogeneous forms such as short-stories or novellas: the text is multiplicity:

But literature takes the opposite path, and exists only when it discovers beneath apparent persons the power of an impersonal – which is not a generality but a singularity at the highest point: a man, a woman, a beast, a stomach, a child...It is not the first two persons that function as the condition for literary enunciation; literature begins only when a third person is born in us that strips us of the power to say ‘I’.³⁰²

The search for the impersonal can be seen in the literary form of Irvine Welsh and the profusion of characters contained in his oeuvre. Thus, Welsh continues the work of Kelman in a different yet equally minor writing. Indeed, for Kelman, describing the poverty and the lives of the working class in Glasgow has to go through:

Getting rid of that standard third party narrative voice [to get] rid of a whole value system [...] In a sense I think the jump is similar to the *nouveau roman*, a similar type of think, trying for a value free text, total objectivity [...] Any colouring that’s going on to try and get rid of. Whether it’s from a feminist point, a heterosexual male point, a middle-class point, any point at all. Get rid of it. So that nobody else is going to be oppressed or colonized by it.³⁰³

The start of *Trainspotting*, the very first line, attests of a *becoming-animal*: ‘The sweat wis lashing oafay Sick Boy; he wis trembling’.³⁰⁴ Sick Boy is the first skagboy we are

³⁰⁰ ATP, p. 277.

³⁰¹ ATP, p. 280.

³⁰² *Essays*, p. 3.

³⁰³ Kirsty McNeill, ‘Interview with James Kelman’, *Chapman 57* (1989), p. 4.

³⁰⁴ *T*, p. 3.

introduced to, described as a sick animal in cage. The symptoms of ‘need’ are described through a *becoming-animal* or even a *becoming-skag*. A few lines below, Welsh continues: ‘Rents. Ah’ve goat tae see Mother Superior, Sick Boy gasped’. The sonorities of the language as well as the image, provoked by it gives more and more intensity to both the animality of Sick Boy. The use of ‘gasped’ brings even more the idea of barking: Renton ignores Sick Boy like a dog barking in a flat, Sick Boy is incapable to human expression: ‘Ah’ve goat tae fuckin move man! He shouts, standing up. He moves ower tae the windae and rests against it, breathing heavily, looking like a hunted animal’.³⁰⁵

Renton’s becoming-skag is described in *Skagboys* as a willing socially isolating experience: ‘Ah was avoiding everybody and they reciprocated, even Bisto; he and Joanne were still going strong. Ah was like a Quasimodo figure, the smelly, shuffling hunchback expelled fae the ranks ay decent folks, and ah fuckin well *loved* it’.³⁰⁶ Renton is detaching himself in order to be able to connect with new ways of thinking and experiences:

In seminar groups ah often took speed tae buck us up, manoeuvrin the discussions towards ma personal obsessions, wi long, rambling druggie speeches as ah mentally groped around, trying tae scratch at the phantom itch in ma brain. Phlegm sat in my chist cavity like Wee Davie’s, tricklin down from a constant stream in my sinuses. Ma breathin was fucked. Ah even noticed the wey ma ain voice had changed; it was as if it was easier tae force the sound up through my nose, producing a tinny, whiny sound ah hated but couldnae stop emittin.³⁰⁷

The comparison with ‘Wee Davie’ suggests the same growing powerlessness and submission to the State and capital that Renton feels throughout his youth. In this very embodied description, Renton’s confrontation with and separation from his body allows him to approach different experiences of life. By recognizing his link with his late brother, Renton is also able to recognise and accept different forms of life, and ways of living beyond traditional humanistic perception towards a molecular perception: ‘we attain a visual and sonorous microperception revealing spaces and voids, like holes in the molar structure’.³⁰⁸

Guattari published the essay ‘Socially Significant Drugs’ in the collection *La révolution moléculaire* five years after his collaboration with Deleuze on *Anti-Oedipus*.

³⁰⁵ *T*, p. 4.

³⁰⁶ *S*, p. 188.

³⁰⁷ *S*, p. 188.

³⁰⁸ *ATP*, p. 266.

Guattari here describes drugs in their social context or *agencement social*; drawing the distinction between soft and hard drugs to see to what extent drugs become subject to socio-economic forces, but also how the distinction leads to new lifestyles and perceptual relationships, which Guattari refers to as a hallucinatory ‘molecular revolution’, as he explains in more detail:

A drug can be said to be soft from the moment it ceases to work in the sense of the above subjective individualisation, of an entrapment, of a break with external realities. Those who use them effect collective assemblages of enunciation (*agencements collectifs d’énunciation*), allowing certain individuals to remove their inhibitions, to question their lifestyles, their moral and political preferences, their social and material environment. [...] In essence; the break between hard and soft drugs occurs between new lifestyle – I prefer here to call it a ‘molecular revolution’ rather than a new culture – and the microfascist elements of industrial capitalist and bureaucratic socialist societies. I will always stand by, be in solidarity with, the addicts, such as they are, against their repression. But this doesn’t imply a defense for hard drugs, which I consider to be essentially microfascist in nature. Not insofar as they are chemical molecules, but to the extent that they are molecular assemblages of desire (*agencements moléculaires de désirs*) crystallizing subjectivity in a vortex of abrogation.³⁰⁹

In Welsh’s fiction, notably in *The Acid House* and *Ecstasy*, drugs are a way to flatten the hierarchal experience, at once an addictive cage and also a liberating move towards forming a new community, forced underground. Because the intensity of a multiplicity and a roving pack is marked by a highly embodied experience of becoming-animal and living beyond the drab trajectory of mere survival or consumption, skag becomes a conduit for extending communities beyond the filial as much as beyond the molar-perceptual. In becoming-skag, there is also a simultaneous ‘*becoming-collective-fucking-animals*’, as Welsh writes:

- Naw, man, naw; ah admire they boys...they know that the game isnae fuckin straight. They know that there’s a Government fill ay dull, boring bastards who gie

³⁰⁹ Félix Guattari, ‘Socially Significant Drugs’ in *High Culture: Reflections on Addiction and Modernity*, ed. by Anna Alexander and Mark S. Roberts (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003): 199-208 (pp. 202-3).

the likes ay us fuck all and they expect ye tae be as miserable as they are. What they hate is when yir no, in spite ay aw their fuckin efforts. What these cunts fail tae understand is that drug and club money is not a fuckin luxury. It's a fuckin essential.

- How can ye say that?

- *Because we are social, collective fucking animals and we need to be together and have a good time.* It's basic state of being alive. A basic fuckin right. These Government cunts, because they're power junkies, they are just incapable of having a good fuckin time so they want everybody else tae feel guilty, tae stey in wee boxes and devote their worthless lives tae rearing the next generation of factory fodder or sodgers or dole moles for the state. It's these boys' duty as human fuckin beings tae go oot clubbing and partying wi their friends. Now, they need tae eat from time to time, it's obviously important, but it's less important than having a good fuckin time.³¹⁰

Like the post-human experiences induced by hallucinogens or psychedelics that Guattari links to a molecular revolution, Welsh finds that his characters test the boundaries of their own existence by becoming-skag, opening themselves up to the pain of addiction as much as new experiences of the 'BwO' (body-without-organs), a metaphor for the roving pack of junkies that Welsh affirmatively celebrates as much as worryingly cares for.³¹¹ As a binding feature of Leith then, drugs are the tokens that mediate alliances between enemies and friends in the Welshverse, and while they can be used as tools by the State to kill off entire minor populations, they also allow for the construction of a new awareness that constructs vitalistic mappings that are decentred, nonhierarchical and allow the minoritarian voices to speak up, shout, or scream. Drugs, in their creative-destructive intensities, see the body without organ, as we have seen in Chapter Three, a body without

³¹⁰ *E*, p. 212-3, my emphasis.

³¹¹ For more on the Deleuzian term of 'body-without-organs', see Kylie Message's essay, 'Body Without Organs' in *The Deleuze Dictionary Revised Edition*, ed. by Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 2010): 37-9. Message explains: 'The term first emerged in Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense*, and was further refined with Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. The BwO is proposed as a means of escaping what Deleuze and Guattari perceive as the shortcomings of traditional (Freudian, Lacanian) psychoanalysis. Rather than arguing that desire is based on Oedipal lack, they claim desire is a productive-machine that is multiple and in a state of constant flux. And whereas psychoanalysis proclaims closure and interpretation, their critique of the three terms (organism, significance and subjectification) that organize and bind us most effectively suggests the possibility of openings and spaces for the creation of new modes of experience. Rather than proceeding directly to invert or deconstruct terms dominant in the production of identity and consciousness, they suggest that implicit within, between, and all around these are other – possibly more affective – fields of immanence and state of beings,' p. 37.

an upper or lower bodily hierarchy serves as a metaphor for the loosening of desiring and embodiment from identity, as Catherine Driscoll explains:

The body without organs is the body without hierarchized organs such as penis, phallus, vagina, even mouth; “opposed not to the organs but to that organization of the organs called the organism”. The organism is the unification of the body, the conceptualisation of the body as unified, and it is difficult to conceive of gender or sexual difference as other than such organisations. The organisation of the body is a delimitation of what the body can do. The organization of the body is a delimitation of what the body can do. But for Deleuze some things a body does – like becoming-woman or being a girl – are not so easily organized into delimited hierarchies, into relations to norms or majorities; they can even defer or defy normative or majoritarian organisation.³¹²

Hence, the communal element of this minor literature is in becoming-skag as much as it is in becoming-animal and becoming-nomad, in the smoothing and mixing of social organizations, which allows for the possibility of challenging the top-down power structures of the State through collective assemblages of enunciation, or what Tamsin Lorraine describes as the ‘shifting mosaics of space-times out of the heterogenous blocks of differing milieus’.³¹³

Furthermore, in becoming-skag, there is an element of contamination, connoted with addiction, whether the drug itself is addictive or not, but also with addiction as a disease and of course the fear of AIDS transmissions which goes with drug injection through needles sharing such as heroin injections. Becomings are themselves contaminating as Deleuze and Guattari explains:

When Virginia Woolf was questioned about a specifically women’s writing, she was appalled at the idea of writing ‘as a woman’. Rather, writing should produce a becoming-woman as atoms of womanhood capable of crossing and impregnating an entire social field, and of contaminating men, sweeping them up in that becoming.³¹⁴

³¹² Catherine Driscoll, ‘The Woman in Process: Deleuze, Kristeva and Feminism’ in *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, ed. by Ian Buchanan and Claire Colebrook (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000): 64-85. (p. 71).

³¹³ Tamsin Lorraine, ‘Smooth Space’ in *The Deleuze Dictionary Revised Edition*, ed. by Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 2010): 256-8 (p. 275).

³¹⁴ *ATP*, p. 322.

Becoming-animal and becoming-other can only be achieved molecularly, opposed to the molar constructions of ideological and identarian centralisations of Being, as described in the 'Introduction'. The contamination of becoming is deterritorialised as a liberating experience, a molecular revolution, as Deleuze and Guattari examine the figure of the werewolf or vampire as contaminating forces:

Propagation by epidemic, by contagion, has nothing to do with filiation by heredity, even if the two themes intermingle and require each other. The vampire does not filiate, it infects. The difference is that contagion, epidemic, involves terms that are entirely heterogeneous: for example, a human being, an animal, and a bacterium, a virus, a molecule, a microorganism.³¹⁵

For Deleuze and Guattari, a 'werewolf' propagation resonates with their definition of becoming-animal and the rhizome as they reproduce themselves not by filiation but by contamination, transforming others into themselves, as they describe a becoming-wolf: 'Lines of flight or of deterritorialization, becoming-wolf, becoming-inhuman, deterritorialized intensities; that is what multiplicity is. To become wolf [...] is to deterritorialize oneself following distinct but entangled lines'.³¹⁶ While Eva Bischoff describes the dangerous deterritorialisation of man for the cannibalistic werewolf of vampire as the rise of the white monstrosity of 'becoming-man', this section understands the elements of contagion as a creative reformulation of the working-class body.³¹⁷ Thus, it is important to stress that for Deleuze and Guattari, the contagion of becoming-wolf emerges as a becoming-revolutionary, situating the werewolf and the vampire in opposition to the State and its molar compositions of whiteness, maleness, and heteronormativity:

These multiplicities with heterogeneous terms, cofunctioning by contagion, enter certain *assemblages*; it is there that human beings effect becomings-animal. But we should not confuse these dark assemblages, which stir what is deepest within us, with organizations such as the institution of the family and the State apparatus.³¹⁸

³¹⁵ *ATP*, p. 282.

³¹⁶ *ATP*, p. 36.

³¹⁷ Eva Bischoff, 'The Cannibal Within: White Men and the Embodiment of Evolutionary Time' in *Deleuze and History*, ed. by Jeffery A. Bell and Claire Colebrook (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009): 121-41 (p. 136).

³¹⁸ *ATP*, pp. 282-3.

This community per contagion or contamination echoes the fear of AIDS among drug users which isolate and break the new sense of community, as explained by Kelly:

But with the fear of contracting AIDS rife, it is significant that sharing became dangerous, even fatal. So the network of heroin users is a community which paradoxically effaces community, a community based upon the antithesis of communal values and sharing. [...] So in the fragmentary and bewildering world confronting the characters in the novel, positives become negatives, communities become repositories of sequestered solitudes.³¹⁹

Spud's description of their way of life compared to vampires confirmed the death of this community yet revived by contagion of new becomings:

It is 5.06 a.m. and the hostelry's yellow lights are on, a haven in the dark, wet and lifeless streets. It had been, Spud reflects, a few days since he'd seen the light. They were like vampires, living a largely nocturnal existence, completely out of synchronization with most of the other people who inhabited the tenements and lived by a rota of sleep and work. It was good to be different.³²⁰

However, drug use and addiction signify social death. The consequence of the industrial fallout and push towards neoliberal policies, a sense of fatalism, expressed by capitalist realism, drives these young men and women to choose death:

Instead of making a body without organs sufficiently rich or full for the passage of intensities, drug addicts erect a vitrified or empty body, or a cancerous one: the causal line, creative line, or line of flight immediately turns into a line of death and abolition. The abominable vitrification of the veins, or the purulence of the nose – the glassy body of the addict.³²¹

Renton's relationships are centred around death, the death of his brothers, 'Wee Davie' and Billy which both encapsulate the death of the working-class man, going to war or rendered

³¹⁹ Aaron Kelly, *Irvine Welsh*, p. 43.

³²⁰ *T*, p. 329.

³²¹ *ATP*, p. 332.

a burden by society, incapable to speaking for himself. With Hazel, Renton connects with her as they are ‘both fucked up’, as a result of the death of her becoming-woman:

And they’d lain in bed together most nights since then, the junky and the incest victim, the voluntary and conscripted recruits to the army of the sexually dysfunctional, and helped themselves to sleep. They didn’t know if they were in some kind of love. They certainly knew they were gripped by a sort of need.³²²

With Kelly and Renton, the relationship is already tainted by her abortion and his inability to connect with her about it. Begbie goes through the same inaudible pain of losing a child when June suffers from a miscarriage. Alison tries to console him, and herself dealing with the pain of losing her mother, as Alison explains:

Real life wasn’t reducible to the written word, and even spoken words, our interactions with others, just seemed like distracting drama. She lowered the book, and let her gaze fall across the still, black river. *This* was real life, when we were alone on thought, lost in memory.³²³

This is a community where becomings are found out of death lines and experienced alone. The feeling of need isolates but also creates a becoming-animal and a becoming-skag through potential death contaminations leading to molecular experiences. Similarly, Renton and Hazel’s need for each other results from these death lines and the limitation of their becoming or unbecoming, leaving them secluded yet able to turn need into care for each other. As Deleuze and Guattari explain:

These knights claim that drugs, under necessary conditions of caution and experimentation, are inseparable from the deployment of a plane. And on this plane not only are becomings-woman, becomings-animal, becomings-molecular, becomings-imperceptible conjugated, but the imperceptible itself becomes necessarily perceived at the same time as perception becomes necessarily molecular: arrive at holes, microintervals between matters, colors and sounds engulfing lines of flight, world lines, lines of transparency and intersection.³²⁴

³²² *S*, p. 517.

³²³ *S*, p. 315.

³²⁴ *ATP*, p. 329.

This process of becoming-skag is seen through a deterritorialisation of the male body. The process of becoming-skag is visceral, a slow dissolution of the self into pure skag. In her analysis of the film adaptation of *Trainspotting*, Anna Powell describes a scene from Boyle's film adaptation, explaining how even in filmic terms, the conceptualisation of psychedelics and opiates reflects the experiences of becoming-skag:

A scene from Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting* (1996) depicts the crack literally, as a gaping hole in the floor. Heroin addict Renton (Ewan McGregor), injecting a shot of 'pure' from his dealer Mother Superior, goes 'down, instead of high'. The hole externalised here is, of course, in the addict's flesh, viscerally expressed by an extreme close-up of pores, hairs and a drop of blood on the skin on Renton's arm.³²⁵

Similarly, in the opening line of *Trainspotting* we have seen Sick Boy's body described as almost 'leaking' and trembling, transformed by the effects of heroin on his body. The contrast comes from Renton watching a Jean-Claude Van Damme's film ('Ah wis jist sitting thair, focusing oan the telly, tryin no tae notice the cunt') where Renton is watching a display of masculine bodies turned into weapons.³²⁶ As noted by Kelly:

Sick Boy's bodily disintegration mediates a more general social malaise that demarcates the decimation of traditional forms of community and collective life by de-industrialisation and unemployment. *Trainspotting*, and much of Welsh's other works, emerge from a historical moment in which working-class communities are not working – both in the sense of being characterised by mass unemployment and of ceasing to function as networks of collective experience and tradition. Notably, Renton seeks to forestall his awareness of Sick Boy's foundering body and his own disintegration by concentrating upon the Jean-Claude Van Damme video. The historical emergence of the contemporary muscle-bound action hero – a trend in which Van Damme follows actors such as Sylvester Stallone (particularly his *Rocky* and *Rambo* films) and Arnold Schwarzenegger – significantly occurs

³²⁵ Anna Powell, *Deleuze, Altered States and Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 74.

³²⁶ *T*, p. 3.

amidst the de-industrialisation and decline of manual labour in Western societies from the late 1970s to the present.³²⁷

Drugs enable Renton to detach himself from his male body and especially this image of masculine bodies turned into weapons or reminiscent of industrial labour. Kelly points out the redefining work place which saw working class men excluded or rendered obsolete or rather their bodies rendered useless. These films are tied to the entry of women in the work place and working-class men being sent back the domestic sphere. The deterritorialisation into of the body achieved through drug injections, a rejection of traditional masculinity to achieve heady, out-of-body experiences that heighten the sensuous nature of the body. Welsh establishes new discourses on peopling by associating addicts with intensity and affect, undermining the individual's quest for a solid sense of masculine Scottish identity, as Del Valle Alcalá explains in his chapter on Welsh:

The group of addicts thus enacts the undoing of individuality through their co-belonging in need, through a 'force' – 'whatever force' – that composes a world for which the system of instrumental identification can find no use or viable representation.³²⁸

Becoming-skag allows to experience intense level of embodied experience of the world; instead of maintaining the body for hard work, war or reproduction, they maintain their mind through psychedelics and drug injections. The title 'The Skag Boys, Jean-Claude Van Damme and Mother Superior' does not suggest the opposition between the body and the mind but the necessary combination to achieve a becoming-skag. After having troubles with drug injection due to his vein, Renton goes to look for his veins in order to achieve better injections in the future:

When ah git back tae the flat, Sick Boy still isnae back. Ah start tae strip oaf again n look at ma body in the full-length mirror. Ah systematically tourniquet and tap up ma veins, finding oot where the best yins are. There's better ones in ma legs, a good yin on the crook ay ma arm, and one oan the wrist that ah just might be able tae get up on demand.³²⁹

³²⁷ Kelly, pp. 40-1.

³²⁸ Del Valle Alcalá, p. 128.

³²⁹ *S*, p. 88.

There is a decomposition of the body in which the phallus is not the primary concern anymore but rather obsolete, the body is observed and redesigned with the sole purpose of accommodating drugs. Even sex is approached as a sensitive and emotional experience rather than an act that reflects the 'duty' of reproduction, or the idea of potency-impotence tightly tied to the reflection of masculinity and the working-class means of survival. Through ecstasy, another plane of emotions and sensation can be achieved, reforming the steely, industrial body of the hardman into the porous, sexualised body of the junkie.

Psychic Defence or Existential Ecstasy? The Nuances of Drug Use in Skag-Lit

The image of the strong working-class community is shattered by the rise of individualism in Leith's community. The dominant political themes of the 1980s and 90s had devastating effects in the lives of people as individuals' problems were their own, against a backdrop of a society which glorified individual wealth and success and saw anyone less successful as a loser. The marginalised and/or the drug users of Leith are characterised by Johnny Swan: 'nae friends in this game. Jist associates'.³³⁰ Leith's community is held together by violence and drug addiction instead of friendships and a sense of community. Begbie constantly threatens his friends, making them cope with his paranoia and his psychopathic behaviour while Sick Boy, Spud and Renton are brought together in their drug consumption. Indeed, outside of their shared use of heroin and other drugs, it appears that nothing is left, as illustrated by Renton when he abandons his friends. That final betrayal was already predictable from the first paragraph of the novel: 'The sweat was lashing oafay Sick Boy; he wis trembling. Ah wis jist sitting thair, focusing oan the telly, tryin no tae notice the cunt'.³³¹ Sick Boy and Renton cannot stand one another but they still stick together for old time's sake, as a reminder that they may have been friends in the past. The truth is that this relationship is about social limitations such as their seeming dependency on drugs, not attachment to one another. This is a community of individuals rather than a society: 'There's no such thing as society'.³³² Their drug consumption appears as a means of transcending social limitations, seeing it as a process in which 'a new autonomy of the individual arises, carved out of self-modification and the will to power', as Alexander and

³³⁰ *T*, p. 6.

³³¹ *T*, p. 3.

³³² Margaret Thatcher, *Women's Own*. "No Such Thing as Society" from: <http://www.margaret-thatcher.org/document/106689> (1987) [Accessed 28/09/17]

Roberts explain.³³³ And this is true for a while until another way to escape is shown to Renton: economic freedom. All the characters are running away from the norm, society's 'normal' life or institutionalised life where consumption dictates every option, as Brian in the novella 'A Smart Cunt' concludes:

I'm thinking what can I do, really do for the emancipation of working people in this country, shat on by the rich, tied into political inaction by servile reliance on a reactionary, moribund and yet still unelectable Labour Party. The answer is resounding fuck all. Getting up early to sell a couple of papers in a shopping centre is not my idea of the best way to chill out after raving. [...] I think I'll stick to drugs to get me through the long, dark night of late capitalism.³³⁴

Welsh's protagonists seek oblivion in heroin to flee their situation: poverty, joblessness, sectarianism and the image of the hardman, all aspects of this harsh environment:

Whin yir oan junk, aw ye worry about is scorin. Oaf the gear, ye worry about loads ay things. Nae money, cannae git pished. Goat money, drinkin too much. Cannae git a burd, nae chance ay a ride. Git a burd, too much hassle, cannae breathe without her gitting oan yir case. Either that, or ye blow it, and feel aw guilty. Ye worry about bills, food, bailiffs, these Jambo Nazi scum beatin us, aw the things ye couldnae gie a fuck about whin yuv goat a real junk habit. Yuv just goat one thing tae worry about. The simplification ay it aw.³³⁵

Heroin reduces any links with the world whether it is with friends, family, relationships, commodities, football loyalties or the sectarianism that poisons urban Scottish life. The only connection that matters is heroin. Drugs are the symptom of a malaise in Scottish society, taken as a 'psychic defense' by Renton and his friends, linked to their limitations, and their need to defend themselves. As Kelly explains: 'Consuming heroin therefore provides a telling metaphor for the loss of identity in late capitalist consciousness and the putative pleasures and freedoms of consumer society. It affirms that consumer pleasure is a deeply alienated enjoyment'.³³⁶ Renton goes through several stages of his addiction as

³³³ Anna Alexander and Mark S. Roberts, 'Introduction' in *High Culture: Reflections on Addiction and Modernity*, p. 6.

³³⁴ *AH*, p. 240.

³³⁵ *T*, p. 133.

³³⁶ Kelly, p. 42.

indicated by the titles of the novel's sections: 'Kicking', 'Relapsing', 'Kicking Again' and 'Blowing It', between addiction and withdrawal. However, the novel never gives the characters' motivation for starting or giving up heroin. Renton chooses to use drugs to stop consuming, working, spending his salary in drinking after work for oblivion but also because he can stop the consuming machine. Indeed, as Karnicky argues,

Heroin brings the junky close to a complete stop, where movement is only memory: "It has been done before". The *Trainspotting* junky falls into an inhuman slowness that distances the junky from both the outside world and any space of interior subjectivity.³³⁷

Accordingly, heroin brings a simplification to signification, as Karnicky explains as the junkie's world revolves around skag. However, in this apparent simplification comes a becoming-animal and a becoming-skag, as we have seen, opening doors to molecular contagion.

In building a social picture of the Scots in post-industrial Britain, Welsh shows the reality and the reason for drug use in Scotland, raises awareness of hospital facilities and helps associations in Edinburgh. Locally, Welsh's fiction has had an impact on Scottish society describing the lives of his community, whether real or imagined, but it is not clear whether the novel has had concrete repercussions on this community, on the non-fictional victims of late capitalism. Coming back to Leith after a long absence in London, Welsh recollects:

I saw a lot of people I used to know, from the scheme housing estate I'd grown up on, who were all HIV plus from sharing needles, and everyone was bangin' up on smack. You'd get guys who used to go for a pint, now they'd go and bang up... The place was flooded with cheap Pakistani heroin.³³⁸

The collective value of Welsh's fiction comes from his desire to 'express [his] anger at the death of people where [he] grew up'.³³⁹ In the introduction of *Trainspotting & Headstate*, Welsh points out the hypocrisy of the State regarding drug use and repression. Welsh

³³⁷ Jeffrey Karnicky, *Contemporary Fiction and the Ethics of Modern Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 140.

³³⁸ Walsh, 'The not-so-shady past of Irvine Welsh', p. 7.

³³⁹ Irvine Welsh, 'Drugs and The Theatre, Darlings' in *Trainspotting & Headstate* (London: Minerva, 1996): 1-10 (p. 6).

tackles the hypocrisy of ‘drug society’ in the West, ‘in which social interactions are defined by drugs whether it is alcohol, caffeine, tobacco, marijuana or chemicals’:

The legal status of drugs has always related to historical, cultural, power and economic factors and has absolutely nothing to do with the health or scientific or criminological issues concerning the toxicity, addictive qualities and social damage caused by a particular drug.³⁴⁰

Welsh continues, explaining that ‘the damage to health, the family, society and the economy by the drugs alcohol and tobacco have been well documented [...] alcohol and tobacco claimed 300,000 lives in Britain per year, while all other drugs could only manage 300’.³⁴¹ This accusation takes various forms in Welsh’s novels because his drug narratives prompted harsh reviews, as well as helping him become a literary and pop culture phenomenon. Reviewing *Ecstasy*, Chris Maume remarks:

The problem for Welsh is, what can he do next that is even more sensational? How do you top having one of your characters anally penetrate a recently charred corpse then douse the anus with lighter fuel and set fire to it to avoid detection? The challenge, surely, is to create one or two believable, rounded characters who don’t do drugs and aren’t viciously violent.³⁴²

The sensation comes from Welsh’s narration and social and capitalist realism. In Welsh’s ‘minor literature’, uncompromising, harsh and crude, drugs are simply one element of the story, yet the mystification of drug use and users in literature and politics makes of *Trainspotting* a sensational drug narrative. More than a simple testimony, Welsh’s novels have had an impact on their readers, most of them from well beyond the community described in the novel. The *Trainspotting* sequel, *T2: Trainspotting*, highlights the point of this sequel: trauma. Welsh does not write novels, so much as a social history of a group of Leith-based people in post-industrial Britain:

The main issue for me is that so many people are using drugs negatively, to get as far away from the horror and dullness of straight, mainstream life as possible, rather

³⁴⁰ Welsh, ‘Drugs and The Theatre, Darlings’, p. 2.

³⁴¹ Welsh, ‘Drugs and The Theatre, Darlings’, p. 2.

³⁴² Chris Maume, ‘Do We Need Irvine Welsh?’, *The Independent*, (9 June 1996), <<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/do-we-need-irvine-welsh-1336376.html>> [accessed 30/01/19].

than positively, as life enhancers. That's the real crime, the real issue; that so many people feel that straight life in this society has so little to offer them. And feel it with such good reason, given that state's constant attacks on its populace, particularly young and old working-class people, over the last two decades. The main purpose of these notes is not to criticise western drugs policy, although I hope the reader will forgive my rantings as these policies ensure that a lot of people die of ignorance, from misuse of both legal and illegal drugs.³⁴³

Welsh argues that drugs are social painkillers masking a bleak reality of poverty and unemployment in areas which have been severely hit by deindustrialisation. Drugs are no longer associated solely with the marginalised but on the contrary are mainstream in their use, yet still 'underground' because of current drug policies perpetuating criminalisation and misinformation on the grounds of morality. Moreover, this democratisation of drug use among British youth, as narrated by Welsh in his novella collection *Ecstasy*, suggests the paradox of drug use: first as a way to escape the consumer society of 1990s, it becomes increasingly apparent that through the characters' mutual dashed hopes and crushed revenges, they find themselves back where they were and probably never left: in a bleak dead end, as capitalism takes control of drugs as it previously did with the hippie and punk movements.³⁴⁴ Therefore, whether sensation comes from drug use or sex work, both are symbols of a society falling into precarity but also of an untamed need of morality in society. More than being social painkillers, Welsh argues that:

Drugs replaced work and the transition is still on going. That's the reason why *Trainspotting* was so successful: this isn't a book, nor a film, about drugs, it's a book about the transition we are experiencing towards a world without work. The working class was the first one who has had to face it. But if the film had such an impact, and still has one among the bourgeois students, it's because they could see that the sectors they were destined to, such as journalism or now law or medicine, will be destroyed as well.³⁴⁵

³⁴³ Welsh, 'Drugs and the Theatre Darlings', pp. 3-4.

³⁴⁴ Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (New York: Methuen, 1979), pp. 24-6.

³⁴⁵ Annabelle Laurent, 'Les drogues ont remplacés le travail', *Usbek et Rica*, (April 2017), <<https://usbeketrica.com/article/irvine-welsh-les-drogues-ont-remplace-le-travail>> [accessed 03/05/2017]: 'Les drogues ont remplacés le travail, et la transition est toujours en cours. C'est la raison pour laquelle *Trainspotting* a eu autant de succès: ce n'est pas un livre – ni un film – sur la drogue, c'est un livre sur la transition que nous vivons vers un monde sans travail. Les premiers à avoir dû l'affronter sont les classes populaires ouvrières. Mais si le film a autant résonné, et résonne encore chez les étudiants bourgeois, c'est qu'ils pouvaient voir que les jobs auxquels ils se destinaient, comme le journalisme, ou maintenant le droit ou la médecine, vont être détruits aussi.' (my translation).

Here, Welsh insists on the fact that a part of his audience only remembered the sensations of drugs use in *Trainspotting* when for Welsh the novel was about the disappearance of the working class. Without work, following the massive deindustrialisation of the U.K. which started before Thatcher's era, but was accelerated under her government, the working class was to disappear entirely. For Welsh's characters, it means wandering in limbo as nomads. This is emphasised even more in *Glue*, where we follow a group of young men in Leith from the 1970s to the 2000s. The novel narrates the destruction of labour throughout the generation where the fathers lose their jobs in the factory, the factory closes and ultimately, we see the consequence for their sons unable to find work and struggling with mental and physical health. The beginning of the novel emphasises the housing crisis as the symbol of a society which has failed its people; from the slum-clearances, the new council flat to their rapid decay:

David felt like a newly crowned emperor surveying his fiefdom. The new buildings were impressive all right: they fairly gleamed when the light hit those sparkling wee stanes embedded in the cladding. Bright, clean, airy and warm, that was what was needed. He remembered the chilly, dark tenement in Gorgie; covered with soot and grime for generations when the city had earned its 'Auld Reekie' nickname. Outside, their dull, narrow streets nipping with people pinched and shuffling from the marrow-biting winter cold, and that rank smell of hops from the brewery wafting in when you opened the window, always causing him to retch if he'd overdone it in the pub the previous night. All that had gone, and about time too. This was the way to live!³⁴⁶

The novel illustrates drugs as 'social painkillers', as Welsh explains.³⁴⁷ Welsh narrates this lost generation in order to describe their existential crisis entrapped in the everyday violence of drugs, sex and violence. Urban Scotland has based its social and cultural image on labour (industrialisation) until these modes of economics and social life crumbled, shattering any image of (national) identity. For Deleuze, there is a need to rethink and invent new ideas of nation, family and economy, with the necessity to leave old models of society behind:

³⁴⁶ Irvine Welsh, *Glue* (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 3. Hereafter *G*.

³⁴⁷ Welsh, 'Drugs and the Theater Darlings', p. 4.

Health as literature, as writing, consists in inventing a people who are missing. It is the task of the fabulating function to invent a people. We do not write with memories, unless it is to make them the origin and collective destination of a people to come still ensconced in its betrayals and repudiations. American literature has an exceptional power to produce writers who can recount their own memories, but as those of a universal people composed of immigrants from all countries. [...] This is not exactly a people called upon to dominate the world. It is a minor people, eternally minor, taken up in a becoming-revolutionary.³⁴⁸

In *Irvine Welsh and the Trainspotting Phenomenon*, John Neil Munro's chapter entitled 'The Muirhouse Connection' establishes a detailed social and historical context for the heroin problem of Edinburgh in the 1980s, from the impact of deindustrialisation which led to massive unemployment among the working class, to social determinant factors: 'later studies showed that many people who turned to intravenous drug use came from broken homes; some had experienced physical and sexual abuse during childhood and were in care or in trouble with the law'.³⁴⁹ This chapter therefore provides an overview of the problem growing from Thatcher's government, the role of Pakistani cheap heroin, and the overflowing hospitals due to drug-related pathologies and ignorance of such pathologies by medics, as well as the government's law enforcement policies criminalising users.

An article published in *The Herald* in 2012 entitled 'Drug Deaths in Scotland Reach Highest Ever Level' described the '*Trainspotting* generation' as 'now paying the ultimate price' – the ultimate price being years of suffering withdrawal or addiction symptoms as well as battling drug-related diseases such as HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis B or C or death. With authorities such as the Scottish Office being slow to take action to address the problem, locals affected by drugs and their consequences started their own support groups such as user Morag McLean's Shada in October 1981 for example, backed by the gay community, at the time massively marginalised and stigmatised, as Roy Robertson explains:

Our other great allies were the gay community. If they hadn't been there, then our drug users wouldn't have been of interest to anybody. Gay men were marginalised and stigmatised back then much more than they are now. They were considered to be a closed community and therefore less of a threat to the population. A

³⁴⁸ *Essays*, p. 4.

³⁴⁹ Munro, p. 75.

government like Thatcher's was not in the least bit interested in our community. But all of a sudden young heterosexuals and females became important.³⁵⁰

Munro's chapter is almost solely based on the testimony of Robertson, a GP in the Muirhouse area since 1979, and by 2017 chairman of the National Forum on Drug-Related Deaths as well as Professor of Addiction Medicine at the University of Edinburgh, who acknowledges the impact of *Trainspotting* on awareness of the situation to the public and abroad but deplors the lack of policies as well as responses from the authorities:

I thought the book was fantastic, just amazing, and I still do. In a way we really owe Irvine Welsh a great debt, for publicising these things in a way that was so inflammatory and caught people's imagination. Our own approach to trying to draw attention to these problems had been successful, but less so than it should have been. I suppose in a way someone like Irvine is much more influential than the Minister for Health in getting things into the public imagination. How many people know who the Chief Medical Officer is in Scotland? Someone like Irvine, who can get the story out into the public domain, is really worth their weight in gold.³⁵¹

However, from the middle of the 1980s, an increasing number of anti-drug campaigns on television or radio appeared in Britain such as 'Heroin Screws You Up', the echoes of the American campaign 'Just Say No' or 'Shooting Up Once Can Screw You Up Forever'. In 1998 the Policy Paper 'Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain' was written and linked the use of heroin with poor living conditions in Britain especially in some areas in Scotland. The understanding of drug usages and the link with HIV were already out of control when *Trainspotting* the film was released but it did play a part in either mystifying drug use or on the other hand a tool to teach young adults.³⁵² As highlighted in Amanda Rosemary Hayne's thesis, at the time, methadone maintenance was becoming more socially acceptable and drug use was no longer linked with addiction but allowed the inclusion of recreational drugs, psychedelics, with no longer-term effect or addiction. However, the multiple anti-drug campaigns remained on a repressive message, negative

³⁵⁰ Munro, p. 84.

³⁵¹ Munro, p. 84.

³⁵² See Amanda Rosemary Hayne's PhD thesis: *Choose life, choose a perspective: a Q-methodological analysis of different perceptions of drug education and Trainspotting in small town Scotland* (University of Manchester, 1998) Web, [accessed 9/10/17], for a detailed timeline and study on the evolution of drug prevention in Scotland and the use of *Trainspotting* the film as a tool of prevention.

perception and stereotype of the junkie and drug use instead of seeing drug use as targeting all categories of population; class, gender and race.

The collective value of Welsh's fiction therefore resides predominantly in his depiction of drug use in a rhizomatic world populated by junkies, hardmen and other neglected marginal souls left to slowly disappear on Leith's shores. By creating a world where the borders between fiction and reality are blurred, Welsh expresses the possibility of a community or a gathering of Leith Heads, those who are contaminated, forming new communities in order to survive temporarily outside of the State's reach. Indeed, as we have seen, drugs allow deterritorialising trips, expression of the molecular and therefore contacts with becoming. However, if for William Burroughs, 'Junk is a way of life', for Welsh, junk becomes a consequence of late capitalism and how becomings can also be captured and controlled by capital, which Welsh effectively articulates throughout his work and notably in *Ecstasy* as Karnicky explains: 'Welsh creates a form of life that emerges into a "new" world of biopolitical powers.'³⁵³ Thus, Welsh articulates the complexity of becoming-skag: if skag brings limitation to these characters, the experience of becoming they go through is not less liberatory, it simply moves towards a becoming-aware.

³⁵³ Karnicky, *Contemporary Fiction and the Ethics of Modern Culture*, p. 134.

Part II: Choosing Life and Its (Un)Becomings

Choose Life. Choose Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and hope that someone somewhere cares. Choose looking up old flames, wishing you had done it differently. And Choose watching history repeat itself. Choose your future. Choose reality TV, s*** shaming, revenge porn. Choose a zero hours contract, a 2-hour journey to work and choose the same for your kids only worse and smother the pain with an unknown dose of an unknown drug made in somebody's kitchen and then take a deep breath. You're an addict so be addicted. Just be addicted to something else. Choose the ones you love.

Choose your future.
Choose life.

T2 Trainspotting

Figure 7

Chapter Four

Becoming-Woman and Welsh's Experience of *Écriture Feminine* in *Porno*

After the success of *Trainspotting*, Irvine Welsh waited until 2002 to publish its sequel, *Porno*, bringing back its characters: Renton, Sick Boy, Begbie, Spud and Diane. In addition to drawing in his central cast of Leith Heads, Welsh also drew from *Glue* to bring back characters like Terry 'Juice' Lawson, who will later reappear in *A Decent Ride*. The novel welcomes two new protagonists: Nikki Fuller-Smith, a young English student at the University of Edinburgh, and her Scottish flatmate, Lauren, also a student. Welsh attempts to shock his readers with a crude and almost grotesque depiction of sex work and the sex industry in playing with roles and archetypes. Welsh's approach to women is often controversial, being seen at times as misogynistic and limited, at others empowering, but ultimately Welsh's novels always receive divided criticism. Some reviewers criticised Welsh's handling of women's voice, often two dimensional and stereotypical as well as talking about pornography through women's point of view. They are the mothers, the glue of the family, the consumers and the sexual object. Until *Porno*, women had short appearances, small vignettes scattered here and there, always third person narrative to signal a certain distance or a caution from Welsh and his reader or they would appear through the male gaze, enabling them to speak, feel or become real, amplified by *Marabou Stork Nightmares* which described the violence of being a woman in Welsh's world. Women are the representation of the destroyed masculine figure. However, with *Porno*, Welsh goes further, in a first-person narrative, something he will reiterate with *The Sex Lives of the Siamese Twins* (2014). As we are going to explore, the result of this attempt at writing women sparked a lot of polarised reviews, confirming Welsh's cleaving and complex oeuvre.

Porno's Popular Reviews and its Gendered Divisions

Porno comes back in a post-Devolution Scottish society, one which is more cosmopolite with a gentrified Leith as a result of a new European student culture, tuition being free in Scotland for students from EU countries. Welsh has always been criticised for his style, language and depiction of both men and women and it started with *Trainspotting* as we can see from Meb Kenyon and Phyllis Nagy's article, 'Season of lad tidings', in which they challenge Welsh's handling of the feminine in *Trainspotting*, describing it as a vehicle of a misogynistic culture:

The post-feminist era is confusing and frustrating for everyone, but while women talk about the current crisis in male / female relationships openly and with a certain amount of humour and self-awareness, most of their male counterparts seem to have retreated into a world of adolescent fantasy and misogyny. The recent spate of laddism displayed in the arts and typified by work as disparate as David Mamet's play *Oleanna* and Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* is only one of the symptoms of a much more serious underlying illness: the fact that violent misogyny is alive, kicking and applauded throughout England.³⁵⁴

Louise Welsh and Ali Smith do point out the 'worm in the innards of Porno'³⁵⁵ to be the character of Nikki. Louise Welsh describes her as:

A wet-dream fantasy; body-dysmorphic bulimic. An English girl with a daddy complex and an allowance, she describes being a poor student as 'a racket'. Nikki disturbs the balance of the book, hinting at a colonial corruption absent from the rest of the novel. Diane, Renton's sweetheart, is by contrast idealised. No girl wants to be put on a pedestal. It's too far to fall.³⁵⁶

Ali Smith also noted Dianne's idolatry and describes her as 'the lovingly fantasised underage schoolgirl of *Trainspotting*, now an equally fantasised clever girl who loves good sex and is writing a thesis about sex-workers.'³⁵⁷ Smith and Louise Welsh also point to the representation of women in Welsh's novels as either virgins or whores; a dichotomy which Welsh himself acknowledges. In an interview by Rebecca Seal for the Guardian in 2007 he declares: 'Growing up in Edinburgh, we had a very black-and-white understanding of people, so women were naturally divided into virgins and whores. That was what I grew up with: there were some lasses that you don't take home to Mummy.'³⁵⁸ Therefore, both Smith and Welsh notice the two-dimensional portrayals of Welsh's female characters:

³⁵⁴Meb Kenyon and Phyllis Nagy. 'Season of Lad Tidings: Provocations', *The Guardian*, (4 December 1995), p. A7.

³⁵⁵ Ali Smith, 'Begbie is Back', *The Guardian*, (24 August 2002), <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/aug/24/fiction.irvinewelsh>> [accessed 16/01/16].

³⁵⁶ Louise Welsh, 'Porno by Irvine Welsh', *The Independent*, (6 September 2002), <<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/porno-by-irvine-welsh-175769.html>> [accessed 16/01/16]

³⁵⁷ Ali Smith, 'Begbie's back'.

³⁵⁸ Irvine Welsh, 'What I know about women', *The Scotsman*, (27 January 2009), <<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2007/jul/08/familyandrelationships.irvinewelsh>> [accessed 18/02/16].

‘Nikki, of course, is a two-dimensional creation herself, an upmarket Welshian exercise in stereotyping, desperate for sexual satisfaction and fame as a means of control, happy to have her cake and throw it up, as Welsh puts it, to keep herself in the sexual running’.³⁵⁹

If they acknowledge the clumsiness of the portrayal of Nikki Fuller-Smith, Welsh, Smith and Susannah Herbert also recognise the entertainment and dark humour as well as satirical potential of the novel describing Welsh as a ‘a prime satirist and, like the best satirists, he gives society a reflection of itself. He successfully places the Scottish landscape in a wider political and geographic context.’³⁶⁰ Smith recognises as well Welsh’s talent for satire and emphasises the difference between the author and the narrator: ‘Welsh is not a monster or a conundrum; he’s a literary stylist, pure and simple, and *Porno* is his latest examination of one of his favourite subjects, the addictions of our baser natures’.³⁶¹ It contrasts with Tom Lappin’s review for *The Scotsman* published the same day, where he assumes that Welsh is talking through the character of Sick Boy, recalling previous critics who identified Welsh with Renton in *Trainspotting*: ‘Simon “Sick Boy” Williamson is the predominant voice here, and one that is difficult not to identify with the author himself, especially as Welsh paints him as such a calculating, manipulative figure’.³⁶²

For Herbert, *Porno* is ‘a brilliant satirical study of the ugly dynamic which draws together predators and prey – they get it’ and acknowledges the power of humour and satire in the novel: ‘Welsh is too sophisticated a satirist to make voyeurs of his readers and anyone reading for a turn-on is in for a series of alternately funny and appalling shocks.’³⁶³ In the same review, she also defends the book against criticism such as Tom Lappin’s review of the novel calling Welsh ‘a porn writer’.³⁶⁴ Even though Herbert recognises the limitations of Welsh’s women, by pointing to the issue of the women’s voices in *Porno* which ‘never quite become real’, she still seems to misunderstand Welsh’s eroticism.³⁶⁵ It is, however, relevant to note the importance given to Begbie in Smith’s review because if she regrets the feminine portrayals in the novel, she comments positively on the male character:

³⁵⁹ Ali Smith, ‘Begbie’s back’.

³⁶⁰ Louise Welsh, ‘Reviews *Porno* by Irvine Welsh’.

³⁶¹ Ali Smith, ‘Begbie’s back’.

³⁶² Tom, Lappin, ‘Brain rotting’, *The Scotsman*, (24 August 2002), <<https://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/books/brain-rotting-1-620389>> [accessed 16/01/16].

³⁶³ Susannah Herbert, ‘Sex and Drugs and a’ that’, *The Telegraph*, (25 August 2002), <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/4728588/Sex-and-drugs-and-a-that.html>> [accessed 15/01/16].

³⁶⁴ Tom Lappin, ‘Book Reviews: *Porno*: Brain rotting’.

³⁶⁵ Susannah Herbert, ‘Sex and drugs and a’that’.

Begbie blows the two-dimensional boys and girls away. What I'd give to see Welsh find a female creation to match this force. But such a girl, unhaveable, undismisable and uncategorisable, couldn't exist in Welsh world, where everything and everybody, not just the girls, are simplified, categorised and had.³⁶⁶

Smith's criticism of the lack of depth in the portrayal of women is mirrored in the Scotsman review of the novel: '[Welsh] cannot manage a story, he is incapable of complexity, devoid of imagination and, above all, cannot approach an idea with sophistication or empathy'.³⁶⁷ This review negates completely Welsh's characters, whether male or female, proving that pornography and sex work are still taboo and considered too delicate to handle.

The general criticism is the lack of involvement into the subjects tackled, the lack of research, thoughtfulness and ambiguity throughout the novel, especially on women's versions of the story. Some reviewers were indeed harsh regarding Welsh's handling of women's voice in their involvements, reactions or emotions with sex or porn industry. Sukhdev Sandhu for *The Telegraph* is more conciliatory in his review and admits that 'Welsh's books are comedies and urban fantasies as much as sociological treatises'.³⁶⁸ However, he also adds that 'this novel is not as lyrical as his previous works. Half a dozen characters are used to tell the story, but their narratives do not really play off or ironise each other' which is a way to not point out the limitation of women's narratives in terms of characterisation and soundness of their voices in order to celebrate Welsh's humour and nerve to talk about porn through women's point of view.

Whether it is as a genuine impression of the book, or as a wary intervention, Burhan Wazir praises the female voices in *Porno* to the point of claiming that Welsh, 'for the first time, [is] writing sympathetically about women', calling Nikki 'the most well-rounded character yet to surface in a Welsh novel'.³⁶⁹ Such a difference of opinion on the characterisation of Nikki can be seen as a way to handle the book differently and welcome Welsh's effort to give a voice to women. However, it is almost exaggerated because if Nikki is indeed the female character to have the most importance in Welsh's fiction so far—with the most 'air time'—Burhan Wazir misses the point Welsh was trying to make through this character; that is to question the male's intervention of the feminine, men

³⁶⁶Ali Smith, 'Begbie's back'.

³⁶⁷Anonymous, 'Book Review: Porno', *The Scotsman* (25 August 2002), <<http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/books/book-review-porno-1-1378760>> [accessed 25/03/2016].

³⁶⁸Burhan Wazir, 'Sick Boy and the Hangover', *The Guardian*, (18 August 2002), <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/aug/18/fiction.irvinewelsh>> [accessed 15/01/16].

³⁶⁹Burhan Wazir, 'Sick Boy and the Hangover'.

writing women, men showing women, men and women consuming each other. Therefore, this precaution with handling *Porno* can lead to some misleading or plural interpretations of the book which triggers the effect of sensationalism and the idea of a provocation for the sake of it, causing division and confusion regarding the real nature and purpose of the book. Therefore, the caution, or on the contrary, the outrage that comes from Welsh's fiction, can actually separate men and women's reception and critics of the novel.

On the contrary, Lappin was scathing in his critique, claiming that Welsh is bringing back 'misogynist pop culture' and calling *Porno* a 'flaccid read, pitiable evidence of a past-it writer falling to recapture his literary libido'.³⁷⁰ Lappin tends to see in Welsh's depiction of pornography and scurrility in language a sense of gratification in depicting violence, crude sexual intercourses or even rape which recall the 'nauseating rape fantasies of *Marabou Stork Nightmares*'.³⁷¹ For Lappin, Welsh plays with roles and archetypes in characterisation, exemplified by Nikki's character, making her the 'archetypal Scottish fantasy'. The same impression can be noticed in the majority of reviews regarding the lack of depth and credibility when reading female characters. Lappin goes further and adds that 'Welsh's attempts to get inside her head seem deliberately aimed to justify the kind of misogyny that fuels pornography', the same phenomenon of reclaiming or justifying of the culture of misogyny exposed in Meb Kenyon and Phyllis Nagy's article in 1995.³⁷²

Don Gillmor, a Canadian novelist and journalist wrote a review of *Porno* for *The Globe and Mail* which also noticed the same impression of muffled female voices: 'All the families in *Porno* are estranged. Ex-wives and children are referred to, but rarely seen'.³⁷³ However, as he points out the 'male-centered only' nature of the book (which is forgetting almost half of the book told through Nikki's voice whether we condemn it or not), Gillmor himself alienates Nikki's characters by presenting her as 'Simon's new girlfriend Nikki', reducing her to her relationship with Sick Boy. Indeed, Gillmor's review is more focused on Scots nationalism and more generally on the return of Sick Boy, Spud, Renton and Begbie. From this point of view, it shows either a malaise regarding the handling of these female characters or is testimony to the effect that the book can have on its readers. By ignoring Nikki's part in the novel in his review, Gillmor demonstrates the book's influence and consequence for the representation of women in the novel. If the novel has this effect,

³⁷⁰ Tom Lappin, 'Book Reviews: *Porno*: Brain rotting'.

³⁷¹ Don Gillmor, 'Trainspotters Revisited', *The Globe and Mail*, (26 October 2002), <<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/trainspotters-revisited/article757381/>> [accessed 15/01/16].

³⁷² Don Gillmor, 'Trainspotters Revisited'.

³⁷³ Meb Kenyon and Phyllis Nagy, 'Season of lad tidings'.

we can start asking questions regarding the purpose of it; whether it is purely meant to be entertaining or whether sensationalism confirms sensations.

Indeed, the psychological impact of pornography has been disregarded or was not meant to be exploited by Welsh, as noted by a reviewer for *The Scotsman*:

Nikki's flirtation with pornography leads to great sex, mild cystitis and lots of money. In terms of plot mechanics, it is a success; however, its psychological effect is suspended and unexplored. At the end, whether Nikki is still bulimic or not is a moot point. It is as if the disease was only introduced to give the appearance of three dimensions.³⁷⁴

However, this emphasis on the lack of psychological trauma resulting from sex work also shows a need for a moralistic end of Nikki's pornographic experience, for Welsh to condone it or to explain it. Welsh is precisely a controversial writer, (raising polarised reactions) because he chooses not to place himself on a moral ladder; like some of his contemporaries, 'he offers no easy resolutions to suburbanites'.³⁷⁵

These reviews not only illustrate the reaction to Welsh's writing but also the reaction to Welsh's serious attempt at writing women. The question whether Welsh is a feminist, or a misogynist has always been there from *Trainspotting*; whether it was during the depiction of sex, male's desire, women's bodies and women's voices, but women's characters have always been side characters, second zone, exemplified in the film adaptations of Welsh's novels.³⁷⁶ The polarised reviews emerge when Welsh writes half of his novel from the point of view of a young English woman, probably the complete opposite of Welsh's characters and Welsh himself, with a serious attempt at depth and characterization. Welsh is neither a feminist or misogynist, but rather an iconoclast or a provocateur (social/philosophical). Welsh writes primarily about class, disfranchised working-class men dealing with the end of their world and therefore still a masculine world. However, if there are problems with Welsh's women characters, it does not invalidate attempts at *writing women* and showing the complexities of gender and class struggles. Contrary to the polarising reviews and readings of Welsh's work as either feminist or misogynist, this chapter argues that in challenging the notion of a fixed Scottish

³⁷⁴ Anonymous, 'Book Review: Porno'.

³⁷⁵ Irvine Welsh, 'Introduction' in *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis (London, N.Y: Vintage, 2015), p. vii.

³⁷⁶ Alan Riach, 'The Unnatural Scene: The Fiction of Irvine Welsh', in James Acheson and Sarah C.E. Ross (eds.), *The Contemporary British Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 40. See also Carole Jones, 'Welsh and Gender' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 56-57.

identity, Welsh examines alternative possibilities for understanding the nature of Scottish gender politics and sexuality through the Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy of ‘becoming-woman’. By reading Welsh’s conflicted feminism into a theoretical reading between Hélène Cixous’ *écriture féminine* and Deleuze and Guattari’s *becoming woman*, this chapter hopes to illustrate Welsh’s nuanced attempt at addressing feminist concerns in the reality of post-industrial Scotland.

Becoming-Woman in Welsh’s Novels: Rhizomatism as *Écriture Féminine*

In *A Thousand Plateaus* Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari present ‘becoming-woman’ and ‘becoming-animal’ as the two privileged ways to exit majoritarian structures of domination. Becoming, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is a rhizome. As we have seen in the first three chapters of this thesis, Welsh writes minor literature not because he is a minority nor because he writes with a particular identity, on the contrary, he writes with a voice which escape the constraints of identity, the voice of a people to be, yet to be created. Welsh’s fiction is impactful as minor literature because it helps to articulate the stifled voices of Scottish society, women, children and the poor. Welsh’s fiction seeks to continually challenge the idea of one voice and one identity (or philosophically one Being). As Rosi Braidotti confirms, ‘all becomings are minoritarian, that is to say, they inevitably and necessarily move in the direction of the “others” of classical dualism’.³⁷⁷

For Deleuze and Guattari, the philosophical concept of becoming is an ontological question about existence, identity, and subjectivity that can also be seen as a political strategy intended to destabilise patriarchal and capitalistic structures of domination, as this chapter seeks to illustrate through Welsh’s work. According to Deleuze and Guattari, all becomings begin with ‘becoming-woman’, since ‘woman’ has operated as the definitive ‘other’ of Western patriarchal society.³⁷⁸ Welsh’s characters always show contrasts, navigating between Being (the image of the Scottish woman) and becoming (multiple voices of different women with different experience of female sexuality who live in Scotland), always trying to escape imposed identities: they are those who escape it and those who are trapped. The themes of stagnation and entropy in Welsh’s novels are often characterised as masculine, whereby the impotence and impoverishment of Being is exposed as the burdening history that no one can escape from, the imposed gender roles and masculinist power over and the vision of civilisation. Following Deleuze and Guattari,

³⁷⁷ Braidotti, p. 34.

³⁷⁸ *ATP*, pp. 320-1.

women are usually the first victims in Welsh's unapologetic world, the first victims of phallogocentrism: always on the side, spectators, supporters, enduring and cheering, trapped into archetypal roles specifically designed for them by Thatcherite society. Becoming-woman does not mean imitating women, it is escaping men, not being men, as the esteemed Deleuzian feminist Claire Colebrook explains,

because man has been taken as the universal ground of reason and good thinking, becoming must begin with his opposite, 'woman'. But this becoming must then go beyond binary opposition and pass through to other becomings, so that man and woman can be seen as events within a field of singularities, events, atoms and particles.³⁷⁹

Indeed, Welsh writes woman not because he is a woman or because he imitates a woman but because he attempts to liberate his writing from phallogocentrism, to question a history of power, masculine domination and imagine the other. In this way, Welsh functions as an author of becoming woman, as Deleuze and Guattari write:

All we are saying is that these indissociable aspects of becoming-woman must first be understood as a function of something else: not imitating or assuming the female form, but emitting particles that enter the relation of movement and rest, or the zone of proximity, of microfemininity, in other words, that produce in us a molecular woman, create the molecular woman. We do not mean to say that a creation of this kind is the prerogative of the man, but on the contrary that the woman as a molar entity *has to become-woman* in order that the man also becomes – or become-woman.³⁸⁰

Therefore, Welsh, while often read as a feminist or a misogynist by his critics, is rather, as I argue, an artist who seeks to denaturalise the concept of 'Scottish Womanhood' as an essential, existential identity, in favour of a process of understanding becoming-woman. First, this chapter establishes becoming-woman through Welsh's rhizomatic writing style, which as Cixous writes, is an element of *écriture féminine*. After establishing Welsh's style as women's writing, I argue through the works of Julia Kristeva, that in an attempt to write

³⁷⁹ Claire Colebrook, 'Introduction' in Ian Buchanan and Claire Colebrook. *Deleuze and Feminist Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000): pp. 1-18, (p. 2).

³⁸⁰ *ATP*, p. 321.

women realistically, Welsh (while he does not always succeed), inverts the male gaze by exposing the possible liberatory powers of feminine abjection in his work. Finally, this chapter concludes that Welsh's ability to imagine becoming-woman does not only take place through his contradictory and sympathetic female characters, but through the experiences of his male protagonists (namely Mark Renton), who must face the awful joke of Scottish masculinity and its caricature of womanhood.

As we have seen in the earlier chapters, Welsh has experimented with narrative structure since *Trainspotting* and we identified the rhizomatic structure of his *oeuvre*: We see a large number of narrative connections in novels and between novels. There is not just one thread of connection but many, not just one entry point but a multitude. Welsh's fiction is an oeuvre made of sections, windows, vignettes, stagnation and progression, history repeating itself and clean breaks with the past that become messy returns. Welsh's entire universe is rhizomatic, a stream of consciousness which connects and disconnects characters or cities, but also feelings, point of views and intensities. There is not a predominant stream of thoughts, or one main protagonist and one story to tell even if Welsh's novels will gradually evolve from characters to a much more distinct line between major and minor characters as identified by Morace.³⁸¹ However, this line does not compromise the rhizomatic element of Welsh's work. As we have seen in Chapter Three, narratives do not stop at the end of a novel, they end there just to reappear in another novel, whether it is briefly just as a reference, for a chapter or for a whole novel. Welsh's work challenges the phallogocentric, fixed and rational perspectives of traditional Anglophone novels. This is the reason why in the reviews we saw the frustrations and almost a feeling of betrayal caused by Welsh's writing because there is never a sense of resolution, explanation or moralistic undertone in his novels. Welsh is literally all over the place, there is no linearity in his work, everything is webbed, expressive, embodied and explosive. This excessiveness characteristic of Welsh's work mirrors the image used by Hélène Cixous when she talks about what it means to write women or what is *écriture féminine*, as she describes it as a 'diffusion' opposing the 'erection' of phallogocentrism:

Her rising: is not erection. But diffusion. Not the shaft. The vessel. Let her write!
And her text knows in seeking itself that it is more than flesh and blood, dough
kneading itself, rising, uprising openly with resounding, perfumed ingredient, a

³⁸¹ Morace, *Irvine Welsh*, p. 128.

turbulent compound of flying colors, leafy spaces, and rivers flowing to the sea we feed.³⁸²

The image of the sea is not trivial, it englobes elements of flow, of change, fluctuation and insubordination or, in Cixous's words of overflowing, of flying:

In a way, feminine writing never stops reverberating from the wrench that the acquisition of speech, speaking out loud, is for her – 'acquisition' that is experienced more as tearing away, dizzying flight and flinging oneself, diving. Listen to woman speak in a gathering (if she is not painfully out of breath): she doesn't 'speak', she throws her trembling body into the air, she lets herself go, she flies, she goes completely into her voice, she vitally defends the 'logic' of her discourse with her body; her flesh speaks true. She exposes herself. Really she makes what she thinks materialize carnally, she conveys meaning with her body. She *inscribes* what she is saying because she does not deny unconscious drives the unmanageable part they play in speech. Her discourse, even when 'theoretical' or political, is never simple or linear or 'objectivized', universalized; she involves her story in history.³⁸³

As we have seen in Chapter One, Welsh's work exposed the same reaction, it produced affects through the language, through expression and forms (literary and the language itself), visual, bodily and with a voice which escaped any conventions: a transgression which sparked many debates in the literary world and even in the Booker Prize committee.

Minor literature tends to be rhizomatic, there is no linear resolution, it is not cohesive: it is overwhelming, intense in multiple directions, and multiple storytelling. Rhizomatic storytellings are *woman* in the sense of a becoming-woman: they are not encoded in one sex (an unfixed space where both sexes meet) and more importantly they let emerge any sort of becomings. Hence for Cixous, writing women, letting one's self experience Others, is possible for men writers and she mentions example such as: 'Kleist, Shakespeare. There are others. But I have never known an equal to such generosity. That is where I have loved. And felt I was loved.'³⁸⁴ In the same way, Deleuze and Guattari

³⁸² Cixous, p. 88.

³⁸³ Cixous, p. 92.

³⁸⁴ Cixous, p. 99.

mention Lawrence and Miller,³⁸⁵ Cixous describes Shakespeare as ‘that being-of-a-thousand-beings called Shakespeare’,³⁸⁶ a male writer who was able to overcome phallogocentrism, and instead, opted for difference, multi-dimensional minor voices, and always navigating in-between the binaries of male-female through the free-floating desires and love of people:

Sometimes I find where to put the many-lifted being that I am. Into elsewhere opened by men who are capable of becoming-woman? For the huge machine that ticks and repeats its ‘truth’ for all these centuries has had failures, or I wouldn’t be writing. There have been poets who let something different from tradition get through at any price – men able to love; therefore to love others, to want them; men able to think the woman who would resist destruction and constitute herself as a superb, equal, ‘impossible’ subject, hence intolerable in the real social context.³⁸⁷

With these words, Cixous permits the possibility of becoming woman for men, men can write women and they can even do it really well. Here, Welsh explains his process when he approaches women characters, attesting of his weariness and perhaps cautiousness as well as a willingness to extract himself from the phallogocentrism denounced by Cixous and Deleuze so he can allow himself to become woman:

It’s not so much I can’t write women characters, it’s a question of being very wary of doing it. It’s about acknowledging that you’re not a woman, and acknowledging the other-ness...of how women characters think, feel, react and all that. I don’t think women and men do think, feel, and react differently. But again, it’s this whole imperialist thing. You’ve got to be aware of the issues and acknowledge the possibility of that other-ness. So, it’s been a tentative process, for me, writing about women characters.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁵ *ATP*, p. 322: ‘The rise of women in English novel writing has spared no man: even those who pass for the most virile, the most phallogocratic, such as Lawrence and Miller, in their turn continually tap into and emit particles that enter the proximity or zone of indiscernibility of women. In writing, they become-women.’

³⁸⁶ Cixous, p. 98.

³⁸⁷ Cixous, p. 98.

³⁸⁸ Irvine Welsh in conversation with Aaron Kelly’, quoted in Aaron Kelly, *Irvine Welsh*, p. 209.

This is what we are going to explore in Welsh's fiction with examples from *Trainspotting* and *Porno* where his writing of women and his depiction of becoming-woman are the most profound.³⁸⁹

The Carnavalesque and the Object: Inverting the Male Gaze

Welsh's fiction is not perfect and not all women in his novels are well rounded characters and women from this world are acknowledged by Welsh but they remain, as part of his social realism, eternally punished in a place where if things get bad for working-class men, things will get worst for them. In an effort to explain his inclination for writing marginal voices, we can clearly see the problem when it comes to writing women; they will be the mere reflection or the ghost of men's breakdown, social class or misogyny:

I like to get characters who are in a fucked up phase of their life—they're not like that all the time, but they're having a bad year or a bad six months, a mental breakdown, or a relationship breakdown. The problem is when guys are like that, any woman who's got any intelligence isn't going to be around them. So the women who do tend to be around them tend to be... not victims, but in a bad way themselves, they tend to be completely fucked-up and insane themselves.³⁹⁰

This is true for Welsh's fiction: the women will almost always be subject, subject to the male gaze which will reduce them to their body. It is shown through Kirsty's violent rape in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* in which the denial and fantasies of Roy meet into a destructive and dehumanising gaze; his point of view, his gaze, his lies will kill her and the trial will finish her: she was never able to speak or simply to exist on the page, just like in Scottish society. Terry's or Sick Boy's opportunistic gaze, for example, fall into this expression of phallogocentrism, examples of a masculinist point of view who are either unable or unwilling to change. Welsh uses and plays with the male gaze throughout his *oeuvre*, in showing his awareness of it, as a problem in literature as well as his trying to overcome it, just like in the following example in *Skagboys* from Alison's point of view:

³⁸⁹ While using Deleuze and Guattari in feminist discourse, I am aware of the works of Claire Colebrook, Adrian Parr, Eve Bischoff and Elizabeth Grosz who write as a way to combat to Lacanian psychoanalysis. I am also aware that Cixous and Kristeva are read as post-Lacanian but I believe that once read with Deleuze they are post-structurally engaging.

³⁹⁰ Irvine Welsh in Emily Cook and Eric Lorberer. 'The "C" Word: Chef? An Interview With Irvine Welsh', *Rain Taxi Review of Books*, (2007), <<http://www.raintaxi.com/the-c-word-chef-an-interview-with-irvine-welsh/>> [accessed 20/03/15].

The Dalry Road pub was a standard working men's dive bar, similar to many that straddled Leith Walk. Alison felt she'd been undressed a dozen times during the short walk from door to bar. Alexander, shifting uncomfortably in his suit, glanced into an alcove at the back of the pub, where his brother, Russell, sat with a man dressed in overalls.³⁹¹

In a mirroring of the same point of view, we see even Begbie in *The Blade Artist* express the same seeming awareness about the violence of 'the male gaze', described famously by Laura Mulvey in her essay on visual pleasure and male audiences.³⁹² Welsh writes:

Frances seems to have vanished in the drizzle, but she's only crossed over to the Links side of the street, and is cutting through the park. He sets off in pursuit and catches up with her, walking behind her. His eyes instinctively go to her arse. The undulating movement of her buttocks beguiles him for a second, then he recalls discussions with Melanie about the objectifying male gaze, and he lifts his eyes to take in all of her frame. He thinks about men looking at his daughters in that way, as they grew up. What would he do? He would kill them. Tear them apart. Toast the memory of their stares with a pint of their still-warm blood.³⁹³

Renton's conflicting gaze from *Trainspotting* to *Dead Men's Trousers* matches probably best what Welsh's work shows: his work explores the complexities of gender relations in contemporary Scottish culture, especially in the way in which women are viewed, expressed, and examined in Scottish male society. Welsh writes women through the female body, he expresses female in bodily ways: he imagines their embodiment through 'vulgar' language, 'grotesque' descriptions, Tarantino-esque excess to the abject. In doing so, he, on the one hand, digs deeper into the male gaze (what is it, why is it and how) and on the other hand, he permits through it to liberate the Woman (as Thing) from the sexualised object, to see a figure of vitalistic difference, standing opposed to the dominant male

³⁹¹ *S*, p. 99.

³⁹² Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Feminism and Film Theory*, ed. by Constance Penley (New York: Routledge, 1988): 57–68.

³⁹³ *BA*, p. 122.

perspective.³⁹⁴ *Trainspotting* was already Welsh's first attempts to 'do women' and show the culture of misogyny women have to endure.³⁹⁵

In *Trainspotting*, the character of Kelly, a waitress in a pub to save up for university, is subjected to sexist remarks coming from a group of young wealthy men, 'white-settler types'.³⁹⁶ Welsh describes the encounter in the form of a joke gone wrong:

- One sais: - What do you call a good-looking girl in Scotland?
- Another snaps: - A tourist! They speak very loudly. Cheeky cunts.
- One then sais, gesturing in ma direction: - I don't know though. I wouldn't kick that out of bed.
- You prick. You fucking doss prick.³⁹⁷

She is then torn apart by her inability to answer back by the fear of losing her job and therefore her degree: 'No cash; no Uni, no degree'.³⁹⁸ Strangled by the terror of precarity and her experience status as a minor voice in Scottish and British society, Kelly continues, proceeding on taking the order:

Taking the order is a nightmare. They are engrossed in conversations about careers; commodity broking, public relations and company law seeming tae be the most popular, in between casually patronizing and trying tae humiliate me. The skinny creep actually asks me what time ah finish, and ah ignore him, as the rest make whooping noises and dae a drum roll on the table. Ah complete the order, feeling shattered and debased, and depart tae the kitchen.³⁹⁹

In this extract, gender and class come together as the power relations: client/waiter and man/woman fusion, blending together the violent separation of labour, class, and gender with histories of oppression, silence, and economic exploitation or retribution directed at women who spoke out. Any decisions will make her feel worst about herself and leave her

³⁹⁴ Slavoj Žižek, 'Courtly Love, or, Woman as Thing', in *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality* (London: Verso, 2005). pp. 89-112.

³⁹⁵ Carole Jones, 'Welsh and Gender' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Irvine Welsh*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 59.

³⁹⁶ *T*, p. 377.

³⁹⁷ *T*, p. 377.

³⁹⁸ *P*, p. 378.

³⁹⁹ *BA*, p. 378.

powerless, even if she stands up to herself, as her manager reminds her: ‘It’s business. The customer’s always right, even if he’s a fuckin knob-end’.⁴⁰⁰

Once more, Welsh shows how power works against working-class women. Her revenge and her sole source of power is ‘ironically’ through her body. In the kitchen, Kelly pours into their drinks her urine, period blood into their soups, rat poison and even mix her faeces with their food:

A couple ay these rich, imperialist bastards have ordered soup; out trendy tomato and orange. As Graham’s busy preparing the main courses, ah take the bloodied tampon and lower it, like a tea-bag, intae the fish bowl ay soup. A couple ay strands ay black, uteral lining float in the soup, before being dissolved wi a healthy stir.⁴⁰¹

Instead of a simple revenge, we witness the creation of a curse, recalling back the image of the witch and her cauldron, treating evil by evil, increasing the image of the ‘ugly truth’ glued to the fiction of Irvine Welsh, but also by using the unthinkable and the grotesque, Welsh brings out the absurd and the abject in the scene. The grotesque of the situation comes also from the profusion of body fluids as noted by Morace:

Less graphically but more perversely for the reader who fails to appreciate *Trainspotting* as a work of grotesque realism is Welsh’s Rabelaisian preoccupation with human orifices—mouths, anuses and vaginas, as well as needle holes—and with body fluids and biological processes (from eating, drinking and copulating to urination, defecation, menstruating, and vomiting).⁴⁰²

Here, Morace talks about bodies in general, not specifically about women. Both men’s and women’s bodies are subject to the coming out of body fluid, or humours, and it is linked with the grotesque of Welsh’s fiction, the desacralisation of the human body. In the above quote, Morace refers of course to the work of Mikhail Bakhtin on the carnivalesque, the image of the carnival and folk humour in literature from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance and its representation in contemporary literature.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰⁰ *T*, p. 378.

⁴⁰¹ *T*, p. 379.

⁴⁰² Morace, p. 35.

⁴⁰³ See also Carole Jones’s chapter ‘Welsh and Gender’ for more on the use of the carnivalesque in Welsh’s fiction.

It has been observed by Bakhtin himself and other critics such as Michael Holquist and Sue Vice that such images and representations of the carnivalesque in literature appear in context of intense social control. Vice notes that Bakhtin claims that the carnivalisation of literature:

proved remarkably productive as a means for capturing in art the developing relationships under capitalism, at a time when previous forms of life, moral principles and beliefs were being turned into ‘rotten cords’ and the previously concealed, ambivalent, and unfinalized nature of man and human thought was being nakedly exposed.⁴⁰⁴

In his study of the carnivalesque and the grotesque, Bakhtin identifies the Church as its main opposition, as the starting point of the release of the carnivalesque and revolutionary energies. The association of food and every possible fluid and excrement from Kelly’s body certainly creates a sense of what Kristeva calls abjection into the scene and this chapter plays with elements of contamination: here it is quite clear that menstruation and excrement are linked together in a maternal abjection, of contamination, of the impure or the evil as the image of the sorcerer comes to mind as Kristeva explains:

Blood, indicating the impure, takes on the ‘animal’ seme of the previous opposition and inherits the propensity for murder of which man must cleanse himself. But blood, as a vital element, also refers to women, fertility, and the assurance of fecundation. It thus becomes a fascinating semantic crossroads, the propitious place for abjection where death and femininity, murder and procreation, cessation of life and vitality all come together. ‘But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.’⁴⁰⁵

The liberation of the carnival means the liberation of the body; the grotesque representation of the body is at its core: there are no limits to the body, its fluids, excrements, snorts, are inherent and almost celebrated, ‘the bodily element is deeply positive’.⁴⁰⁶ There is no split between mind and body here, as Bakhtin argues:

⁴⁰⁴ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson, Manchester, 1984, pp. 165–66 quoted in Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997) p. 150.

⁴⁰⁵ Julie Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror: Essays on Abjection* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1982) p. 96.

⁴⁰⁶ Kristeva, p. 19.

Contrary to modern canons, the grotesque body is not separated from the rest of the world. It is not closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits. The stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world, that is, the parts through the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world. This means that the emphasis is on the apertures or convexities, or on various ramifications and offshoots: the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose. The body discloses its essence as a principle of growth which exceeds its own limits only in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking, or defecation. This is the ever unfinished, ever creating body, the link in the chain of genetic development, or more correctly speaking, two links shown at the point where they enter into each other. This especially strikes the eye in archaic grotesque.⁴⁰⁷

As pointed out by Vice, the carnivalesque has its continuity in the work of Kristeva, notably in her essay *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* in which she takes a psychoanalytic approach to the grotesque and the abject.⁴⁰⁸ Thus, the grotesque is the experience of the in-between, the hybrid, the monstrous, the other, and the unsettling, which is necessary for undermining the sanitised and the oppressed world defined by religious mores or masculinist civil laws, both of which reproduce the means of male power in society.

In her essay, Kristeva explains the human subject as being in a crisis of identity once confronted with the abject. The abject is neither subject nor object but only affect without any limits. This crisis of identity has its origin in the rebellion in the parental authority. It is the abjection that signals the identity crisis but also the shaping of the new identity. For Kristeva, the abjection is first the confrontation with the mother and the maternal realm in general. The child will learn through a paternal world: the law of the father or the name of the father, but it is the mother who will teach the child its limits: what he can eat, how he should behave, etc. The phallogocentrism of thoughts needs to abject in order to identify, abjecting the mother. Kristeva insists of course on the importance of the Oedipal triangle: first the abjection of the corpse, of decay, of putrefaction, comes from the

⁴⁰⁷ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 26.

⁴⁰⁸ Vice, p. 163.

father, the abjection of murder and the second is the forbidden maternal body, the abjection of incest:

What will concern me here is not the socially productive value of the son-mother incest *prohibition* but the alterations, within subjectivity and within the very symbolic competence, implied by the *confrontation with the feminine* and the way in which societies code themselves in order to accompany as far as possible the speaking subject on that journey. Abjection, or the journey to the end of the night.⁴⁰⁹

Kristeva describes this confrontation as a perpetual battle for power between the sexes – ‘two powers who [attempt] to share our society’.⁴¹⁰ Therefore, a story of domination follows in which the other sex has to be stigmatised and demonised:

The question of the origins of such a handling of sexual difference remains moot. But whether it be within the highly hierarchical society of India or the Lele in Africa it is always to be noticed that the attempt to establish a male, phallic power is vigorously threatened by the no less virulent power of the other sex, which is oppressed (recently? or not sufficiently for the survival needs of society?). That other sex, the feminine, becomes synonymous with a radical evil that is to be suppressed.⁴¹¹

However, the abjection is quickly subverted as Welsh uses abjection as a weapon, to repel the bourgeois values and especially Christian morality which seek to detach women from their bodies as their embodiment and sexuality is monitored through morality. Kelly’s act of gendered retribution deterritorialises the male-centric realms of the Welshverse, inverting the male abjection of *Filth* or *Porno*.

Furthermore, in an act of women’s writing, Kelly writes an essay for her philosophy class on morality. The prompt asks whether it is relative or absolute, and highlights women’s imprisonment and repressions through religious discourses on morality at the beginning of the chapter, which she shares in through her silence. Yet at the end of the chapter she chooses:

⁴⁰⁹ Kristeva, p. 58.

⁴¹⁰ Kristeva, p. 58.

⁴¹¹ Kristeva, p. 70.

In my essay, ah now think that ah'd be forced tae put that, in some circumstances, morality is relative. That's if ah was being honest with masel. This is not Dr Lamont's view though, so ah may stick wi absolutes in order tae curry favour and get high marks.⁴¹²

Welsh renders their reality more palpable, deterritorialising women's bodies and therefore the male gaze through the language of the minor and the carnivalesque abjection, cleaning away institutional contamination. Here, the abjection of food and women's bodies reveals the underlying reality of men's consumption of women's bodies; they are easily consumed and easily misunderstood by them. The title of the chapter only confirms this image as 'Eating out' signals both eating at a restaurant, outside of the home, and literally eating a woman out, suggesting the cannibalistic and sexual image of men consuming women.

Nina and the Becoming-Woman of the Revolutionary Girl

In chapters such as 'Growing Up in Public', Welsh focuses on the character of Nina, a teenage girl (Mark Renton's cousin as we learn at the end of the chapter) navigating through the family reunion at her Uncle Andy's funeral. This chapter marks her only appearance in the novel and in the Welshverse. Through her eyes, the perspectives are changed and yet when we reach the end of the chapter she is immediately (re)attached to Renton not because she mentions him as her cousin but because her experience, her existence faces the same obstacle and refusal to conform: she is in-between, between the child and the woman, the girl or the becoming of all becomings according to Deleuze and Guattari: 'The girl is like the block of becoming that remains contemporaneous to each opposable term, man, woman, child, adult. It is not the girl who becomes a woman; it is becoming-woman that produces the universal girl'.⁴¹³ Nina refuses her past as a child:

She could find no emotional connection though, between the her of now and the her of then, and therefore no emotional connection to Andy. To hear her relatives,

⁴¹² *P*, p. 381.

⁴¹³ *ATP*, p. 277.

recount these days of infancy and childhood made her squirm with embarrassment. It seemed an essential denial of herself as she was now.⁴¹⁴

More than refusing her past, she refuses the frozen image of herself, the impossibility to change, to become and to escape identification. Deleuze and Guattari reinforce this idea: 'The girl's becoming is stolen first, in order to impose a history, or prehistory, upon her'.⁴¹⁵ She is in-between times of frozen images of her childhood from her relatives' memories in which she does not recognise herself and womanhood in which her family are already waiting for her to conform to the molar composition of women. Through the eyes of Nina, we also see Renton's mother in new light if not finally noticing her: 'Nina liked her Auntie Cathy. She was the most outgoing of her aunts, and treated her like a person rather than a child'.⁴¹⁶

She creates uneasiness wherever she goes, at first from her mother: 'Despite the unmistakable resentment she could feel from her mother, Nina could not fathom what she had done wrong. The signals were confusing. First it was: Keep out of the way; then: Don't just stand there'.⁴¹⁷ Nina is never in the right place, she has to learn her place in the world, she deranges/unsettles. Even more painful, it is her mother who already treats her as other, suggesting a violence among women, a lack of support and understanding, symbolic of an internalised misogyny. Welsh moves towards the visceral, her inside waiting to disrupt: 'Through in the kitchen, she studied her face in the mirror, focusing on a spot above her top lip. Her black hair, cut in a sloping wedge, looked greasy, although she had just washed it the night before. She rubbed her stomach, feeling bloated with fluid retention. Her period was due. It was a bummer'.⁴¹⁸ The taboo of menstruation is explored by Welsh in the following scene:

In the lavatory she took off her clothes, starting with her black, lacy gloves. Examining the extent of the damage, she noted that the discharge had gone through her knickers but had not got into her back leggings. – Shite, she said, as drops of thick, dark blood fell onto the bathroom carpet. She tore off a few strips of toilet paper, and held them to her in order to stem the flow. She then checked the bathroom cabinet but could find no tampons or sanitary towels. Was Alice too old

⁴¹⁴ *T*, p. 42.

⁴¹⁵ *ATP*, p. 322.

⁴¹⁶ *T*, p. 44.

⁴¹⁷ *T*, p. 41.

⁴¹⁸ *T*, pp. 41-2.

for periods? Probably. Soaking some more paper with water, she managed to get most of the stains out of the carpet. Nina stepped tentatively into the shower. After splashing herself, she made another pad from bog-roll, and quickly dressed, leaving off her pants which she washed in the sink, wrung out, and stuffed into her jacket pocket. She squeezed the spot above her top lip, and felt much better.⁴¹⁹

The detailed account of the urgency to clean and hide menstruation is not abject or grotesque; it is simply a lonely process, there is no impression of support, or seen as something human, on the contrary it is almost robotic, it is something to conceal, to be finished with as soon as possible. It separates her from the rest of her family. A body to manage, to take care of, to assume and to deal with on her own: that is all Nina is reduced to in this moment of womanhood.

There is a subtle abjection to it: the need to make it disappear which brings back the rejection of her mother and the danger of her own identity as Kristeva explains, the social and sexual identity, her sexual difference.⁴²⁰ Menstrual blood is closely attached to what Kristeva calls 'corporeal waste',⁴²¹ blood and excrements, the sudden flow of menstrual blood during the funeral can also be seen as a way to link death and fertility, to bring back the vitalistic element of menstruation and therefore womanhood.⁴²² Her own abjection to motherhood, through the description of a procedure her aunt had to go through in order to have children, is more on the corporeal reality and the intense pressure of pregnancy, of forced and imposed lives of 'producing' children and therefore of what capitalist society expects of women:

- Aw aye. Medical science. How's Elsa by the way? Kenny's voice dropped.
 - She's gaun in fir another op. Fallopian tube job. Apparently what they dae is...
- Nina turned and left the room. All Malcom seemed to want to talk about were the operations his wife had undergone to enable them to produce a child. The details made the tips of her fingers feel raw.⁴²³

There is a clear rejection of the molar of Scottish women: quiet, attentive mothers, whose public and private role is defined by reproductive capital and the labour of bearing and

⁴¹⁹ *T*, p. 45.

⁴²⁰ Kristeva, p. 71.

⁴²¹ Kristeva, p. 70

⁴²² Kristeva, p. 96.

⁴²³ *T*, p. 43

raising children. The abjection here is on the rawness of the condition of women in her family. She sees no other way out; she is offered no other possibility. Jeremy Idle argues in his essay about William McIlvanney that ‘the women worth knowing can become fixed as victims, as with this off-the-cuff example and as with the mining community of *Docherty* (1975) where women give birth, suffer, and are ordered into the house before a decent fight’.⁴²⁴

Idle describes the recurrent image of the molar composition of women in (working class) Scottish literature, and the same women are found in Welsh’s novels. Women after birth are usually denigrated as loose, morbidly obese and stupid, almost as a caricature of the image of the working-class woman in 1970s and 1980s literature. These working-class women are submissive, repeatedly beaten or single mothers and victims of and reduced to their body weight such as June in *The Blade Artist*:

Even since he’d briefly seen her at his mother’s funeral, surprisingly obese, June has massively expanded. It’s impossible to square this version with the thin, brittle one of his memory. She looks at him, and, for an excruciating second, seems as if she is going to hug him. Her lips quiver, and her eyes implore. But then she turns abruptly, and heads inside. Assailed by the smell of cats and old, congealed deep-fried fat and, most of all, stale tobacco, he follows her into the flat.⁴²⁵

Beyond the constant assault June must endure throughout her relationship with a violent Begbie and the impossible expectations set for her, we see a similar experience described in *Glue*, in which Terry’s mother who describes the aftermath of having children and aging:

Paula was waiting. Waiting for his kisses, for that comforting arm that was now round Alice. Crying, puffy, sagging Alice. What a contrast with Paula’s youthful body; tight, lithe, unmarked by childbirth. There really could be no contest.⁴²⁶

As a curse, women once they have undergone a pregnancy are no longer women to be seen or to be desired, simply imprisoned in her isolation and domesticity. Motherhood is abject in this way. Just like the pub culture or the representation of the hardmen, Welsh plays

⁴²⁴ Jeremy Idle, ‘McIlvanney, Masculinity and Scottish Literature’ in *Scottish Affairs*, 2 (1993), p. 53.

⁴²⁵ *BA*, p. 69.

⁴²⁶ *G*, p. 8.

with his readers' social expectations of him and the working-class he writes about, offering a distorted image of women made by the men who will also twist their children's image of gender role. Through the eyes of their children, Welsh's women are treated between love and abjection as a reminder of the idealised version of the working-class mother whose social statute is, according to Horst Prillinger, 'typically the third position after male adults and male children. As the fathers are often conspicuously absent from these stories [working-class fiction], the mother has to bear the whims of her son.'⁴²⁷ Images of obese women are recurrent in Welsh's fiction and they are the representation of the consequences of precarity. Their bodies still reflect their social value, their capital and their place in society and precarity leads them to either cheap junk food or use their body through sex work, for example. For women in the working class their body is both their way out and their prison.

The Joke of Womanhood: The Tensions of the Carnavalesque and Female Abject

Thus, throughout Welsh's character of Nina and the many other women he writes, the male gaze is challenged and overwhelmed by realism, exaggeration, and a liberating evaluation of what is abject and what is not. In reversing Nina's gaze back on his readers, Welsh reveals a deconstructive, reflexive, and alienating experience of becoming-woman:

That lassie never wears anything but black. In ma day, lassies wore nice bright colours, instead ay tryin tae look like vampires. Uncle Boab, fat, stupid Uncle Boab had said that. The relatives had laughed. Every one of them. Stupid, petty, laughter. The nervous laughter of frightened children trying to keep on the right side of the school hardcase, rather than that of adults conveying that they had heard something funny. Nina consciously realized for the first time that laughter was about more than humour. This was about reducing tension, solidarity in face of the grim reaper.⁴²⁸

Here, Nina's family uses Nina's body and her refusal to conform to the standards of Scottish womanhood as a means to relieve the tension. She is the joke, her becoming-woman is the joke to ease the fear of her relatives. Like Kelly becoming the joke for the

⁴²⁷ Horst Prillinger, *Family and the Scottish Working-Class Novel 1984-1994* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 120-1.

⁴²⁸ *T*, p. 43.

sake of her misogynistic customers, Nina's joke-becoming reveals the gross hypocrisy of the male carnivalesque, a style of cruel bigotry that is often misunderstood as the everyday jocular misogyny of Welsh's own works, which as I illustrated earlier, often becomes the primary critique of bourgeois readers. Note how Nina first condemns the men, denouncing the hypocrisy of the laughter, until she attempts to gaze back at them as the Major, the molar, and reflections of the patriarchal State. In an attempt to understand the gross inequities women must endure, Nina awakens to see that her family, the men and the women of her family, have internalised the expectations of women in Scottish society for her to perform.

Similarly, the joke of Womanhood, reflected by Nina's challenge to parochial patriarchy and the dominance of the family, is explored as a way for Welsh to deterritorialise the male carnivalesque, thus presenting the punchline of egalitarianism in modern Scottish society. The chapter 'The Elusive Mr Hunt' starts with the point of view of Mark as Mark and Sick Boy are preparing to prank Kelly while she is working at the pub. Sick Boy, calling from another pub, asks for a 'Mark Hunt' and as Kelly asks the name several times to the crowd, the joke unfolds with the growing laughter as 'Mark Hunt' sounds exactly like 'Ma (my) cunt'; '- ANYBODY SEEN MARK HUNT? Some guys at the bar collapse into loud laughter. - Naw, but ah'd like tae! one says.⁴²⁹ She quickly realises her mistake and the point of view shifts between Kelly and Renton:

Kelly throws the half-empty contents of a water jug at them, but they scarcely notice. While it's all a laugh to them, she feels humiliated. She feels bad about feeling bad, about not being able to take a joke. Until she realized that it's not the joke that bothers her, but the men in the bar's reaction to it. Behind the bar, she feels like a caged animal in a zoo who has done something amusing. She watches their faces, distorted into a red, gaping, gloating commonality. The joke is on the woman again, she thinks, the silly wee lassie behind the bar.⁴³⁰

Here, there are clear elements of the Bakhtinian grotesque, insisting on the 'distorted' faces, reminder of masks and images of the monsters, but this is not minoritarian, here the monsters are releasing repressed masculine rage and embracing the dominant voice 'gaping and gloating commonality', the other is not the monster laughing but the woman, eternally othered. The joke is on the woman because the joke is deemed funny only because *she is a*

⁴²⁹ *T*, p. 348

⁴³⁰ *T*, p. 349.

woman, the only woman in the room. The image of the cage emphasises the violent image of domination and colonisation as it suggests that she resembles the complete Other, displayed openly without any agency in a seemingly colonial human zoo. Welsh also shows here the carnivalesque tradition is brutally masculine. The human zoo, the abjection of women and their ridicule were all part of the carnivalesque, which stayed a very masculine dominated tradition. Here the grotesque is not reformative or revolutionary: it is entirely oppressive. Welsh's depicts the joke of womanhood through the carnivalesque, and like with Nina, attempts to turn it back on the readers who might actually find the joke of womanhood funny. Kelly, like Nina, has internalised misogyny to an extent that neither quite understand why they are targets of a joke. The lack of agency of the character and on her own sex and her sexuality is emphasised by the joke itself, 'where is ma cunt', which enunciates the displacement of her control over her body, her image, and her sense of self.

This scene is even more poignant as it happens just after the chapter 'Feeling Free', in which Kelly and Alison alongside with other women are depicted as fighting back street harassment, leading to a scene in which the women bond together over the violence of the male gaze, and form a temporary coalition together. The older women in the group, however, cannot enjoy the coalitional victory for long. As Welsh describes, 'the wifies' have to return to their domestic prison immediately after the bonding takes place: 'We tried tae get the wifies tae come, but they had tae go hame and get their men's teas on, despite us telling them to let the bastards get their ain food. One was really tempted: - Ah wish ah wis your age again hen, ah'd dae it aw different, ah kin tell ye'.⁴³¹ Welsh is very clear in this chapter as he talks about internalised misogyny, as he voices in Kelly: 'Our problem is, we don't think aboot it that often and jist accept the bullshit these pricks dish oot tae us'.⁴³²

The following lines describes Mark's arrival at Kelly's flat and finds himself the outsider among this group of women, bonding with each other over the patriarchal Scottish society. As Mark gently leaves, Kelly and Jane note:

- I suppose some of them are okay, Jane sais, eftir we've composed oorselves.
- Aye, when they're in the fucking minority thir okay, ah sais, wondering where the edge in ma voice had come fae, then no wantin tae wonder too much.⁴³³

⁴³¹ T, p. 345.

⁴³² T, p. 346.

⁴³³ T, p. 347.

The power of her voice scares Kelly and she decides to ignore it rather than embracing it. This act will cost her a lot as the later joke will humiliate her and the men will only get a stronger power over her: it is a revenge well-orchestrated by Welsh as the men who were ridiculed in the previous chapter, their hate towards them is released in the revenge as Kelly describes: ‘the guy looks at her wi real hate, but he was lookin like that anyway. It’s only like, now he’s got a reason tae hate her, rather than just because she’s a woman.’⁴³⁴ This backlash signals the impossibility for women to win, to gain power in this world. In his depiction of women, Welsh does not advocate a ‘radical egalitarianism’ as Carole Jones argues, but on the contrary, he painfully represents the world they live in, that is, a brutal, unequal, unforgiving working-class community on the verge of dissemination.⁴³⁵ However, in the chapter ‘The Elusive Mr Hunt’, Welsh does not stop there and transforms the humiliating moment for Kelly into a different experience for Renton as he allows himself to become woman:

Renton looks at her and sees her pain and anger. It cuts him up. It confuses him. Kelly has a great sense of humour. What’s wrong with her? The knee-jerk thought: *Wrong time of the month* is forming in his head when he looks about and picks up the intonations of the laughter. This is lynch mob laughter. How was ah tae know, he thinks. How the fuck was ah tae know?⁴³⁶

Renton, who is at the origin of the joke with Sick Boy, had the preconception of the joke being funny because it is drawing from the Being of women, the molar composition of women, the joke is at the expense of the other. Based solely on the phallogocentric view of fraternal othering, womanhood becomes a joke not because women are inherently silly or humorous, but because the notion of women existing in the public realm at all upsets the masculinist order of millennia of patriarchal oppression. The fact that it happens in a pub is also worth noting as the place reinforced the hostility towards women. The pub is a symbol of the masculine working-class world where women should not enter unaccompanied or at all: a world not made for women. After the joke, Renton learns through Kelly, but first he goes through an unwillingness to learn from the other ‘What’s wrong with her?’ or when he thinks ‘*Wrong time of the month*’ as a way to block his point of view by a biological distinction between sexes instead of allowing himself to see her as human. Following his

⁴³⁴ *T*, p. 343.

⁴³⁵ Carole Jones, ‘Welsh and Gender’, p. 59.

⁴³⁶ *T*, p. 349.

discovery, Renton realises the sorrow of the joke. In recognising his becoming woman, he experiences an intense level of embodied experience of the world as woman: a molecular experience of becoming woman, or as Cixous would say, a ‘diffusion’ as Renton is overwhelmed by his discovery.⁴³⁷ The chapter closes by his anger ‘how was he to know?’, referring to his inability to know how painful the joke of womanhood actually felt like. Renton never directs his ire at Kelly, but rather, at his realisation and his experience at becoming woman, unbearable, between shame and anger, accomplice and victim.⁴³⁸

Indeed, because of Renton’s ability to witness the possibility of becoming-woman, he too, is able to support his younger cousin Nina in overcoming her anger and uneasiness of the male gaze, and urges her, like Kelly and Alison, to fight against it by growing out of it:

Nina recognized that the look Geoff had been giving her was not one of hate, but of lust. He’d obviously been drinking before he had arrived and his inhibitions were lowered.

- You’ve really grown, Nina, he said.
- Aye, she blushed, knowing she was doing it, and hating herself for it.⁴³⁹

With Nina and Kelly as the Deleuzo-Guattarian girls, everything they experience is a flux of intensities, of emotions, of bodily movements, and vicious silencings and otherings. Like Kelly, Nina moves through her multiple becomings, attempting to escape her past by passing through another becoming, as she moves, avoids, faces, and detours her relatives, only to allow herself to be open to other becomings, like a stream of consciousness that overwhelms her. This is the women’s writing of Nina, the becoming-woman of Nina, that Welsh sympathises with, reminding us of Cixous’ and Deleuze and Guattari’s Virginia Woolf. Nina, finding her existential becomings beyond the State, is suddenly overflowing with tears as she lets herself fill with new and past intensities:

- It’s awright darling. There ye go hen. Dinnae worry yirsel, she said, as Nina realized that she was crying like a baby. Crying with a raw power and unselfconscious abandon as the tensions ebbed from her body and she became limp in Cathy’s arms. Memories, sweet childhood memories, flooded her

⁴³⁷ Cixous, p. 88.

⁴³⁸ *T*, p. 349.

⁴³⁹ *T*, p. 49.

consciousness. Memories of Andy and Alice, and the happiness and love that once lived here, in the home of her auntie and uncle.⁴⁴⁰

Like Kelly's wrathful realisation of the joke of womanhood, Nina's abject crying is powerful, intense, and world-shattering; like the great floods of womanhood that she feels all at once, Nina feels the rush of experiencing becoming-woman. Throughout the Welshverse, girls are often the most important conduits towards a becoming-woman, as Deleuze and Guattari can affirm. As Nina and Kelly embrace the abject, Welsh chastises the carnivalesque laughter of the misogynistic, moving his readers towards more radical experiences of becoming-woman, becoming-stream, becoming-ocean. Thus, the equally Biblical and feminine image of Nina's floods echoes not only her wild affects and emotions, but like her menstruations, these images of water and blood reflect themes of life and death. As a safeguard of choosing life, Nina moves between mourning, contamination, and an intense desire to flee the rotten domestic space to signal a becoming yet to come. For all of Welsh's struggles with masculinity in his novels, it seems as though Nina's becoming-woman is the most violent, revolutionary shattering of the natural order of a patriarchal Scotland. Here a becoming-woman reveals the complex pains and battles that the poor, vulnerable, and precarious women of working-class society must overcome, often on their own, not only fighting violence or harassment, but the awful laughter and jeering that comes with becoming-woman.

'Some cunt's fuckin gittin it': Porno and the Problematic Sex Wars for Feminism

In *Porno*, Irvine Welsh examines the cultural turning point in the 1990s concerning the representations of women in society. Welsh attempts to draw a parallel between the abundance and consumption of pornography and capitalist society with the codification of the physical aspect of the woman's body and its use, its commodification and its consequences. Nikki works for a sauna where she earns money by giving sexual massages in order to subsist and pay for her studies in Scottish literature. The link between her experience as a sex-worker and the impacts of the capitalist society on the representation of women and the trade (whether it is literal or symbolic) of women's bodies, is quite obvious when Nikki claims: 'That's the thing with sex-work; it always comes down to the most

⁴⁴⁰ T, pp. 51-2.

basic formulas. If you really want to see how capitalism operates, never mind Adam Smith's pin factory, this is the place to study'.⁴⁴¹ For example, Morace argues that:

If the virtue, as it were, of pornography does indeed lie in its transgressiveness – the very quality that made *Trainspotting* so powerful and influential in terms of style, subject matter, language and structure as well as its economic, cultural and political consequences – then a key weakness of *Porno* is that, despite its mock-shock and titillating title, it is not transgressive enough, or at all. After all, by 2002, porn was everywhere [...] *Porno* is what, according to [Frank] Rich, the whole sex industry is: no longer an affront to the nation's values but a ringing endorsement of the values of our consumer society in an age of global capitalism, with pornography already chic and with food, alt and punk-porn all growing trends.⁴⁴²

At first glance, Nikki appears as a confident young woman until the chapter entitled '...ugly...'. The chapter focuses on the effects magazines and media in general have on young women, notably regarding the impossibility to attain the standards imposed by society and therefore the impossibility to identify with the images of objectified women conveyed in everyday life: 'There is no way mine is as perfect as hers. My breasts are too small. I will never be in the magazines, cause I'm not magazines material, I don't look like her'.⁴⁴³ In choosing to take part in Sick Boy's amateur porn film, Nikki thinks she can have some amount of control over her body, by making the willing choice of being objectified in an attempt to redefine the vision of women's sexuality as a feminist choice. Lauren, described by Nikki as 'a puritanical girl',⁴⁴⁴ views this choice as a betrayal:

- But it's pornography Nikki! You're being used! I let out my breath slowly.
- Why do you care? I'm not stupid, it's my choice, I tell her. [...]
- What you are doing is against your own sex. You're enslaving and oppressing women everywhere! You study this Dianne! Tell her, she urges. [...]
- It's a wee bit more complex than that Lauren. I'm finding out a lot about this as I go along. I don't think porn per se is the real issue. I think it's how we consume.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴¹ *P*, p. 88.

⁴⁴² Robert Morace, 'Irvine Welsh: Parochialism, Pornography and Globalisation' in Berthold Schoene (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 229.

⁴⁴³ *P*, p. 66.

⁴⁴⁴ *P*, p. 28.

⁴⁴⁵ *P*, p. 266.

As Nikki articulates, consumption is central to the way women are seen and perceived. Talking about the viewers of pornography, Angela Carter remarks:

We know we are not dealing with real flesh or anything like it, but with a cunningly articulated verbal simulacrum which has the power to arouse, but not, in itself, to assuage desire. At this point, the reader, the consumer, enters the picture; reflecting the social dominance which affords him the opportunity to purchase the flesh of other people as if it were meat, the reader or consumer of pornography is usually a man who subscribes to a particular social fiction of manliness. His belief in this fiction prevents him from realising that, when he picks up a dirty book, he engages in a game with his own desire and with his own solitude, both of which he endlessly titillates but never openly confronts.⁴⁴⁶

Pornography turns women into objects which can be consumed and bought. One woman's body can be substituted indefinitely for another. If seen like this, pornography robs the woman of her identity, which almost happened for Nikki until she decides to stop it.⁴⁴⁷ This example also illustrates a central division in Anglo-American feminism which is the compatibility of pornography and feminism, or the 'Porn Wars' in feminism. Jane Gerhard identifies the end of the second wave of feminism as being a consequence of the 'Sex War' in feminism (antipornography feminists and sex-positive feminists), which had a deep impact on the view of women's sexuality, pornography being a central issue:

The psychological essentialism outlined in theories of women's difference and their subordination of sexuality to gender proved enormously useful to the other major branch of cultural feminism, the antipornography movement. For these feminists, theories that reaffirmed women's desire for intimacy, mutuality, and care bolstered their critique of pornography and rape as key elements of an oppressive form of heterosexuality. Antipornography feminists utilized the same set of traits outlined in theories of women's difference toward specifically political ends. [...]

In the years between 1975 and 1980, feminists turned their attention to sexual violence: rape, the seeming acceptability of sexual assault within marriage and the family, the economic power of pornography, and the near legal sanctioning of

⁴⁴⁶ Angela Carter, *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (London: Virago, 2006), p. 15.

⁴⁴⁷ For more on pornography, see Linda Williams' *Porn Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

violence against women. Feminists active in the antipornography movement used theories of women's difference to outline a distinct view of female sexuality.⁴⁴⁸

Lauren and Nikki seem to represent two different visions of women's liberation of social oppression and therefore embody the sex war of the second wave of feminism moving towards the third wave. Nikki, in taking part in a porn film, takes back the control of her image in order to go against the submissive and objectified representation of women in the porn industry. Lauren, on the contrary, embodied another extreme, that is the stereotype of the middle-class, uptight described in the novel by Nikki as 'that closet lesbo frigid little moraliser'⁴⁴⁹ or 'priggish feminist' by Robert Morace.⁴⁵⁰ She refuses to see sex-workers as willingly choosing this career and she only sees them as victims. Lauren is seen as looking down on working class's struggles and choices, as she does not see further than the pornographic act itself rather than the context and its consequences as pointed out by Dianne. Dianne embodies the balance and the link between the two women, making her the only female character to avoid extremism and therefore becoming a sort of feminine ideal to the reader. Moreover, Nikki is presented as a posh English student which serves the plot and Welsh's handling of pornography as it avoids the trap of falling into a moralistic account of working-class women as sex-workers. However, Welsh will hint on these issues in several occasions, most notably in *A Decent Ride* and *Dead Men's Trousers*.

At the end of the novel, Nikki realises the impossibility to keep control of her image and therefore sexuality when she sees the final product of the movie. Sick Boy, who edited some scenes to change the reality in his own way, made the character played by Nikki look like she was performing anal sex even though she explicitly said she was against it and she would not do it: 'I said nobody fucked me up in the arse! Why did the scene need to be put in that sequence? That is not me! It's Mel!'⁴⁵¹ Here, the editing process is a harsh reminder of how reality works in the context of consumption in Capitalist society, as the most adept neoliberal capitalist in the Welshverse, Sick Boy, will remind Nikki:

Editing's a creative process, it's a craft, an art, designed to maximize the erotic experience. I was at that editing suite for four days and nights, my eyes fucking

⁴⁴⁸ Linda Gerhard, *Desiring Revolution: Second-Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of Twentieth-Century American Sexual Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 173.

⁴⁴⁹ *P*, p. 93.

⁴⁵⁰ Robert Morace, *Irvine Welsh*, p.128.

⁴⁵¹ *P*, p. 372.

stinging, and this is the shite I get! I need creative freedom to edit the material!
 Youse are fascists!⁴⁵²

Sick Boy's answer to the outrage of his two lead actresses also confirms his hypocrisy: for Sick Boy female bodies and identities are endlessly replaceable and the art form disguises the selling and consumption of these fake images.

The American stand-up comedian Dave Chappelle uses Iceberg Slim's *Pimp: The Story of my Life* (1967) in order to describe insidious form of human exploitations; describing how Slim forces his best 'ho' to extend her mileage, in other words, as Chappelle explains:

Mileage on a ho' is a very wild concept. It means that pimp understand there's a finite amount of bad shit a person can do before they lose their fuckin mind. And a good pimp can look at a woman that he's never seen before and call it. She's good for 500 fucks. That's her mileage. Anything over that, that bitch is gonna spill. They do it to you. Why the fuck you think most of us work nine to five? 'Cause nine to six might kill a bitch.⁴⁵³

Thus, the editing scene reveals similarly that Nikki feels that she was part of the problem as well as being a victim, literally and metaphorically fucked over by Sick Boy. Nikki, at this moment, is at 'the end of her mileage', and as with all young women in the pornography industry, quickly becomes obsolete for her male employer. Most importantly, Nikki's realisation that she had been exploited will lead her to abandon the idea and the hope that women can have any sort of control in the pornography industry in avoiding internal submission. She finally realises the essence of capitalism and the problem of a durable exploitation of labour and of bodies, as Welsh writes: '*Some cunt's fuckin gittin it*'.⁴⁵⁴

In the words of Slim and Chappelle, Nikki takes on one too many fucks, and she finally spills: 'I'm not doing porn again; I'm not going to that fucking sauna again either'.⁴⁵⁵ As Nikki fumes, Welsh expresses the pain and fury she experiences upon realising that her body – like Kelly and Nina's bodies – is not truly hers to control in the masculine public sphere:

⁴⁵² P, p. 373.

⁴⁵³ Dave Chappelle, *The Bird Revelation*, Netflix, (2017).

⁴⁵⁴ P, p. 127.

⁴⁵⁵ P, p. 376.

It hits me like an iron fist in the chest that in this global communications village somehow, in some way, my father's going to see me getting a butt-fuck I didn't actually get. I hate the idea of having anal sex; as a woman it's a negation of your femininity. Most of all, I loathe being a fake. My family. The boys at the uni, some of the bitter, immature little nothings I've knocked back, all wanking off at the image in their bedsits. Others, thinking they know all about me, all about my sexuality from that image.⁴⁵⁶

Nikki has been seen challenging the bourgeois family and challenging what it is to be a woman in patriarchal society and more importantly she was navigating through feminism and trying to find a way where she could fit in feminist discourse. She lists the patriarchal discourse that imprisons women, she feels its full weight for the first time since she left her bourgeois bubble. She goes through moments of flux as she leaves the studio, challenging binary visions, she enunciates acts of becoming. When she comes home, she finds Lauren who tries to comfort her. The following scene happens just after Nikki, confused and in search of herself, kisses Lauren:

I raise my head to kiss her. She returns my kiss, a tentative fear in her eyes. I want her to be free, not the stiff way she always is, I want her to stretch and bend...but when my hand goes down to her flat belly and starts caressing it she stiffens and pushes me away. – Don't, Nikki, please, don't do that.

My body stiffens as much as hers. It's like we've both just done a line of coke. – I'm sorry I thought it was what you wanted, I thought it was what you always wanted.

Lauren shakes her head in a look of uncomprehending shock. – You really thought that I was a dyke? That I fancied you? Why? Why can't you accept that people can really like you, even love you, without wanting to fuck you? Is your self-esteem that low?

Is it? I don't know, but I do know that I'm not taking this from her. [...]

- Don't talk to me about appropriate, not when you try to do that to me, she bats back an unbowed retort, all arrogant in her chastity.

In weak response, I can only think of a dippy thing to say. – So sex between women isn't appropriate, is that what you're saying?

⁴⁵⁶ P, p. 374.

- Don't be fucking stupid. You're not a lesbian, and neither am I. Don't play stupid games, she says.
- I fancy you a bit though, I say meekly, now feeling like it's Lauren who's the big sister and me who's the silly little virgin.
- Well I don't fancy you. Behave yourself and fuck somebody who wants to fuck you, and preferably not because there's money changing hands on either side, she scoffs, standing up and heading to the window.⁴⁵⁷

Lauren becomes the voice of the internalised dominant patriarchal society as Nikki feels reduced and weakens, 'I say meekly' symptomatic of the effect of the dominant voice and therefore, Nikki is othered by this moment. Nikki is trying to explore her becomings and articulates very intense and controversial becomings. She is thus confronted with the molar rooted State identity 'dyke' where instead she was just processing her sexuality through sex acts, affirming herself as a woman through sex acts in a way to know and have control over her body. She was trying to understand her body, its limits and its expanding and becoming woman through it. Instead she is reduced to a sexual identity, dyke, lesbian, heterosexual, bisexual, etc. Where Lauren asks her 'is your self-esteem that low?' it also reminds her of the cliché of the sex-workers' daddy issues or women in general exploring their sexuality, where sexuality for them is considered a lack of morality. Even though it is uncomfortable for the both of them, Nikki wants to 'free' Lauren from her blockage to desire, from her ingrained heterosexual codes. However, Lauren's rejection reveals an ingrained misogyny under her perhaps immature feminist identification which compels the reader to question such 'identifications' and to sympathise with Nikki as her becoming-woman is suddenly questioned and challenged.

'To Lose a Whore': The Problem of Mileage

Porno ends with Nikki, Diane and Renton fleeing Scotland to California suggesting once again the limitations of such becomings (becoming-woman, becoming-animal, becoming-other). For Renton, coming back to Scotland five years after the events of *Trainspotting* resulted in another escape from Begbie's desire for revenge, from Sick Boy's tainted friendship and from Spud's alienation and despair. Renton falls back into Diane's arms and with the help of Nikki, steals the profit from Sick Boy's films, and returns to his starting point, without truly confronting the molar of Scottish society. Welsh tells us that the

⁴⁵⁷ P, p. 375.

solution is not just to leave: there is no truth or reconciliation at the end of this sequel, only another cycle of violence, betrayal and pain which breaks up the Leith Heads once more. Similarly, for Nikki, leaving the U.K. for California does not guarantee a liberation, her becoming woman. If going to California is a move towards the rhizomatic as Deleuze and Guattari describe, this is not enough:

America is a special case. Of course it is not immune from domination by trees or the search for roots. [...] Nevertheless, everything important that has happened or is happening takes the route of the American rhizome: the beatniks, the underground, bands and gangs, successive lateral offshoots in immediate connection with an outside.⁴⁵⁸

While it seems that Nikki is liberated, has experienced growth outside of the State, Welsh is not entirely affirmative about her liberated status. Rather, Welsh is sceptical of any neoliberal freedom, especially because he views Nikki's becoming as an opening for sophisticated and more insidious forms of exploitation; the American soil and especially the Californian state is now a symbol of a rhizomatic, nomadic, and neoliberal capitalism. As emphasised in the previous chapter, not all becomings are liberatory; they are experiences, a process leading to other becomings. Returning to the novel *Pimp* – which Welsh wrote an introduction for, and is described as one of the largest influences on his later writings, as noted in the Canongate edition – Welsh writes: ‘I was convinced that Iceberg Slim was a writer with a mission, rather than just an entertaining street raconteur’.⁴⁵⁹ Indeed, Chappelle, inspired by Slim like Welsh, also describes how the novel is a ruthless and enthralling lesson of the heart of capitalism:

Iceberg Slim was the one that broke down what a bottom bitch was. [...] A bottom bitch is pimp's number one ho. She's even a bitch that helps him keep the other bitches in line. [...] Iceberg Slim breaks down some of the coldest capitalist concepts I've ever heard in my life. He describes in details how these men break women so that they will give them the money that they made with their own bodies.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁸ *ATP*, pp. 19-20.

⁴⁵⁹ Welsh, ‘Introduction’, *Pimp: The Story of my Life*, p. vi.

⁴⁶⁰ Chappelle.

Describing it further, we learn that Slim could not afford to lose his bottom bitch, because she was so important for his profit-margin. She was unaware that she was at the end of her mileage. In order to keep her, he orders her to do one last job: she had to sleep with a man, pour a sleep pill in his drink and steal his suitcase for Slim. Slim tricked her. As the man appears to be dead, Slim does everything he can to fix the situation. At the end, he asks her to stay with him a little while longer until everything goes back to normal. Chappelle, describing the climax of the scene, concludes:

That's how the whole shit works, ladies. You understand? This bitch was at the end of her mileage. She was at for 498, she ended up tricking for Iceberg for another six months. She must have turned another 200 tricks for him. [...] That's some cold shit. And the cold shit about it is that the dead guy on the bed wasn't even dead at all. [...] And the bag of money was Iceberg's money in the first place. The money he got from all those women. That's a cold game. That's the motherfucking capitalist manifesto, and that's why I went to South Africa.⁴⁶¹

Chappelle here is clearly indicating how the cannibalistic system of extracting bodies for profit is the name of the game in consumer capitalism. Instead of producing ships in a shipyard, cars in a factory, etc., contemporary consumerism produces bodies (or images of bodies) for consumption, whether that be Nikki in *Porno*, Slim's hoes in *Pimp*, or Dave Chappelle in his Hollywood comedy career. Hence, Welsh, like Iceberg Slim and Dave Chappelle, is in good company as a writer with a mission, a Marxian comradery that allows them to use their vernacular voices to illustrate how terrifying the extraction of bodies for capital truly is. In *Porno*, Welsh exposes Adam Smith's pin factory in the same way Chappelle explains Slim's capitalist manifesto: if somebody's getting fucked, someone else is getting paid.

Like Nikki and Welsh, Chappelle mentions that after facing the molar experience of Capital ('mileage'), he had to leave; while Nikki, Diane, Renton, and Begbie fled Leith for California, Welsh chose Chicago and Miami. Chappelle, however, a Washington D.C. native and Hollywood star comedian, felt like an alien in his own nation during the end of his television series, *Chappelle's Show*, which he mysteriously left in April of 2005 to an anonymous psychiatric facility in South Africa. Chappelle did not return to his career as a stand-up comedian in 2013, as an actor in 2015 playing a role in Spike Lee's black American tragedy, *Chi-Raq*, and finally, in 2016-17 when he was signed by Netflix for

⁴⁶¹ Chappelle.

four comedy specials: *Deep in the Heart of Texas: Dave Chappelle Live at Austin City Limits* (2017), *The Age of Spin: Dave Chappelle Live at the Hollywood Palladium* (2017), *Dave Chappelle: Equanimity* (2017), *Dave Chappelle: The Bird Revelation* (2017). The material used in this chapter is from Chappelle's last special, *The Bird Revelation*, which recounts when he left for South Africa to escape the crass racial exploitation of his work in Hollywood. In his special, he not only covers topics like the #MeToo Movement and Iceberg Slim's *Pimp*, but he also addresses a political message about how to unify in Trump's America. While his previous three specials address Trump more directly, the final special describes the divisiveness of Trump's presidency as an inherent element of American society, rooted in its colonial past and history of slavery, in the aftermath of the Civil War, the Jim Crow laws of segregation and legal lynchings, and what he considers as the limits of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. In what is best described as a stream of consciousness guided meditation, Chappelle explains his reservations about the current social climate around #MeToo and #TimesUp, not because he is not a misogynist or a radical feminist, but rather, because as he reminds the audience, his position as a black man in America alters his perspective on what can and cannot be reformed overnight. Throughout the intimate one-hour conversation that Chappelle has with his small audience in a tiny nightclub in Los Angeles, he seems to overcome some of his reservations, and clarifies why he worries about women who are vocal and public about their experiences of sexual violence, discrimination, harassment, and economic inequity. As Chappelle, like Welsh, challenges and reassesses clichéd discourse, he comes to terms with explaining that while it is important to expose structural sexism, he anticipates a brutal backlash from white men in power. Drawing specifically from his experiences of racial discrimination and his time spent in South Africa, Chappelle speaks to the women in his crowd, and finds solace in the words and actions of Nelson Mandela:

I don't know if you're doing it right, but I mean, who am I to say? I don't think you're wrong. I just think that...you can't make a lasting peace this way. You got all the bad guys scared. And that's good, but the minute they're not scared anymore, it will get worse than it was before. Fear does not make lasting peace. Ask black people [...] Without irony, I'll say this. The cure for L.A. is in South Africa. You motherfuckers need truth and reconciliation with one another. Because the end of apartheid should have been a fucking bloodbath by any metric in human history, and it wasn't. The only reason it wasn't is Desmond Tutu and [Nelson] Mandela and all these guys figured out that if a system is corrupt, then the people

who adhere to the system and are incentivized by that system are not criminals. They are victims, and the system itself must be tried; but because of how systems work [...] the only way we can figure out what the system is, is if everybody says what they did. Tell ‘em how you participated. Because men want to help, they’re just scared.⁴⁶²

Chappelle’s controversial, yet enlightening revelation is a bridge between Welsh’s *Porno* and *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, which were both published decades before this comedy special, revealing a similar insight that perhaps both Welsh and Chappelle were able to view through Slim’s *Pimp* and their experiences with economic and social inequalities. While both artists address the contradictions of finding some sort of lasting peace between the minor voices of women and the patriarchal structures that control their social, political, and biological experiences in public and private life, it appears that both men are able to empathise with the women that they see are often ‘fucked over’, run ‘over their mileage’, and are consumed by the insatiable male gaze. Perhaps, in the words of Chappelle, Welsh’s works on gender reveal, as the next chapter will examine, how the ‘cure for Scotland’ is too in the middle of South Africa, amongst its most painful histories of colonisation, civil war, and apartheid. Following Chappelle, Welsh too believes that what Scotland needs is truth and reconciliation, and it begins with accessing an empathetic and political reading of patriarchal violence.

⁴⁶² Chappelle.

Chapter Five

Facing the Stork: Confronting Colonisation and the History of Man in *Marabou Stork Nightmares*

Whether it is in *Trainspotting*, *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, *Filth*, *Glue*, or *Dead Men's Trousers*, the crisis in masculinity is often at the centre of the vicious violence within Welsh's novels. The devastating effects of poverty studied in the previous chapter lead us to explore masculinity in Welsh's novels as another consequence of self-sabotage. The depiction of masculinity in his novels has been subject to criticism from critics who either attack his work as misogynistic in his descriptions of violence against women, or those who claim his focus on masculinity alienated and obscures the voices of women, children, and others outside of the male arena of blood, guts, and heroin. Welsh has defended himself on several occasions insisting on the correlation between class and gender representation, as well as remarking on how most criticism can be described as a moralising bourgeois gaze on his novels that misunderstand the everyday violence of his post-industrial worlds. This hyper-realism, omnipresent in his novels, is a means to oppose the old image of the working class as traditional, egalitarian, kind-hearted and moralistic.

More than opposing the masculinity or hyper-masculinity of this social milieu, Welsh is determined to show his readers the disastrous effects of masculinity on the working-class over generations. Even though his emphasis is on male characters, we get a glimpse of what women go through whether it is through victimisation, violence, alienation, and brutal objectification in Welsh's fiction. The hyper-masculinity of Welsh's novels is represented through several characters such as the infamous Francis 'Franco' Begbie, Andrew 'Gally' Galloway in *Glue* or Detective Bruce Robertson in *Filth*, which all fit in his archetype of the 'hardman', a trope that Welsh deploys in his fiction in order to articulate the origins of violence and domination throughout poor Scottish society.

The Brutal Being of the Hardman in the Welshverse

Welsh writes the consequences of drug use, addiction, poverty and factory work on these characters from the working class but also shows the ravages of masculinity on both the body and the mind. Because the world of these characters is defined by the social Darwinist laws of the survival of the fittest, a reified project of maintaining strict codes of violent masculinity, whereby survival remains the only marker of identity left to this community. Welsh presents us the archetype of the psychotic, misogynistic hardman in order to subvert the construction of masculinity as a self-destruction method for these

characters. In *The Scotsman*, the article from 1996 ‘Sometimes it is hard to be a real man’ already pointed at a malaise among men in Scotland in relation to drug problems and violence:

The modern male is a wounded beast, deprived of appropriate role models and the means with which to heal himself, according to the psychotherapist John Rowan. [...] When the new lad is with his friends, he is the traditional male, criticizing women and being generally misogynistic, according to Rowan. But when he is with women, he is more like the new man, offering them his caring, appreciative and positive side. “Instead of having a new identity which is thoroughly defensible, he has two identities” says Rowan.⁴⁶³

The code of masculinity is challenged, rewritten and often destroyed by the younger generation as shown in *Glue*:

It’s a difficult world now, no like the yin we grew up in, Duncan said. Ye never know what tae teach them. Ah mean, there’s the basic stuff like back up yir mates, never cross a picket line...

- Nivir hit a lassie, Wullie nodded.
- Definitely, Duncan agreed sternly, as Maria looked at him with a you-just-try-it-pal expression, – Nivir shop anybody tae the polis...
- ...neither friend nor foe, Wullie added.⁴⁶⁴

Images of hardmen have dominated the representation of Scottishness and especially Scottish urban literature of the 1970s and 1980s with notably William McIlvanney’s novels such as *Docherty* and *Laidlaw*, Ian Rankin’s Rebus novels, and Francis ‘Franco’ Begbie in Welsh’s *Trainspotting*. The male-dominated world of Scottish literature has been seen as an affirmation of Scottishness, and by extension, a rejection of female Scottish voices, only until the Literary Renaissance of the 1920s and 30s as described by Carol Anderson and Glenda Norquay in their article ‘Superior-ism’⁴⁶⁵ which opposed the Kailyard school associated with domesticity and femininity by Hugh MacDiarmid.⁴⁶⁶ In her essay ‘Not a Crying Game: The Feminist Appeal: Nationalism, Feminism and the Contemporary

⁴⁶³ Thom Dibdin, ‘Sometimes it is hard to be a real man’, *The Scotsman* (16 May 1996), p. 17.

⁴⁶⁴ *G*, p. 26.

⁴⁶⁵ Carol Anderson and Glenda Norquay, “Superior-ism”, *Cencrastus* 15 (1984): 8–10.

⁴⁶⁶ See Idle, ‘McIlvanney, Masculinity and Scottish Literature’ in *Scottish Affairs*, 2 (1993).

Literatures of Scotland and Ireland’, Marilyn Reizbaum describes the phenomenon of ‘double exclusion’ of woman’s voice in a marginalised or “minor” culture where nationalism leads to a double marginalization’, which I explained in Chapter Four.⁴⁶⁷ Reizbaum describes how the dialogue between nationalism and feminism has been avoided in Scotland and Ireland because of the cultural inferiorisation they both suffered as ‘certain writers serve up caricatures of imposition types that have to some degree been created cooperatively through imposition and internalization by the colonizer and the colony (dubbed “green prose” in Ireland and “kailyard” in Scotland)’.⁴⁶⁸ Moreover, Anderson and Norquay affirm that the ‘cultural Scot obsessively displays his intellectualism but confines it to certain areas, and relegates a range of other artistic and intellectual concerns which have become identified as ‘non-masculine’.⁴⁶⁹ For Jeremy Idle, more examples of conflating intellectualism with masculinity includes such examples like ‘James Kelman’s hard-drinking hard-swearing teacher in *A Disaffection* (1989) who shows intimate acquaintance with German and classical poets and philosophers; Tom Leonard’s speakers in *Intimate Voices* (1984) who address questions of “mehta physics/fuckin Mehta physics”; or McIlvanney’s all-man detective Laidlaw in *Strange Loyalties* (1991)’ and first here in *Laidlaw*:

He felt his nature anew as a wrack of paradox. He was potentially a violent man who hated violence, a believer in fidelity who was unfaithful, an active man who longed for understanding. He was tempted to unlock the drawer in his desk where he kept Kierkegaard, Camus and Unamuno, like caches of alcohol.⁴⁷⁰

The pub culture has also its importance in perpetuating male dominance in literature as women are excluded from it or described as distractions or burdens. Idle quotes Norquay and Anderson’s article quoting MacDiarmid who ‘characterising anti-pub factions as consisting of women, clergymen, Englishmen, before going to include women in his list of anathematised pub distractions such as “music”, “chromium fittings” and “too many mirrors”’.⁴⁷¹ The male bonding image of the pub culture in McIlvanney’s novel is also opposed to family and domesticity. Leaving family behind for Laidlaw is always a necessity as it does not belong in the world of men. The hyper-violent hardman John

⁴⁶⁷ Marilyn Reizbaum, ‘Not a Crying Game: The Feminist Appeal: Nationalism, Feminism and the Contemporary Literatures of Scotland and Ireland’ in *Scotlands* 1. (1994), p. 24.

⁴⁶⁸ Reizbaum, p. 24.

⁴⁶⁹ Anderson and Norquay, p. 9.

⁴⁷⁰ William McIlvanney, *Laidlaw* (London: Sceptre, 1996), pp. 6-7.

⁴⁷¹ Idle, p. 52.

Rhodes whose rage and fury is sublimated as source of independence and pride, while keeping his family apart from his actions, mirrors Laidlaw's 'annoying' wife who asks him to be a father to his children – the world of domesticity is always linked to motherhood and they have to stay away from it as much as possible in order to perform and keep their double identities. The two worlds must be kept apart. We learn later on that Laidlaw has a child from another woman he has never seen yet, leaving him tortured in his inability to be a father. In Welsh's novel however, these two worlds collide and crumble as Welsh shows the disastrous consequences of this separation. When working-class men have nowhere to go but home, their vision or masculinity is threatened.

Similarly, while the image of the hardman is deconstructed and strewn apart in Welsh's novels, so too are the spatial confines of Scottish masculinity: the pub. The myth of the Scottish pub culture is decomposed right from the start in *Trainspotting* – 'ah hate cunts like that. Cunts like Begbie [...] ah hate the Scots' in the episode entitled 'The Glass'. Renton's disgust for the pub reflects a recognition that the pub is no place for transformation or camaraderie, but rather, a place where loneliness, drunkenness and a devastating sense of enclosure rise to the surface.⁴⁷² In 'A Smart Cunt' we see familiar faces like Spud haunting the pub more miserable as ever, as 'a survivor' of this culturally inculcated cruelty. Hardmen of the pub are put under the anthropological loop of Sara-Ann in *A Decent Ride*, which emphasises her otherness, her impossibility to understand and be a part of the world of working class men, but also the social and economic fracture of the city embodied by a gender division: 'Sara-Ann looks at the men around the table, in a deep socially anthropological way. She thinks about how, although she grew up in this city, she's never spent any time in the company of men like these'.⁴⁷³ Coming from a well-off family from Edinburgh and growing up in England, she is cut off from her Scottishness, the same way she is cut off from the world of these men. Sara-Ann is like the reader, alienated in this Brechtian turn of *A Decent Ride*, forced to confront the alien-like image of a working-class that is barely working, of a proletariat without any future. This is not a celebration of the hardman, but a conscious uncoupling, a denaturalising of everyday masculine violence.

As pointedly put by Welsh himself in his piece for *The Guardian* 'Scotland's murderous heart', he explains that the Scottish stereotypes of men like Begbie are not written about to dehumanise them. Rather, he writes:

⁴⁷² *T*, p. 100.

⁴⁷³ *ADR*, p. 174.

We are not, and never have been, a nation of violent psychopaths. It's surely a little trite to say that heavy drinking is the sole reason, as bingeing is now ubiquitous in the UK. More likely it's the peculiar drinking habits and the urban environment of the most disadvantaged Scots.⁴⁷⁴

In this article, Welsh draws on a set of consequences of neglect which led to more and more division in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and all of Scotland. As Glasgow was quickly becoming reformed publicly as a 'City of Culture' and Edinburgh was forced to market itself as an international festival city, the poor of both urban environments are being kept away from the city centres:

The postwar process of rehousing has led to the disappearance of traditional city-centre working class areas. [...] In our modern urban life, we have two cities, Glasgow is Hillhead or Easterhouse, Edinburgh Merchiston or Muirhouse. And you stand a far better chance of being murdered in one than in the other.⁴⁷⁵

Welsh points at the effect of gentrification with the breakage of community in the effort to install an individualistic mentality notorious under Thatcher's government and by extension the disastrous psychic effect of individualism in society: the psychosis and paranoia of late capitalism. The hardman is a historical result of this socio-economic alienation that has been brought on by the complete obliteration of their social functions as generational labourers. As their *raison d'être* of working and surviving is challenged, so too is their masculinity, their sovereignty, and their position in civil society.

The Man of the House: Working-Class Masculinity in Crisis

Pierre Bourdieu in his book on *Masculine Domination*, first published in 1998, continues his work on the study of gender and class distinction, and identifies 'manliness' in strict opposition to what is seen as femininity:

If women, subjected to a labour of socialization which tends to diminish and deny them, learn the negative virtues of self-denial, resignation and silence, men are also prisoners, and insidiously victims, of the dominant representation. Like the

⁴⁷⁴ Irvine Welsh, 'Scotland's Murderous Heart'.

⁴⁷⁵ Welsh, 'Scotland's Murderous Heart'.

dispositions towards submission, those which underlie the pursuit and exercise of domination are not inscribed in a nature, and they have to be learned through a long labour of socialization, in other words, as has been seen, of active differentiation from the opposite sex.⁴⁷⁶

Alistair Fraser's book *Urban Legends* continues this work and analyses both historical and contemporary gang identities in post-industrial cities such like Glasgow. In one chapter entitled 'Damaged Hardmen', Fraser analyses the construction of masculinity and gang identity among precarious young men. Following the destruction of industries and in particular ship-building industries at the end of the 1980s, work has been displaced to services, retail, leisure and tourism, a lot of men found themselves displaced or unemployed as a lot of construction work became rarer which has had an impact on the way of life and the redefinition of masculinity in these communities:

Where once these masculinities were coupled with forms of capital – both physical and symbolic – that were productive in the industrial economy, however, this connection has largely been severed in the shift to a service economy. As a result, these 'ways of being' are increasingly disconnected with the broader economic field in the post-industrial city.⁴⁷⁷

Men relocated in the different types of sectors such as tourism, retail or various office work (Fraser takes the example of a call centre) is therefore perceived as repression of the traditional masculine identity that they once had in heavy industrial work now 'feminised' into office work seen as subordinate and docile. In *Glue*, we see the changes operate through generations when the novel starts with the descriptions of factory works in the 1970s to their replacements in the 1990s with new generations that did not have the time to foresee the changes:

- Tell ye what Billy, ten years fae now, this street'll be unrecognisable. Aw that building work at the West End, reaching right up tae what we used tae ken as Tollcross. Ye ken what that's gaunny be?
- Offices, ah bet.

⁴⁷⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*; translated by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), p. 49.

⁴⁷⁷ Alistair Fraser, *Urban Legends: Gang Identity in the Post-Industrial City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 178.

Power smiles, hands me a coffee in a Hibernian mug. – Right, but mair than that. It's gaunny be Edinburgh's new financial centre. So what happens here, tae aw they fine old buildings?

Ah say nowt.

- This place changes, eh explains, - becomes an entertainment centre. No like Rose Street, wi its tacky touristy pubs, n places for the suburbanites tae huv a toon pub-crawl doon. Naw, aw these punters that go oot ravin now, they'll be ten years aulder doon the line, n they'll want thir creature comforts.⁴⁷⁸

The same goes with unemployment where the confinement of home, the feminised private space of the domestic, is seen as a complete undermining of traditional masculinity. This aspect is also noted by Scott Hames in his reading of James Kelman's novels:

The pattern of Kelman's characters' lives is not of struggle, development, liberation, but of stasis, failure and resignation: no 'future' is possible which is not merely a dilation of the present. The masculinity of Kelman's protagonists is accordingly vexed: his men of inaction are stoic but ineffectual; if they are enslaved by objective circumstances, they are unchallenged masters of the interior reality to which they escape, the ideologically 'feminine' space where their moral and intellectual selfhood is most firmly anchored.⁴⁷⁹

The will to preserve traditional masculine identity goes through the community of gang identity as Fraser describes the continuous threat of violence associated with 'being a gemmie' but also the circle of continuous shame and embarrassment from others gang members/friends as part of a 'masculine camaraderie':

Being 'wan ae the boays' refers to loyalty to the group—being 'up for' anything that is suggested. This is also strongly linked with area identity; the boys have grown up together, and the power of peer relationships is intimately bound up with their place and space in Langview.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁸ *G*, p. 203-4.

⁴⁷⁹ Scott Hames, 'Dogged Masculinities: Male Subjectivity and Socialist Despair in Kelman and McIlvanney' in *Scottish Studies Review*, 8 (1) (2007), p. 68.

⁴⁸⁰ Fraser, p. 177.

In Welsh's novels we can see the precarious and insecure nature of masculinities in *Trainspotting* with the group gravitating around the fear of Begbie's violence and retaliation, Begbie's constant shamming of his 'junkies' friends, constantly maintaining a power domination over his 'mates' and over women, therefore enforcing his masculinity through the threat of violence. Begbie's hyper-masculine nature is further satiated and emboldened by typical masculine activities such as going to the pub or a football match, which either function as socially accepted leisure spaces that allow him to sublimate his rage, or to perform his machismo in real time in the same way as Tyler Durden of Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* (1996), who is consistently described as a Nietzschean rebel stuck in a 'generation of men raised by women', domesticated, and hungry for an existential fight in the wake of the national crisis of paternal alienation.⁴⁸¹ Similarly in *Glue*, for example, we see the link between football, hooliganism, sectarianism and the violence that erupts in these circles as means to not only dominate fellow men, but to escape the existential blight of boredom:

- Gally, that's it. He seems a good wee cunt. Seems game. Ah saw um once at the fitba. It's Hibs-Rangers at Easter Road in a couple ay weeks. We should aw go, a mob ay us fae the scheme n any other cunt whae's game. Ah ken some boys fae Leith. That would be barry, git a few tidy cunts thegither n pager wi some Glesgay boys.
- Aye, yir on, ah sais, cause it certainly would. Ye need yir entertainment. Life gits too borin otherwise.⁴⁸²

This analysis is mirroring a world that is closing more and more. Because society is giving very little opportunity and space to the most precarious, violence seems to be the only brief antidote for processing the pain of poverty, of having no future, as emphasised by Welsh in this interview:

In these crowded, yet isolated areas, gangs of bored youths converge in underpasses, or on the edge of industrial estates, out of reach of the CCTV cameras. In such a marginalised environment and in a culture where the individual rather than the community has primacy, people require compelling drama in order to give

⁴⁸¹ Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club* (London: Vintage, 2010). p. 50

⁴⁸² *G*, p. 75.

life meaning. The scheme – the housing estate – becomes the world. Violence and scamming become the principal means of winning status.⁴⁸³

In such a decultured landscape, Welsh exposes Begbie and other hardmen as perfect products of what society wants as a working-class man from Leith or rather what the State rejects and neglects: the auto-destructive hardman who only traverses housing prison ‘schemes’, hospitals or prisons, as Foucault describes in his description of disciplinary societies. Deleuze would go further and insist on the constant control imposed on them in ‘Postscript on Societies of Control’. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari note that

Either the State has at its disposal a violence that is not channelled through war – either it uses police officers and jailers in place of warriors, has no arms and no need of them, operates by immediate, magical capture, ‘seizes’ and ‘binds,’ preventing all combat – *or*, the State acquires an army, but in a way that presupposes a juridical integration of war and the organization of military function.⁴⁸⁴

The scheme is therefore controlled by the State but more importantly the scheme becomes the world as there are no way for these men to see beyond it or the other institutions they know already; the school, the hospital, the jail, etc. Easily controlled in an open air prison that is the scheme, Welsh’s characters are left to cope with a closed ideological system breeding violence against themselves, deterred from the continuous repression of the State.

Marabou Stork Nightmares and the Paradox of Becoming-Man

Welsh refers to the will to preserve a traditional masculine identity or a dominant, hyper-masculine one in his piece ‘The Great British Hardman According to Irvine Welsh’ in which he goes back to his several hardmen characters, including Begbie, and he explains that ‘The worst of them rage loudly and bitterly, fearing the displacement of the white patriarchy’s power by the other; be they women, blacks, Mexicans, homosexuals’.⁴⁸⁵ This

⁴⁸³ Welsh, ‘Scotland’s Murderous Heart’.

⁴⁸⁴ *ATP*, p. 410.

⁴⁸⁵ Irvine Welsh, ‘The great British hardman according to Irvine Welsh’, *The Shortlist*, (24 February 2016), <<https://www.shortlist.com/entertainment/books/irvine-welsh-on-the-return-of-begbie/97463>> [accessed 3/04/16].

quote echoes the beginning of *Filth* where the main character, a 40-year-old police detective Bruce Robertson, explains the reason:

The trouble with people like him is that they think that they can brush off people like. Like I was nothing... You've pushed me away mister. You rejected me. You tricked me and spoiled things between me and my true love. I've seen you before. Long ago, just lying there as you are now. Black, broken, dying. I was glad then and I'm glad now. I reach into my bag and I pull out my claw hammer. Part of me is elsewhere as I'm bringing it down on his head. He can't resist my blows.⁴⁸⁶

Behind the 'I' we can read the traditional model of dominant masculinity as well as the traditional subordination of the male working class to capitalism, the capitalist normality which is contested by women, blacks, LGBTQ communities, individual from former colonies, and people ensnared by precarity like drug users or sex-workers. The resistance to a plane of Being (molar) and becoming (molecular), away from the capitalist norms of production, is marked by the extreme violence, misogyny and self-loathing of the characters but more importantly his lack of control on his mental health, the psychosis of division and dissociative disorders represented by the worm in his guts as, according to Deleuze and Guattari 'man is the molar entity par excellence'.⁴⁸⁷ From this racist act we follow Bruce battling against his psychosis, the worm taking more and more space both in his head and on paper – Bruce's narrative is regularly cut through by the worms' thoughts. The 'enemy within' is there the growing rise of the neoliberal individualist bourgeois values, the Other of Bruce. We soon learn that Bruce comes from a family of miners. Bruce's mental health reflects the sense of loss of identity coming from a miner's family with his conditioning to fit in individualist and bureaucratic society. The denial of his past and the shedding of his origins drive him to psychosis, as Welsh writes:

You were on the other side. Power was everything. You understood that. It wasn't for an end, to achieve anything, to better one's fellow man, it was there to have and to keep and to enjoy. The important thing was to be on the winning side; if you can't beat them join them. Only the winners or those sponsored by them write the history of the times. That history decrees that only the winners have a story worth telling. The worst ever thing to be is on the losing side. You must accept the

⁴⁸⁶ Irvine Welsh, *Filth* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 1. Hereafter *F*.

⁴⁸⁷ *ATP*, p. 341.

language of power as your currency, but you must also pay a price. Your desperate sneering and mocking only illustrates how high the price has been and how fully it has been paid. The price is your soul.⁴⁸⁸

Here, Bruce articulates the power structure between the majoritarian voice, ‘the language of power’ and the minoritarian voices; the winners and the losers. Bruce chooses the molar over the molecular, adhering to the History of the major rather than becoming-nomad and keeping his soul. The same battle is illustrated in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* as Welsh transports his readers to South Africa to reveal the cure for Scotland’s majoritarian aspirations.

We have explored in the previous chapter the *becoming-woman* of some of Welsh’s characters and we have seen how these becomings, explored in molecular ways to confront fixed identities or molar compositions in rhizomatic ways. Indeed, for Deleuze: ‘there are no longer binary machines: question-answer, masculine-feminine, man-animal, etc. This could be what a conversation is – simply the outline of a becoming’.⁴⁸⁹ Therefore, these becomings can be liberating, paving the way for some more becomings and new ways to experience the world. However, not all these molecular experiences are as liberatory as becoming-woman or becoming-animal; often, becomings are unsettling, scary and horribly violent, especially in the context of molar compositions of Man, a sort of becoming Deleuze and Guattari do not acknowledge as *becoming-man*. The concept of becoming-man is impossible as it emerges as revolutionary figures situated in opposition to the State and its molar compositions of whiteness, maleness, and heteronormativity:

There is no becoming-man because man is the molar entity par excellence, whereas becomings are molecular. The faciality function showed us the form under which man constitutes the majority, or rather the standard upon which the majority is based: white, male, adult, “rational”, etc, in short, the average European, the subject of enunciation. Following the law of arborescence, it is this central Point that moves across all of space or the entire screen, and at every turn nourishes a certain distinctive opposition, depending on which faciality trait is retained: male-(female), adult-(child), white-(black, yellow, or red); rational-(animal). [...] Man constitutes himself as a gigantic memory, through the position of the central point, its

⁴⁸⁸ *F*, pp. 261-2.

⁴⁸⁹ Gilles Deleuze, ‘A Conversation: What is it? What is it For?’ in *Dialogues II* with Claire Parnet, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2007; 1977) p. 2.

frequency (insofar as it is necessarily reproduced by each dominant point), and its resonance (insofar as all of the point tie in with it). Any line that goes from one point to another in the aggregate of the molar system, and is thus defined by points answering to these mnemonic conditions of frequency and resonance, is a part of the arborescent system.⁴⁹⁰

Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari stress that Man is always dominant and that, as we saw in the first part of this thesis with *minor literature* and *becoming-woman*, the minor voice is the other which stays minoritarian, impervious to assimilation or social integration. Therefore, to explain the impossibility of becoming-man, Deleuze and Guattari remind us that ‘first because man is majoritarian par excellence, whereas becomings are minoritarian; all becoming is a becoming-minoritarian’.⁴⁹¹ Thus, when Deleuze and Guattari speak about majority, it is not about which group is larger than others or about who is a minority in a given group, but about the codification and the norm by which this majority is created: ‘Majority implies a state of domination, not the reverse’, and they argue that ‘the majority in the universe assumes as pre-given the right and power of man’.⁴⁹²

Whether it starts from the 1707 Act of Union, the aftermath of the Culloden massacre, or the failed 1979 referendum, Scotland has had a constant rewriting of its relationship with England and the British Empire. If a situation of dominated/dominating with England has been acknowledged by many academics and historians due to political and economic disadvantages experienced in the union from 1603 to 2018, it remains the case that there is a reluctance to locate Scotland within a postcolonial framework due to the significant role it played in the colonisation process as part of the British Empire. There is an existing debate over the consideration of the Scottish experience as in or outside of the postcolonial framework by historians and academics pointing at different part of Scottish history; the Darien project, the Act of Union, the Scottish involvement in the British empire, and thus, colonialism and slavery.

The reminder of the Scottish colonial past by writers and poets such as Jackie Kay and James Robertson marks the first contemporary attempt to acknowledge Scotland’s complicity with slavery and the colonising project of the British Empire in Scottish literature. Indeed, as emphasised by T. M. Devine, Scotland was part of the transatlantic slave trade to a lesser extent compared to other cities within the British Empire such as

⁴⁹⁰ ATP, p. 341.

⁴⁹¹ ATP, p. 339.

⁴⁹² ATP, p. 339.

Liverpool, Bristol or London but still carried the traces of slavery in centre.⁴⁹³ Jamaica street in Glasgow, as brought back to life by the poet Jackie Kay in ‘Missing Faces’, or James Robertson with *Joseph Knight* (2004), is another symbol of Glasgow’s involvement with colonialism and slavery in the sugar plantation of the Caribbean under the British Empire.⁴⁹⁴ If Scotland has been a pioneer in the abolitionist movement, Devine acknowledges the late reconciliation between Scotland as a new nation to come and its involvement with slavery. Dominated by the wealth and power of England and colonising hand in hand with the British Empire during the late 18th century and beginning of the 19th century, Scotland is put in a dual mind-set, between coloniser and colonised. Michael Hechter, in *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (1975), recognised the effect of such domination and duality, here applied to Scotland by Douglas S. Mack:

In the resulting crisis of identity, the need to adjust to the new British norms was likely to be most keenly felt by members of the Scottish elite who were closest to the British levers of Imperial power and wealth. Equally, the impulse to retain and sustain Scottish identity was likely to come most naturally to the poor and the dispossessed of subaltern Scotland, that is to say to those with little direct access to the material rewards of Empire. This complex and problematic situation might perhaps be summed up by saying that Scotland, as junior partner in the British Imperial project, took a coloniser’s role within Britain’s external Empire, but shared with Ireland and Wales the experience of being colonised within a process Katie Trumpener has described as ‘British internal colonialism’.⁴⁹⁵

Here, Mack takes account both of Scotland’s colonial past as part of the British Empire, the complexity of the relationship between England and Scotland, in which the Scottish elite of landowners, merchants and industrialists clearly favoured a British identity through the erasure of elements of Scottish culture and identity as emphasised by Angus Calder: ‘They [The Scots] craved “assimilation”. The English did not bully Scots into changing the ways they spoke and wrote. Scots took elocution lessons of their own accord and strove to purge

⁴⁹³ T. M. Devine (ed.), *Recovering Scotland’s Slavery Past: The Caribbean Connection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

⁴⁹⁴ Jackie Kay, ‘Missing Faces’, *The Guardian* (24 March 2007) <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/mar/24/featuresreviews.guardianreview25>> [accessed 05/10/2016].

⁴⁹⁵ Douglas S. Mack, *Scottish Fiction and the British Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 7.

their prose of “Scotticisms.”⁴⁹⁶ However, the term of internal colonialism can be appropriate regarding the British state conception and realisation.⁴⁹⁷ As Michael Hechter explains,

The concept of internal colonialism dates from the late nineteenth century and has two somewhat different connotations. Initially coined by Russian populists to describe the exploitation of peasants by urban classes, it was later adopted by Gramsci, Lenin, Preobrazhensky, and Bukharin to characterize the persisting economic underdevelopment of certain Russian and Italian regions. In this conception internal colonialism refers to a process of unequal exchange between the territories of a given state that occurs either as a result of the free play of market forces, or of economic policies of the central state that have intended or unintended distributional consequences for regions. Since the 1960s, however, the term has been largely reserved for regions that are simultaneously economically disadvantaged *and* culturally distinctive from the core regions of the host state.⁴⁹⁸

Furthermore, Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull in their book *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture* (1989) refer to the way in which Frantz Fanon’s concept of colonial transactions in *Black Skin, White Masks* (196) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) disrupts constructions of identity and subjectivity. Forced to identify with the coloniser, the colonised suffers a fractured consciousness in which he is forced to see himself as inferior in the eyes of the coloniser. Beveridge and Turnbull see in Scottish culture a similar state of subordination. Because they were not taught to value their culture, they are not aware of its existence which as a result creates a cultural amnesia and to its disappearance (languages such as Gaelic being nearly extinct). This inferiorism, referred as Celtic Cringe,⁴⁹⁹ can be read in Welsh’s first novel in Renton’s notorious tirade – ‘the lowest of the fuckin low, the scum of the earth’ – which directly brings to mind Fanon’s essay *The Wretched of the Earth*.⁵⁰⁰ Later on in the novel, Renton furiously rants that ‘some say that the Irish are the trash ay Europe. That’s shite. It’s the Scots. The Irish hud the bottle tae

⁴⁹⁶ Calder, *Scotlands of the Mind*, p. 166.

⁴⁹⁷ See Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 2003).

⁴⁹⁸ Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development*, (London: Routledge, 2017; 1975), pp. xiii-xiv.

⁴⁹⁹ The term originates from ‘Cultural Cringe’ coined by A. A. Phillips in 1950 in the Australian review *Meanjin*, variations of the term exist such as ‘Celtic Cringe’ or even ‘Scottish Cringe’.

⁵⁰⁰ *T*, p. 78.

win thir country back, or at least maist ay it'.⁵⁰¹ Renton's rant, while importantly transgressive in Welsh's ambivalence with colonial discourse, reveals the inferiorism and State-constructed sense of self-loathing of the Celtic Cringe. Similarly, Roddy Doyle's *The Commitments* (1989) reveals the same self-othering and self-loathing that continually associates the most minoritarian figures of the world with the neglected Welsh, Irish, and Scots of Northern Europe:

Where are yis from? (He answered the question himself.) – Dublin. (He asked another one.) – Wha' part o' Dublin? Barrytown. Wha' class are yis? Workin' class. Are yis proud of it? Yeah, yis are... – Your music should be abou' where you're from an' the sort o' people yeh come from. – Say it once, say it loud, I'm black an' I'm proud. ... – The Irish are the niggers of Europe, lads. ... An' Dubliners are the niggers of Ireland. The culchies have fuckin' everythin'. An' the northside Dubliners are the niggers o' Dublin. – Say it loud, I'm black an' I'm proud.⁵⁰²

However, Welsh regularly subverts the sense of national inferiority in his novels in order to have his reader face with the complexity and violent truth of post-industrial Scotland, simply to reveal the dangers of misrepresenting the Celts as mere victims of History. In a post-national framework, Welsh seeks to dig deeper into the phenomenon of the cringe in violent ways, especially illustrated by his second novel *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, which he explores as a way to undermine both national identity and inferiorism by associating the literary trope of 'the Scot abroad' with the horrors and paradoxes of becoming-man.

Diving into the Abyss: The Existential Horrors of the History of Man

In *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, there are three levels of narrative in the novel: the first one is Roy's first-person narrative, then a realist depiction of his childhood to his adult life until his suicide attempt, and finally the parallel universe of an African savannah. In this universe, Roy reinvents himself as a powerful adventurer, hunting unfamiliar beasts. Roy's power emerges in his imagined South African savannah in parallel with the powerlessness of his situation in lower-class Edinburgh. Sandy Jamieson, Roy's companion, recalls Roy's

⁵⁰¹ *T*, p. 190.

⁵⁰² Roddy Doyle, *The Commitments* (London: Vintage, 2013; 1987), pp. 8-9.

suicide attempt as the footballer – on the video Jimmy Sandison is the last face Roy saw before falling into his coma.

Roy's account of his life takes place through multiple narratives: (1) his childhood in the Muirhouse housing scheme to his stay with his family in South Africa, his coping mechanism, a fantasy consisting of a quest to kill the Marabou Stork which are decimating the flamingos of Africa, resembling the Victorian boy's books he read as a child; (2) following his suicide attempt which put him in a coma; and (3) his slow coming back to consciousness where we hear the voice of the people from his hospital room: the nurse Patricia, his parents and Kirsty at the very end, bringing up against his will, the account of her gang rape led by Roy. The account throughout is highly unreliable and the reader has to constantly question Roy, from his choice of words to his entire telling of the story. The climax the ending where we discover that the leader of the gang rape is not Lexo, as he has been cleverly explaining to the reader in detail, but Roy himself. Therefore, the unreliability of the narrator can be extended to the whole novel, making the reader question the whole narrative.

The novel questions the colonial past of Scotland as part of the British Empire as Roy's family and especially his father as a supporter and nostalgic of the British Empire who still feels bitter about the failure of the Scottish colonial attempts. Therefore, in this novel, the 'Scottish Cringe' can be read as a failure to recognise Scotland and Scottish men's part in the British Empire, a resentment of the Scottish assimilation in the British state and therefore a refusal to recognise the 'great' Scottish colonial past as described by Roy's father: 'The Scots built the empire n these daft English cunts couldnae run it without us'.⁵⁰³ Welsh plays with these key figures of the Empire as explained in great detail by Aaron Kelly, whether it is the references to John Buchan, Scottish writer and fervent defender of the British Empire, the *fin-de siècle* British colonial adventure books for young boys such as Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901) echoing the name of Roy's sister Kim, the dog's name Winston or Roy's younger brother, diagnosed with autism, Elgin, as noted by Kelly and Schoene-Harwood.⁵⁰⁴ In the context of colonialism and its discourse the naming of Roy's brother, Elgin and indeed his sister, Kim, is highly significant. As Schoene-Harwood notes, Elgin's name evokes the case of the Elgin Marbles – as well as a pun on mental illness and losing one's marbles'.⁵⁰⁵ There is another resonance of this name in Scottish history as Kelly explains:

⁵⁰³ Irvine Welsh, *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (London: Vintage, 1995). p. 125. Hereafter *MSN*.

⁵⁰⁴ Aaron Kelly, *Irvine Welsh*, pp. 104-14.

⁵⁰⁵ Berthold-Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men: Literary Masculinities from Frankenstein to the New Man* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 152, cited in Aaron Kelly, p. 114.

Yet it is the same aristocratic Scottish clan and head of the Bruce family, the Elgins, who helped to raise funds in 1930 to purchase fifty-eight acres of land around the site of the battle of Bannockburn where in 1314 Robert the Bruce defeated Edward II's invading English army and became Robert I of Scotland. So the Elgin clan are at once implicated in acts of British colonial dominance and the commemoration of Scottish independence and difference.⁵⁰⁶

The allusion to Scotland's complicity in the making of the British State and Empire can be found as we have seen, in the discourse of Roy's father, as well as in Roy's memory of going to the Museum of The Republiek Van Suid-Afrika where he learns the history of South Africa. In this brief historical account, we are reminded of the reality of biased histories of colonialism that are often told in postcolonial environments, which often centre on the perspective of the colonisers in Roy's history textbook:

The White citizens of the Union are mostly descendants of early Dutch and British settlers, with smaller admixtures of French, German and other West-European peoples. The White man originally came to South Africa as soldier, farmer, trader, missionary and general pioneer, and owing to his superior education and his long background of civilization he was able to provide the necessary leadership, expertise, technical skill and finance among races who were for the most part little removed from barbarism.

South Africa is the only country in the world where a dominant community has followed a definite policy of maintaining the purity of its race in the midst of overwhelming numbers of non-European inhabitants – in most not still administered as colonies or protectorates either the non-whites have been exterminated or there has been some form of assimilation, resulting in a more or less coloured population. Indeed, far from the extermination of non-whites, the advent of the European in South Africa has meant that whole native communities have been saved from exterminating each other. It is not generally realised that scarcely a century ago Chaka, chief of the Zulus, destroyed 300 tribes and wiped out thousands upon thousands of his fellows.

Gradually, however, the remnants of the tribes which survived the internecine wars were able to settle down to a peaceful, rural way of life under the protection

⁵⁰⁶ Aaron Kelly, p. 114.

and with the assistance of the white man. In the traditional homelands, which cover and extent about as large as England and Wales together, nearly one-half of the Bantu live and lead a simple pastoral life as their ancestors did through the centuries before them – happy, picturesque people living the most carefree existence imaginable.⁵⁰⁷

This extract of South Africa's 'history' compels the reader to demand a rewriting of South Africa's history of colonialism, especially considering that this defence of apartheid is told from the perspective of the majoritarian white man. In this scene, readers note that Welsh emphasises this nationalistic propaganda as a discourse of phallogocentric domination, exploitation and colonisation, a reminder of a history being written by white *men*. The false narrative of colonisation perpetuates and justifies a historical violence that is displaced on others as Kelly points out:

The tendency amongst some of Welsh's characters who are themselves oppressed to oppress others as a means of asserting some form of beleaguered power – whether through sexism, homophobia or racism – is an example of what Peter Stallybrass and Allon White term *displaced abjection*.⁵⁰⁸

Indeed, Roy consistently tries to bring his experience of the scheme of Muirhouse side by side with the experience of black apartheid. As Roy's family is obligated to return to Edinburgh, Roy reflects:

Edinburgh to me represented serfdom. I realized that it was exactly the same situation as Johannesburg; the only difference was that the Kaffirs were white and called schemies or draftpaks. Back in Edinburgh, we would be Kaffirs; condemned to live out our lives in townships like Muirhouse or So-Wester-Hailes-To or Niddrie, self-contained camps with fuck all in them, miles fae the toon. Brought in tae dae the crap jobs that nae other cunt wanted tae dae, then hassled by the polis if we hung around at night in groups. Edinburgh had the same politics as Johannesburg: it had the same politics as any city. Only we were on the other side. I detested the thought of going back to all that shite.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁷ *MSN*, p. 81.

⁵⁰⁸ Aaron Kelly, p. 20.

⁵⁰⁹ *MSN*, p. 80.

If we have to recognise the geographical separation of class through ‘schemes’ or ‘ghettos’ in Scotland, resulting from a politics of displacement of the working class to the outskirts of the city centres (evoked by several Scottish authors such as James Kelman or William McIlvanney notably in *Laidlaw*) as well as the de facto segregation that results from the Conservative policies that stigmatised these populations and destroyed its communities, the trap laid by Welsh through Roy would be to merge race and class. To compare apartheid with class warfare, Welsh indicates how the extract of the history book on the opposite page of the book incites us, as readers, to pay attention to the danger of rewriting history from a white male perspective. The history book extract can be read through an analogy of the Scottish-English relations, evoking the massacres such as Culloden where both Scottish and British forces killed thousands of Jacobites, mostly from the Highlands. From these brutal wars of England’s colonial enterprise, the Gaels now live happily ever after, content in their lands thanks to British/Lowlander Scot advancements, as the Lowlander Scots might attest to in places like Ayrshire or Fife. However, the ‘White Man’ of the history book is symbolically rewritten in the figure of Roy, who has enjoyed his time in South Africa like those who benefited from the Apartheid system in South Africa. Indeed, Carole Jones insists that

taken as the view of Roy Strang, who is, after all, a notoriously, immorally unreliable narrator of his own life, the statement is more like a hysterical outburst at the prospect of the denial of the recently discovered power of his position in South Africa. It is a cry for attention by the disappointed rather than the dispossessed and as such exposes the hyperbolic and imperialist aspiration of the contention. Such exaggeration is similar to the violence in Roy's life, a self-aggrandizing gesture that falsely inflates his standing in response to the grossly deflated sense of self reflected back to him by the dominant culture.⁵¹⁰

This analogy is highly problematic especially regarding a postcolonial reading of Scotland in this case. As Kelly insists: ‘There is a marked danger here of a perverse residual imperialism whereby an oppressed group in the Western world – in a seeming

⁵¹⁰ Carole Jones, ‘White Men on Their Backs – From Objection to Abjection: The Representation of the White Male as Victim in William McIlvanney’s *Docherty* and Irvine Welsh’s *Marabou Stork Nightmares*’ (2006), p. 8.

moment of solidarity – actually colonises and appropriates the suffering of others in order to bolster its own subaltern credentials'.⁵¹¹ Moreover, Marina MacKay articulates that

the dichotomy of exploiter/exploited is far more complicated and problematic than Roy's analysis suggests. First, the relationship between the exploiters and their victims is not straightforwardly indicative of class division, and, second, because, as part of Great Britain, Scotland has long been on the side of the exploiters.⁵¹²

Bearing in mind the unreliability of the narrator, Roy seems to repeat what he has learned in his history book, whether in Edinburgh or in Johannesburg. The same manipulation of history and experience can be expected, as the ISAs of education steer the ideological defences of slavery or apartheid in Scotland or South Africa. The description of the 'scheme' at the beginning of the novel also seems to lean towards merging the class 'cast' experience of Edinburgh and the racial segregation of South Africa. If Roy does recognise similarities with the Blacks of Soweto and the Whites of Muirhouse, Roy and his family enjoy and claim their white privilege in South Africa, seeing the country as 'a white man's country' and take advantage without questioning the apartheid system once there.⁵¹³ The class struggle is easily forgotten over racial supremacy as sarcastically demonstrated in Roy's comatose Scottish imperialist guilty dream where he becomes the British coloniser in a hunt for the marabou stork. As Ellen-Raïssa Jackson and Willy Maley observe,

social differentiation within Edinburgh is collapsed into racial difference in Johannesburg. We are urged to recognise 'the same politics' [...] to some extent this passage demonstrates the ambiguity of Scotland's colonial status and the role of Scots in administering the British Empire.⁵¹⁴

As Jackson and Maley's poignant criticism illustrates, the novel aims at pointing at the complexity of British history as well at the political and social issues still at stake. The obliterations of the welfare system, industries, trade-unions and hope for political agency left entire working-class communities socially deprived, brutalised by poverty and unemployed, living in housing schemes which resembled more a custodial sentence. This

⁵¹¹ Aaron Kelly, p. 116.

⁵¹² Marina MacKay, p. 275.

⁵¹³ *MSN*, p. 24.

⁵¹⁴ Ellen-Raïssa Jackson and Willy Maley, 'Birds of Feather?: A Postcolonial reading of Irvine Welsh's *Marabou Stork Nightmares*', p. 191.

intense social control is described by Roy as he describes his being charged for playing football near his flat at the age of nine.⁵¹⁵ In *Trainspotting*, the chapter ‘Strolling through the Meadows’ in which Spud pleads with Renton to not kill a squirrel, describes the ‘non-white’ status of ‘schemies’: ‘it’s mibbe nae mair vermin thin you or me, likesay...whae’s tae say what’s vermin...they posh wifies think people like us ur vermin, likesay, does that make it right thit they should kill us, ah goes’.⁵¹⁶ Therefore, if Roy recognised the class similarities experienced by poor white people in Scotland and Black Africans in South Africa, the history book facing this declaration should remind the reader that not only Roy is speaking as a white dominant man in South Africa and the reality of the experience of Black South African is completely unknown to Roy, whether through the history he was exposed or through the events he sees. Roy does not question the system, he adheres to it, seeing it as a paradise. Welsh has written about the danger of comparison suffering, in his introduction to Iceberg Slim’s *Pimp*, as he explains:

One way I can describe it was when my American wife, white and from Chicago’s suburbs, on meeting my friends at a party in Edinburgh for the first time, informed me, ‘you don’t really get white people like you and your friends in America. Culturally and socially, you are a lot closer to working-class Black Americans in the projects.’ And by this, she didn’t mean that we greeted each other with a cringeworthy ‘yo’. (Yet it should be emphasised that one would obviously wince even further if this analogy were taken too far. Many Europeans, particularly those from Celtic nations, have often been guilty of overplaying this ‘brothers in misery and oppression’ conceit. No white European tribe, whether Irish peasants after the famine, or Scottish Highlanders following the clearances, have had to face the recent horror and continuing cultural and psychological legacy of kidnap, transportation and slavery).⁵¹⁷

The British colonial past reappears as a soothing and fascinating dream. Reality and fantasy intertwine as personal and national history come together. As the story progresses, the fantasy world that Roy imagines takes darker turns until one of its climaxes, ‘The Flamingo Massacres’, where Roy and Sandy reach a feast of marabou storks. The chase of the marabou storks is intertwined with recollection of his past: ‘What the fuck...I see a

⁵¹⁵ *MSN*, p. 22.

⁵¹⁶ *T*, p. 203.

⁵¹⁷ Welsh, ‘Introduction’, *Pimp: The Story of my Life*, pp. xiii- xiv.

Marabou Stork, not our one, stab a young flamingo, then after thoroughly sousing its prey underwater, swallow it whole'.⁵¹⁸ As Anne-Marie David points out, 'The hunting theme which goes through Roy's comatose dreams, is not only assimilated to rape and racial domination but to hooligan violence.'⁵¹⁹ Struggling to stay in his imaginary world in order to escape the truth, another vision of the Storks announces the following chapters:

...I'm seeing clearly again...we noted that quite close to us another couple of large Storks had insinuated themselves into a pack of squawking vultures who were devouring the unrecognisable corpse of an animal. It looked like the body of a woman.

not like the body of a woman

no⁵²⁰

The next chapter, 'Respect', describes Roy's supposed recollection of the night him and his friends went on to gang rape a young girl. First in the club, Kirsty is described as 'look[ing] so fuckin cool and proud the way she danced, her hair aw sort ay long and flowing, her mouth in that pout that seemed tae spit out contempt for all the world, her lithe body twisting to the music'.⁵²¹ but right before her agony starts, she is already changed: 'Her eye make-up was running. She looked repulsive already. Nothing like she'd looked in the club. The fear had twisted and distorted her face. It wasn't worth it'.⁵²² Through Roy's description, we see a complete dehumanisation of Kirsty; she is first not a woman anymore and she then stops being human as Roy compares her to an animal being eaten alive as the rape starts:

The expression on her face was...I remember seeing a documentary about some animal being eaten from behind while its face seemed to register disbelief, fear and self-hate at its own impotence. That was what she reminded me of. The wildebeest.⁵²³

⁵¹⁸ *MSN*, p. 172.

⁵¹⁹ Anne-Marie David, 'Marabou Stork Nightmares d'Irvine Welsh : Epuisement du récit réaliste et mise en récit de l'Histoire', in *@analyses*, Université de Montréal, 7.1 (2012), p. 97 : 'Le thème de la chasse, qui traverse les rêveries comateuses du personnage, est assimilé au viol et à la domination raciale, mais aussi à la violence hooligan.' <www.revue-analyses.org> my translation.

⁵²⁰ *MSN*, p. 173.

⁵²¹ *MSN*, p. 181.

⁵²² *MSN*, p. 183.

⁵²³ *MSN*, p. 183.

In this comparison, she stops being a person and she is condemned to stay that way. We have no choice but to see the course of events through Roy's version and this comparison compels the reader to see the rape through a 'prey/hunter' loop, already giving clues to the unreliability of the events. Roy's upbringing at home or South Africa attests to this, as we have seen: taught by a South African history book, Enid Blyton's book or Kipling's novels backing up this ideological line. His racist and xenophobic family who are themselves victims of a system feeds him with these preconceptions. At that moment, Roy is a perfect product of the majority. Throughout the novel, Roy represents the insidious, hidden violence of Scottish complicity in the histories of global colonisation and slavery.

Kirsty is reduced to an animal in agony and in her ordeal, she becomes a slave: 'He had her stand on a stool, almost on her tiptoes, with the rope round her neck. He stuck a large ball of cottonwool in her mouth and taped over it with masking tape'.⁵²⁴ Continuing on, Lexo, with Roy present, cruelly smiles, uttering a vicious enunciation of white colonial rage: 'you're ours now, ya sow'.⁵²⁵ This comparison of Kirsty to a sow reflects her position as not only an animal, but livestock and chattel, of both beast and property. Brutally dehumanised, Kirsty is described as a historic victim of white hegemonic masculinity. Like the colonised of the Americas, Asia, or Africa, Kirsty, as the colonised woman, is the first to face the horrors of the historic destroyer, which manifests as conflicting images of colonial sexual violence, as Ania Loomba explains:

Colonising as well as anti-colonial men, while being otherwise opposed, have often shared certain attitudes to women. In colonist as well as nationalist writings, racial and sexual violence are yoked together by images of rape, which in different forms, becomes an abiding and recurrent metaphor for colonial relations'.⁵²⁶

While Welsh does not explain whether or not Kirsty is black or white, his descriptions of conquest and colonisation from both the internal coloniser Lexo and the Scot abroad, Roy, establish a complex metaphorical relationship between Scotland's role in the colonisation and the violence it inherently reproduces throughout the world indefinitely.

After the brutal rape scene, Lexo and Roy make her clean the traces of their horrific colonial conquest. At this point, Roy begins to realise what he has done. Here, it is an

⁵²⁴ *MSN*, p. 184.

⁵²⁵ *MSN*, p. 185.

⁵²⁶ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism-Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 164.

opening to confrontation through Kirsty's unrecognisable self and Roy is starting to see what he and the others have been doing:

In the morning, we made her take a couple of showers and steep in the bath, supervising her washing herself thoroughly. She was so compliant, looked so destroyed and wretched, that I felt it would've been better if we'd topped her. She crossed her legs and kept her arms over her chest, like one of the female prisoners in concentration camp films. Her body, which had always looked so good, so lithe, athletic and curvy as she danced in her tight and flimsy clothes, now looked broken and bent, twisted and scrawny.

I realised what we had done, what we had taken. Her beauty was little to do with her looks, the physical attractiveness of her. It was to do with the way she moved, the way she carried herself. It was her confidence, her pride, her vivacity, her lack of fear, her attitude. It was something even more fundamental and less superficial than those things. It was her self, or her sense of it.

We had no right. We didnae realise... ah didnae think... Get away. Get away from this for a bit.⁵²⁷

The scene sparked criticism regarding the language used in the scene or the scene itself denouncing the lack of female agency in the narration (Kirsty's point of view being absent) but also the use of the Scottish 'dialect' which Elspeth Findlay sees as a way to *épater le bourgeois* as she explains: 'At the moment of the rape, the narrator is, 'ah', a speaker of dialect. As he reflects remorsefully he turns into, 'I'. During the rape he says, 'ay them'. Afterwards he says, 'of her'. The evil side of the narrator speaks dialect, the conscience-stricken side speaks standard English'.⁵²⁸ However, this is not the case for Welsh in this novel. From the molar mask of woman he had put on her since the beginning of the novel, and on other women, he starts experiencing something else, a beginning of a becoming as he describes her in new terms and reach the conclusion: 'we had no right', therefore questioning his masculinity and thus his power. The change between 'Standard English' and Roy's accent right at the conclusion, attests of a sense of control fading away, as well as a sense of power, but prefer to reach back to a fantasy instead of facing the stork or in other words: eating crows, the broken, bent, twisted and scrawny meat that only brings shame and humiliation but also the irreparable mistake he has to admit to. Therefore, the

⁵²⁷ *MSN*, p. 190.

⁵²⁸ Elspeth Findlay, 'The Bourgeois Values of Irvine Welsh', p. 6.

language of power also becomes the language of distancing himself from his action and thus his responsibility, just like in his history books, in diverting his actions on Lexo. Roy is able to process his action and to allow himself to face Kirsty, to see her almost in a perverse way, he is able to look and watch without the guilt: 'I wanted to see her. I needed to see her. We had to go back'.⁵²⁹ This sense of detachment through language also echoes British history which Scotland shares, bringing up the impossibility to distance and deny the part of Scotland's role in profiting off of colonisation in the British Empire.

In her essay, 'The Laugh of Medusa', Cixous – who is importantly herself a product of colonisation, French-speaking and Algerian-born – critiques colonial and misogynistic discourses in addressing the otherness of woman in a male-dominated world as a (post)colonial reality, as an Apartheid in which women have internalised inferiority, a 'brainwashing' as she explains:

Here they are, returning, arriving over and over again, because the un-conscious is impregnable. They have wandered around in circles, confined to the narrow room in which they've been given a deadly brainwashing. You can incarcerate them, slow them down, get away with the old Apartheid routine, but for a time only. As soon as they begin to speak, at the same time as they're taught their name, they can be taught that their territory is black: because you are Africa, you are Black. Your continent is dark. Dark is dangerous. You can't see anything in the dark, you're afraid. Don't move, you might fall. Most of all, don't go into the forest. And so we have internalized this horror of the dark. Men have committed the greatest crime against women. Insidiously, violently, they have led them to hate women, to be their own enemies, to mobilize their immense strength against themselves, to be the executants of their virile needs.⁵³⁰

Therefore, the distance, the voyeurism and the extreme dehumanisation of Kirsty in the rape scene followed by her enslavement connect to the vision Cixous exposes: the double colonial gaze of the white man, viciously hungering to plunder and destroy the bodies of the colonised woman.

Moreover, the novel also exposes the complicity of the British legal system, a system which denies and endorses violence against women. It goes even further as it also exposes internalised misogyny, or as Cixous explains 'we have internalized this horror of

⁵²⁹ *MSN*, 187.

⁵³⁰ Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of Medusa', pp. 877-878.

the dark'. Indeed, Roy's mother is the first to deny the rape allegations against Roy in using sexist derogatory terms against Kirsty: 'A slag! A fuckin slag's gaunny ruin ma laddie's life! N you're gaunny jist stand their n take the slag's world against yir ain flesh n blood!'⁵³¹ This is even more striking as Roy's father is the one to ask about the veracity of the allegations against him: 'Ah jist hud tae ask son, ah jist hud tae ken'.⁵³²

Beyond his family's colonial and complicit role in the internalisation of the rape, Welsh writes Roy as an unexpected victim, perhaps like Dostoevsky describes Raskolnikov's mind-shattering guilt throughout the second half of *Crime and Punishment*. While wandering Edinburgh, Roy reacts to the Zero Tolerance campaign posters displayed everywhere in the city after returning from South Africa, once again. In sight of one of the posters which says: 'No Man Has The Right', Roy feels 'I couldnae get air, the blood seeming tae run right oot ay ma heid. I stood in Princes Street, shaking. – THEY DINNAE KEN! THEY DINNAE KEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES! THEY DINNAE KEN WHAT IT'S LIKE!'⁵³³ Here, Welsh refers back to the quote by John Major, located in the epigraph before the Table of Contents, which reads: 'we should condemn more and understand less'.⁵³⁴ Welsh does not excuse or minimise the violence perpetrated by Roy against women, even though he depicts Roy's denial and encroaching madness in visceral ways. His ire, however, is directed at the ways in which the State failed men like Roy and did not protect women like Kirsty.

As we have seen, the reconfiguration of the old model of working-class masculinity due to massive deindustrialisation and new opportunities in services and in leisure activities saw not only the entry of women in the workplace but also a large portion of men rendered obsolete and unqualified. Between the nostalgia for old models of industrial work, masculinity tends to resist and become more excessive to fill the need of sexual differentiation in the work place and in society. Roy moves between the 'deserving poor' and the underserving, the respectable and the shameful working-class. The nostalgia of a lost Empire serves also as a reminder of what has been lost for these communities, as Anoop Nayak articulates:

Far from disappearing, the anatomy of labour is discursively signalled, embodied and iterated in new styles of consumption. Here, the long shadow of an industrial past that celebrated full employment, continuity and strict sexual division of labour,

⁵³¹ *MSN*, p. 192.

⁵³² *MSN*, p. 193.

⁵³³ *MSN*, p. 198.

⁵³⁴ *MSN*, epigraph, n.p.

cast itself darkly upon their hyperbolic performances. The identification with a 'golden past' enabled the *Real Geordies* to construe themselves as the eternal 'backbone of the nation' – salt-of-the-earth natives who had failed to inherit an industrial heritage that was rightfully theirs'.⁵³⁵

Welsh presents us with probably the 'lowest of the low', the people who are so disenfranchised and marginalised that they are viewed as the shame of the nation when they were once part of and a key component to the success of the greatest Empire in the world. In claiming a 'white supremacy', they might hope to distinguish themselves from an 'underclass' in an effort to hold on to their former glory with a harsher discourse on gender, class and race. Schoene-Harwood highlights the sexual politics of the novel, linking gender and class too: 'Excluded from the privileges of power that in patriarchy serve to consolidate masculine superiority, Welsh's structurally emasculated anti-hero finds himself under enormous pressure to assert himself as a man'.⁵³⁶ In the novel, the hyper-masculinity is a contribution to the re-examination of Scottish identity. Schoene-Harwood describes

Welsh's use of strong, sexually explicit language pertains to his critique of hegemonic power relations that divide people, irrespective of their biological sex, into active 'men' and passive 'women', victors and victims, the powerful and the chronically disempowered. [...] Within patriarchy, social deprivation connotes much more than the general stigmata of poverty, inferiority and failure. To men specifically, it signifies a state of emasculation, of violation and shameful impotence.⁵³⁷

The critique of white hegemonic masculinity goes hand in hand with the critique of power, capital, and national histories. The novel illustrates the underlying truth as Roy goes to work just before the trial. Ironically, Roy's job as a systems analyst is the symbol of a displaced working-class who face the change from industrial labour to office hours. The System Control room where Roy works only confirms the patronising control over working-class men, the panoptical system control which controls its citizens, or detained,

⁵³⁵ Anoop Nayak, 'Displaced Masculinities: Chavs, Youth and Class in the Post-industrial City', *Sociology*, vol. 40, no. 5 (2006) p. 826.

⁵³⁶ Berthold Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men: Literary Masculinities from Frankenstein to the New Man* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 145.

⁵³⁷ Schoene-Harwood, pp. 145-146.

as well as being part of a bigger control system, reminiscent of Deleuze's societies of control:

- Roy's people are doing a wonderful job in dragging us out of the dark ages, into a new, exciting halcyon era of advanced technology, is that not right, Roy? He said, in the plummy stage drama voice which is a required accessory for the exercise of Edinburgh bourgeois wit.
- Eh...aye..., I went, as the others laughed.
- So you're one of Colin Sproul's mob in S.C.? The Brylcreemed cunt says, like an accusation. That sharp, posh voice, always sounding like a fuckin accusation. Ah felt like sayin: naw, ah'm Roy Strang, cunt. Roy fuckin Strang. Hibs Boys. Ah felt like smashin ma boatil ay Becks ower the cunt's heid, then rammin it in ehs fuckin smug pus.⁵³⁸

Here, the analogy between the 'dark ages' of a world without technology and the civilised white man's duty to enlighten the savages is quite clear. Roy's response to the 'bourgeois wit' attests Roy's refusal to conform and to, in other words, adhere to the system of control and hegemonic power. The feeling of being patronised by a 'posh voice' brings Roy to attach himself strongly to a collection of Beings, made up by himself to retain his white hegemonic power. Roy brings up identity and subjectivity in 'Roy Strang' or 'Hibs Boy' before realising that these identities are only made up from nostalgia and what Althusser refers to as ISAs which serves as reproduction of capitalist exploitation and ideology, as described in Chapter Two. However, as the anger and the violence rises as much as his identity is confirmed, Roy suddenly changes his discourse and realises the extent of the exploitation of the working class:

- Bit ah didnae. Wi these cunts, it's like ah'm jist invisible tae thaim n they are tae me. It all came tae ays wi clarity; these are the cunts we should be hurtin, no the boys wi knock fuck oot ay at the fitba, no the birds wi fuck aboot, no oor ain Ma n Dad, oor ain brothers n sisters, oor ain neighbors, oor ain mates. These cunts. Bit naw; we screw each other's hooses when there's fuck all in them, we terrorise oor ain people. These cunts though: these cunts wi dinnae even fuckin see. Even when they're aw around us.
- Eh aye, Systems Control...was all I could say.

⁵³⁸ *MSN*, pp. 200-1.

Systems control.⁵³⁹

Following the ‘success’ of the trial in which Roy and his friends are all discharged from accusations, Roy’s recent revelations troubles him and he tries to leave Edinburgh for Manchester, hoping to escape the guilt and the place which confines him into an identity to which he cannot relate anymore. As Roy prepares to commit suicide, Roy reflects one last time on his discovery about what it means to ‘be a man’, the horror of Being *man*:

I wasn’t a psychopath; I was just a fool and a coward. I had opened up my emotions and I couldn’t go back into self-denial, into that lower form of existence, but I couldn’t go forward until I’d settled my debt. For me it wasn’t running away. That was what I’d been doing all my fuckin life, running away from sensitivity, from feelings, from love. Running away because a fuckin schemie, a nobody, shouldnae have these feelings because there’s fuckin naewhair for them tae go, naewhair from them tae expressed and if you open up every cunt will tear you apart.⁵⁴⁰

Here, Roy rejects the destructive force that is the Being of man and the history of *Man*. There is a reflection on the teaching and the upbringing of boys as we have seen, either through History or the literature written for boys earlier in the analysis. Beyond mere discourses on masculinity and work, the complexity of *Marabou Stork Nightmares* issues a warning about how to tell history, especially when it can so quickly fuel a violent reclamation of a once dominant national project: to take what is rightfully theirs. Thus, it is no surprise that the girl is the first and last victim in Roy’s monstrous becoming-man. For Deleuze and Guattari,

The question is not, or not only, that of the organism, history, and subject of enunciation that oppose masculine to feminine in the great dualism machines. The question is fundamentally that of the body – the body they *steal* from us in order to fabricate opposable organisms. The body is stolen first from the girl: Stop behaving like that, you’re not a little girl anymore, you’re not a tomboy, etc. The girl’s becoming is stolen first, in order to impose a history, or prehistory, upon her. The boy’s turn comes next, but it is using the girl as an example, by pointing to the girl as the object of his desire, that an opposed organism, a dominant history is

⁵³⁹ *MSN*, pp. 200-1.

⁵⁴⁰ *MSN*, p. 254.

fabricated for him too. The girl is the first victim, but she must also serve as an example and a trap.⁵⁴¹

Back in his hospital bed, Roy emerges more and more from his coma and hunting Storks fantasies when he finally hears Kirsty in the room:

I know she's in the room before she speaks; observing me, toying with me. I'm at her mercy in the same way she was at ours. How will she exercise her power? Will she show compassion or is she just the same as us? Is she what we made her?⁵⁴²

Kirsty's becoming has been stolen in the club, 'her proud' is gone and she is now reduced to the molar of women, the destruction of her becomings and herself. Following Roy's breakthrough and becoming, we see that in the novel, Kirsty is *the* example for Roy first to dive deep into his antagonism against women as Kirsty asks 'I hate you for what you did to me, I understand that hate. What I'd really love is for you to be able to explain how you hated me so much to do what you did'.⁵⁴³ This opposition is symptomatic of the Hegelian dialectic of man/woman, pointed out by Cixous in the previous chapter, but also the Hegelian philosophy of History where this is *reason* in History, seeing history as a rational process or as Deleuze and Guattari stipulates 'white, male, adult, "rational", etc.'.⁵⁴⁴ The girl, Kirsty is the first victim in the novel as well as an example for the boys 'You wanted me to feel what happens to any cunt who fucks about with Roy Strang'.⁵⁴⁵ The confrontation on the nature of History is also seen in Bernard's visit (Roy's half-brother) at the hospital in which we see the dominant history responding to attacks, a history which provokes Roy's downfall as well as destruction around him. Bernard confronts him with his experience living in South Africa which turns out to be completely different:

It was paradise

-the sickening greed and avarice, the front-line of South African exploitation, the playground where the settlers enjoyed the fruits of the wealth they'd ripped off

SHUT UP YOU FUCKIN POOF, IT WISNAE LIKE THAT, IT WAS BRILLANT

⁵⁴¹ *ATP*, p. 322.

⁵⁴² *MSN*, p. 227.

⁵⁴³ *MSN*, p. 229.

⁵⁴⁴ *ATP*, p. 341.

⁵⁴⁵ *MSN*, p. 259.

-but even worse than the casinos was the fuckin cabaret. You and Kim were the lucky ones, tucked up back at the hotel. I had to sit in silence as we watched Doreen Staar's show. She was crude and extremely racist. I wrote a poem about that time.⁵⁴⁶

As MacKay notices 'It's clear from Roy's capitalized response, with its defensive anger, that Bernard has won the argument'.⁵⁴⁷ But it is also a violent rejection provoked by the molecular, the becoming and awareness of Bernard which surfaces that overwhelms Roy. His response brings up the molar view of Bernard as a 'poof' as his unique answer to explain Bernard's different experience of the past. The parallel with Scotland and Roy, Apartheid and gender separation as well as class separation finally emerges together. Earlier, we can read the inferiorism and the cringe through Roy's realisation 'I'm a coward' for not facing up to the truth of complicity the whole time, a complicity of Being man, of adhering to the Being of man and to profit from it. Welsh is showing the gender production of the Scottish State and the British Empire and seeks the end of hegemonic construction of masculinity. Scottish history forever linked with the British Empire needs to be acknowledged to overcome the trauma of a shared history of violence and exploitation. Here, Welsh shows that the system, whether it is the Apartheid, British government or legal system, works against the people and that those people complicit are themselves victims: the system must be reversed and put to trial as Dave Chappelle articulates in Chapter Four. Similarly, in *Trainspotting*, Renton finds himself in a bar in London, The Britannia, and he too describes the hegemonic role the imperial ideals of Britannia have in everyday Scottish society:

The pub sign is a new one, but its message is old. The Britannia. Rule Britannia. Ah've never felt British, because ah'm not. It's ugly and artificial. Ah've never really felt Scottish either, though. Scotland the brave, ma arse; Scotland the shitein cunt. We'd throttle the life out ay each other fir the privilege ay rimmin some English aristocrat's piles. Ah've never felt a fuckin thing about countries, other than total disgust. They should abolish the fuckin lot ay them. Kill every fuckin parasite politician that ever stood up and mouthed lies and fascist platitudes in a suit and a smarmy smile.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁶ *MSN*, p. 128.

⁵⁴⁷ MacKay, p. 274.

⁵⁴⁸ *T*, pp. 284-5.

Here, Renton goes back to his previous and notorious internal monologue: ‘Fuckin failures in a country ay failures. It’s nae good blamin it oan the English fir colonising us. Ah don’t hate the English. There’re just wankers. We are colonised by wankers’.⁵⁴⁹ In this scene, Renton borrows the image of a colonised Scotland in order to invert the image to show the poisonous consequences of such speech: the hyper violence, the sectarianism, the hyper-masculinity and a self-perpetuating melancholy, combined with self-hatred of the myth and reality of Scottishness: ‘To throttle the life out ay each other fir the privilege ay rimmin some English aristocrat’s piles’ not only refer to the violence of sectarianism and rise of individualism but also to the Highland clearances perpetrated by Lowland Scots on Highland Scots, and bourgeois and aristocratic Scotland letting its poor kill themselves.

The emasculation symbol in Welsh’s fiction, and especially in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* and *A Decent Ride*, appears as a means to convey the cliché of the Thatcherite grip on Scotland and falling into the trap of gendering the two nations. In order to get out of it, Roy must admit what he did, and it comes at the very end as Kirsty describes her transformation:

You said you wanted me to look at you, and you wanted to see my face. You wanted me to see Roy Strang. You wanted me to feel what happens to any cunt who fucks about Roy Strang. Now I want to see you Roy. I want you to see what you’ve made me, because you’ve made me just like you. I hid like a sick, twisted vegetable for days, hid inside my flat, frightened of my own shadow. Sleep was an impossibility without the pills. You raped me once, and with the help of the judge and the courts you raped me again. Then I saw those posters, those Zero Tolerance campaign posters. NO MAN HAS THE RIGHT they said, but they were wrong, Roy.⁵⁵⁰

What she has become is a Being: she is *man* at this instance, *man* as a destroying and oppressive force, closed off from *becomings* and therefore another victim of a historic violence that will forever perpetuate itself. Later she continues, exclaiming:

I don’t know who fucked you up, what happened to make you the sad, wretched excuse for a human being you are and I don’t care. It’s not my problem. You’re my

⁵⁴⁹ *T*, p. 100.

⁵⁵⁰ *MSN*, p. 259.

problem, or rather were. Now I'm your problem. Might is right. You *take* the right. I'm taking the right Roy, taking the right to fuck you off, son.⁵⁵¹

Her plea for him to see her is answered: 'She's looking into my eyes, lidless eyes and we see each other now'.⁵⁵² The scene is a reminder of Roy's guilty pleasure to position himself as an outsider during the first recollection of the rape, where he was running away from power. The ending sees Kirsty made like them, and echoes Nietzsche's aphorism 'Whoever fights with monsters should see to it that he does not become one himself. And when you stare for a long time into an abyss, the abyss stares back into you'.⁵⁵³ She stared into the horror of *Man* and she holds on to the trace of power left within herself and the same anger and violence keeps her going. The novel is about power, truth and reconciliation as well as the experience of power and complicity as dangerous and nonsensical:

...I can feel her knife hacking into my genitals, thrashing into my chest, digging, trying to find me, but she'll never find me in here...and now I'm soaring upwards trying to get out, to fly across the fields of Africa, but I'm stuck on the hospital ceiling looking down at Roy Strang being hacked to pieces by Kirsty... hacked by a serrated knife...did you get it at Boston's Kirsty...-----

- I'm going to let you feel this, Roy! They say a man can hardly feel it, hardly feel the removal of his prick...

NO

NO

I'm suddenly back down in here and I feel the pain and I can't move because of her.⁵⁵⁴

The unsatisfying ending comes from the lack of understanding, and from the violence of it, coming from a need for revenge from her deep look into the molar as Bourdieu expresses: '*Manliness*, understood as sexual or social reproductive capacity, but also as the capacity to fight and to exercise violence (especially in acts of revenge), is first and foremost a *duty*'.⁵⁵⁵ In the novel, the background of verbal, physical and sexual abuse on the narrator

⁵⁵¹ *MSN*, p. 260.

⁵⁵² *MSN*, p. 263.

⁵⁵³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, ed. by Rolf-Peter Horstmann and trans by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 69.

⁵⁵⁴ *MSN*, pp. 262-3.

⁵⁵⁵ Bourdieu, p. 51.

serves as a history of violence; repeating itself and a mark of manliness but also necessary for survival. This seemingly historical violence is passed on as a way to heal, to 'normalise' the violence received to fall into an endless cycle of violence which will perpetuate the horror of the first historical Being: Man.

Lies and Retaliation at the End of *Marabou Stork Nightmares*

As this chapter has illustrated, Welsh criticises the often-unexamined elements of Scottish complicity in the global colonial problem of white male hegemonic masculinity, the pre-given power of the molar of Man. If the ending of the novel can appear disappointing and almost neutralising, as it offers no female empowerment and produces another castration cycle that appears political as much as historical, as Chapter Two alluded to earlier, the ending of the novel also avoids a moralistic resolution: no one wins when there is no truth and reconciliation, as Dave Chappelle noted in the previous chapter. Once again, Welsh is determined to show the end of hegemonic and historical constructions of masculinity in a violently corporeal gesture. Kirsty is not liberated by castrating Roy: she is once again tossed headlong into the cycle of violence that the corruption of a system perpetuates, thus separating all minor voices along the same major modes of division. Welsh sees the post-national destruction of Scottish masculinity, specifically the type that Roy represents, in a productive and affirmative way, even if the novel might only show 'a lacuna of female agency' as Jackson and Maley note.⁵⁵⁶ However, for Welsh, in this novel, the extent of the power of self-othering, self-loathing, and historical amnesia reveals a danger in the belief of nationhood and its identities that it manufactures for colonial purposes. In this novel, we dive into the abyss of stolen becomings, latent becomings and above all, the violent Being of Man. As MacKay insists:

In any case, the accusation that Welsh is replicating a reactionary version of masculinity by perpetuating misogynistic, homophobic stereotypes is refuted by *Marabou Stork Nightmares*. The rape of Kirsty is shown not to be the random attack of deranged individuals, but rather as part of a wider context of sexual exploitation and abuse, in which violence against women is endorsed by a peer group and sanctioned by the legal system. [...] The novel indicates strongly, and

⁵⁵⁶ Ellen-Raïssa Jackson and Willy Maley, p. 193.

reiterates frequently, that acts of violence against women take place in a culture that complicitly endorses their aggressive and contemptuous treatment.⁵⁵⁷

Following MacKay's concluding thoughts on Welsh's profound critique of sexual exploitation and gendered violence in the colonial and historical recesses of the Scottish imaginary, we might argue that, like in Chapter Four, the solution Welsh poses is in a model of South African truth and reconciliation. *Marabou Stork Nightmares* is not just a novel about the Scot abroad or his colonial hunt: it is a novel about the end of apartheid, which took place in April of 1994, a year before the novel was published. Clearly drawing on the negotiations of Mandela, Tutu, and the white South African State, Welsh finds some sort of solution in the truth and reconciliation strategies for Scotland, as much as for the men and women who take part in a system that has not only forgotten about them but actively seeks to divide and destroy them entirely. The precarity of Roy's class and Kirsty's gender would seemingly produce a coalition against the forces of the State and its ISAs that conduct cruel games of othering. But unfortunately, the molar nature of History cannot be defined by truth or reconciliation; its reoccurrence and its enforcement through educational and political systems (like Roy's history book or the national identity of the Afrikaner) is built on lies and retaliation, as indicated by the Irish Troubles, the genocides of Sudan and Rwanda, the civil wars of Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria, and the bitter cold war waged against the non-white, poor and migrant populations of the United States, Great Britain, and the European Union.

⁵⁵⁷ MacKay, pp. 272-3.

Chapter Six

The Ethics of Choosing Life and the Alternative Working-Class Families of Irvine Welsh

As we have seen so far, Welsh's literary themes are both transgressive and traditional, yet continually working their way back to ways of unbecoming-Scot. As he erupted onto the British literary scene of 1993 with *Trainspotting*, Welsh gave many voices to a lost generation, while also engaging with the contradictions, paradoxes, and nuances of Scottish literature and its relation to its stilted national culture. His latest novels exemplify the above, as *A Decent Ride* deals with paternal alienation and the patriarchal Scottish State, which gives rise to populist political undercurrents, as explored in Chapter Two. *The Blade Artist* examines themes of the duality of some sort of postcolonial consciousness, home and abroad, only further exacerbated by scenes of seemingly classical and mythical allusions to patricide and fratricide. *Dead Men's Trousers* brings a resolution and a way out of circles of violence and destruction by offering new avenues of facing the molar essences of the State and family, and replacing identities for becomings, subjectivity for vitality, genealogies for topographies, and law for care.

Dead Men's Trousers, as the end of the current Leith Cycle, processes the trauma of the previous two novels by deterritorialising the Scot, unravelling the Leith Head. On the brink of existential destruction, figures like Renton, Sick Boy, and Begbie attempt to 'grow up', and provide new models for renewal and change beyond the antiquarian institutions of family, work, religion, and national identity. Unlike the deeply pessimistic vision of the foreclosure of truth and reconciliation in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* that ended with an actual gesture of castration, *Dead Men's Trousers* provides new ways and becomings beyond the strict patriarchal roles of the family. Instead of severing the familial ties by bloodying the waters, Welsh's latest novels offer new possibilities for the twenty-first century children of Leith, who, at one point, would be regarded as the most minor voices in their own minoritarian community: the daughters of Begbie, Sick Boy's gay son, and Renton's autistic boy. In Welsh's novels then, the institution of the family becomes an allegory for the Scottish State, functioning as a mirror that reveals the sores, cankers, and cysts of a schizophrenic national identity.⁵⁵⁸ Throughout his novels, the family (extended or nuclear) replicates the powers of the State and its ISAs, often naturalising toxic masculinity, social divisiveness, and internalised violence as traditional social norms that

⁵⁵⁸ Caledonian Antiszygy refers to the 'idea of dueling polarities within one entity', thought of as typical for the Scottish psyche and literature. It was first coined by Gregory Smith in *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (London: Macmillan, 1919).

destroy most of Welsh's characters, exemplified by the previous chapter in *Marabou Stork Nightmares*. Therefore, this last chapter of this thesis explores alternative becomings in opposition to Scottish familial discourse as some sort of post-family becomings.⁵⁵⁹

As we have seen in previous chapters, through becoming-animal, becoming-woman or becoming-other, becomings imply a propagation which is nonhierarchical, a peopling that is radical in its collectiveness and nonfilial origins:

How can we conceive of a peopling, a propagation, a becoming that is without filiation or hereditary production? A multiplicity without the unity of an ancestor? It is quite simple; everybody knows it, but it is discussed only in secret. We oppose epidemic to filiation, contagion to heredity, peopling by contagion to sexual reproduction, sexual production. Bands, human or animal, proliferate by contagion, epidemics, battlefields, and catastrophes.⁵⁶⁰

For Deleuze and Guattari, the formulation of the political centre of the State is the family, an idea they largely develop notably in *Anti-Oedipus*. They compare political and family alliances as they see the family as an institution which takes the same problems of power as any institution. Through their study of Freud-Lacanian oedipal discourse, they refuse the weight of the father in myth and in family, as they write:

Rather than everything being reduced to the name of the father, or that of the maternal grandfather, the latter opened onto all the names of history. Instead of everything being projected onto a grotesque hiatus of castration, everything was scattered in the thousand breaks-flows of the chieftainships, the lineages, the relations of colonization. The whole interplay of races, clans, alliances, and filiations, this entire historical and collective drift: exactly the opposite of the Oedipal analysis, when it stubbornly crushes the content of a delirium, when it stuffs it with all its might into 'the symbolic void of the father'.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁹ For more on postfamily studies, see Judith Butler and French poststructuralists such as Luce Irigaray: Pheng Cheah, Elizabeth Grosz, Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell, 'The Future of Sexual Difference: An Interview with Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell' in *Diacritics, Irigaray and the Political Future of Sexual Difference*, 28.1, (1998), pp. 19-42.

⁵⁶⁰ *ATP*, p. 282.

⁵⁶¹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 187. Hereafter *AO*.

Hence, for Deleuze and Guattari becomings challenge hierarchies, norms of existence from the majority as we have seen in earlier chapters. In Welsh's fiction, becoming-animal can be seen through a new community, scattered, rhizomatic, a community of individuals linked by intensities and pack alliances, which, in Welsh's world, are signified by drug communities, which Chapter Three introduced:

Alliances never derive from filiations, nor can they be deduced from them. But, this principle once established, we must distinguish between two points of view: the one economic and political, where alliance is there from time immemorial, combining and declining itself with the extended filiative lineages that do not exist prior to alliances in a system assumed to be given in extended form; the other mythical, which shows how the extension of a system takes form and delimits itself, proceeding from intense and primordial filiative lineages that necessarily lose their inclusive and non-restrictive use. From this viewpoint the extended system is like a memory of alliance and of words, implying an active repression of the intense memory of filiation.⁵⁶²

Similarly, the Deleuzo-Guattarian ethics of alliance described here reflects what Carol Gilligan refers to as 'ethics of care',⁵⁶³ which is central to the drama of *Skagboys* and other work such as *Ecstasy*. Welsh's minor voices in these works actively respond to the radical ethical ways that new communities arise out of the State's quest to divide, displace, or disintegrate the precarious and poor communities like Leith, which is emphasised by the importance of comrades, mates, friendships, and the necessities of care and love.

Unbecoming-Father?: Franco's Failed Escape from Fatherhood in *The Blade Artist*

The Blade Artist opens on Californian beach seeing Begbie, now known as Jim Francis, fulfilled with the love of two daughters Eve and Grace, symbol of his apparent absolution. He has to face his past once again as Sean his first-born son to June was murdered back in Edinburgh. Going back for his son's funeral, he will continue to deny his paternity of Sean and Michael. However, he insists on finding out the identity of his son's murderer. In his quest on finding the origin of his son's murder, he will unleash his double, 'Franco', he had

⁵⁶² AO, p. 155.

⁵⁶³ Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

repressed during his Californian exile. This life, almost unimaginable for this character, marks a turning point in the theme of fatherhood in Welsh's novels: 'As he elevates her skywards, the bright sun seems to burst out from behind Eve's head, offering Jim Francis a transcendental moment that he pauses to savour before he lowers the child'.⁵⁶⁴ The daughter or the girl, as we have seen in Chapter Four, is the becoming of becomings, and Begbie's becoming other. The transition from the Begbie from Edinburgh, this brutal, tortured and hyper violent figure to the California artist enjoying his new life shows a new pattern from division to transition.

The Old World and the New World, the stilted Scottish working-class masculinity to the queerness of the Californian liberal bubble, from the poisonous filiation to the endless possibilities of girls, collide in this novel. The novel will dig at the trope of the prodigal son and fratricide, tropes which have been exploited by authors such as James Hogg and Robert Louis Stevenson. The Old World is the world of traditional hegemony which Begbie, on his coming back to Edinburgh, has to face once more. As Welsh explains in an interview:

You see the white male rage of Begbie in the culture today. The end of capitalism means the end of traditional hegemony. There's a deconstruction of masculinity and sexuality going on and that's where a lot of angst comes from.⁵⁶⁵

The violence of Begbie's confrontation with his son is amplified by his return to Scotland and the interplay with his memories of his father, his uncle Jimmy and grandfather Grandad Jock in sections entitled 'The Delivery Boy' describing the masculine violence perpetuated through generations:

- See yir brother Joe, he's scared ay you, Grandad Jock said to me once down the howf. – He kens he's weaker than you. I was floored by this revelation. Joe constantly bullied me: battering me, making my life hell. But I recognized a strange credibility in my grandad's statement. There was a panic in Joe's eyes when he beat me, like he was almost anticipating a retaliation that never came. But, armed with this insight, I resolved that it would now arrive. And he

⁵⁶⁴ Irvine Welsh, *The Blade Artist* (London: Vintage, 2017), p. 1.

⁵⁶⁵ Irvine Welsh in Tim Jonze, 'You see the white male rage of Begbie in the culture today', *The Guardian*, (19 August 2017) <<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/aug/19/irvine-welsh-you-see-the-white-male-rage-of-begbie-in-the-culture-today>> [accessed 15/09/2017]

wouldn't be expecting it. This old bastard Jock, who could smell a man's vulnerability like a shark does blood in the water, he saw everything. He understood it all.⁵⁶⁶

The novel takes a quick turn as Begbie receives a phone call from Edinburgh, from his sister: 'His younger sister, ten years and four months between them. His brother Joe, just over a year older than him. And why was she getting in touch? It had to be about Joe, he was a heavy drinker. The drink took their father. It would get Joe too'.⁵⁶⁷ As he listens to the news of his son's death, he goes silent and reflects on his experience of fatherhood in Edinburgh:

They all seemed to belong to a different life, one lived by somebody else. He looks at his tanned countenance in the mirror on the wall. Melanie is hovering behind him, her own face tense in the reflection. When Grace and Eve had come along it had been so different. He'd felt himself as something small, yet part of an infinite cosmos, and swarmed by an internal kaleidoscope of emotion, he'd cried and squeezed her hand.⁵⁶⁸

This experience of a cosmic becoming described by Begbie could only happen with his exile from Scotland, and beyond the destructive cycle of fathers and sons, of the oedipal circle of historical violence.

In California, he is able to feel and express fatherhood in new terms. The experience of the father of two sons in Scotland and the father of two daughters in California is entirely different because he was able to become other, to become outside of the traditional formulations of State masculinity and see in his daughters endless becomings:

I did everything wrong with him and his brother, he says, seeming to Melanie to grow almost conversational in his tone, like he is talking to someone else. It disconcerts her, and he picks up on it, sinking his voice. – When I had kids I said I'd never be the way my old man was with me. And I kept my words; I was worse,

⁵⁶⁶ *BA*, pp. 27-8.

⁵⁶⁷ *BA*, p. 19.

⁵⁶⁸ *BA*, p. 20.

he allows, almost bluntly, as he pulls up the American Airlines page on the screen. Then he turns to her and says, intently, - But I'm different with the girls.⁵⁶⁹

Begbie's becoming, or rather unbecoming, can be seen through the way he grew out of his community and friends, as he realises that his former community was held by a glue of violence, retaliation and molar Beings tied to masculinity:

As for friendships, those that existed between unreconstructed men of violence could thrive in camaraderie and even genuine affection for a while, as long as pecking order was steadfastly adhered to. When it broke down, however, the results were devastating and few relationships could survive them, assuming both parties managed to. But in any case, his old friends lived lives that no longer had any appeal to him.⁵⁷⁰

His unbecoming goes through a phase of rejection of the Scottish family shown through his rejection of fatherhood. Begbie moves away from the oedipal construction of fatherhood and as Deleuze and Guattari remind us: 'the Oedipal bond is established by the murderous identification, at the other end it is reinforced by the restoration and internalization of paternal authority ("revival of the old state of things at a new level")'.⁵⁷¹ Thus, the family in Scotland is seen as a molar entity which operates by negation, lack, guilt, and brutal violence. As Begbie remembers the birth of his first-born son:

He recalls that time, the irritating fuss Elspeth and his mother had made. *The bairn this, the bairn that*. The bitterly resented implication that his life was now over, that he would live by proxy through this child. And he realized that he'd been manipulated, that the pregnancy and the birth of the kid had represented a (forlorn) hope by June and his mother that he would change.⁵⁷²

In the above quote, Begbie articulates the idea of the end of the father through the child or rather the idea of the rivalry between father and son, internalised from birth, signifying the death of the father as well as a bond between mother and son against the paternal. As Begbie confronts the molar of the father figure, he is able to feel and become-other as he

⁵⁶⁹ BA, p. 22.

⁵⁷⁰ BA, p. 30.

⁵⁷¹ AO, p. 79.

⁵⁷² BA, p. 103.

embraces fatherhood differently with his daughters, suggesting the impossibility of being a father of boys in Scotland:

I liked the *idea* ay having sons, but I was never really interested in you or Sean. Never loved youse like I do my girls. My beautiful, rich, spoiled daughters. You boys, he shakes his head, – tae me there was never any real point in you boys.⁵⁷³

In rejecting his role as a father to his children in Scotland, Begbie seemingly breaks from oedipal structure and the patrilineal hierarchy, which as Welsh indicates later in the novel, frames the entire filial relation to power and violence:

All I can do for them is try to live my life in a decent way. Show them the different consequences ay that. Show them that acting like a radge means a twelve-foot concrete box in Saughton, which is not good. But opening yourself: that means a house by the beach in California, which is pretty damn fine. That's the only lesson I can impart to anybody. I'm not going to preach. He lays down his cutlery and spreads his hands. – It's all there for people to look at, if they would just care to open their fuckin eyes.⁵⁷⁴

Here Begbie explains the imprisonment of fatherhood and its destructive aspect as he detached himself from his Scottish fatherhood, symbolic of the cannibalistic oedipal structure that ordered both familial and social life.⁵⁷⁵ Challenging morality, the lack of guilt is also the one of *ressentiment*, or the reestablishment of new values towards a vitalistic outcome.⁵⁷⁶ As Cixous argues:

Let's defetishize. Let's get out of the dialectic that claims that the child is its parents' death. This child is the other but the other without violence. The other rhythm, the pure freshness, the possibles' body. Complete fragility. But vastness itself. Let's be done with repeating the litany of castration that transmits and

⁵⁷³ BA, p. 66.

⁵⁷⁴ BA, p. 105.

⁵⁷⁵ AO, p. 80.

⁵⁷⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 104. Hereafter NP.

pedigrees itself. We're not going to back up to go forward anymore. Let's not repress something as simple as wanting to live life itself.⁵⁷⁷

Begbie is only at the beginning of his becoming as he comes back to confront the molar, he admits that he looked too deep into the abyss or in other words, he has not liberated himself from all molar composition, violence stays with him and pulls him back deep into the black hole: 'Don't go back down into the black hole, Frank. Frank Begbie considers this. – Sometimes I wonder if I've ever really left it, John'.⁵⁷⁸

Friendship represents an alternative in Welsh's world to the destructive family unit as Begbie goes deep into the confrontation of violence within his past. Friendship, just like alliances, allows for nonhierarchical relationship and a reformulation of power. Here, friendship is a rhizomatic bond: 'Frank Begbie knew that Mark Renton's gesture was one of solidarity with him. He loved Renton after that, and would have done anything for him. They were inseparable friends. Yet it had gone so bad between them. Drugs. They got Renton, just like they got Sean.'⁵⁷⁹ Welsh reveals that friendship as an alliance can function as affiliation. The relationship between Renton and Begbie is therefore no longer based on fear and retaliation as Renton explains in *Trainspotting* but has arisen from solidarity over institutional violence and humiliation. The place, Scotland, Leith, has corrupted Begbie in molar Beings and Renton was able to escape only on the surface, experiencing State controlled becomings. Therefore, as Begbie has left after Renton, it is natural that he feels connected to Renton again, as he understands what or who was the key for Renton to leave:

– What do you think of that Renton guy now? Frank Begbie seems to consider this, rolls his bottom lip over his top one. – I can see it from his point of view. See that he had to get the fuck out, he acknowledges, his brow furrowed. – It's funny, but he was probably the only real mate I ever had.⁵⁸⁰

The need for departure is tied to the Scottish State replicating toxic masculinity in which women are victims of men, where men are destroying themselves with alcohol, violence and sectarianism. National identity is replicated in the family, as the State represents, is,

⁵⁷⁷ Hélène Cixous, 'Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays', in *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*, ed. by Adam D. Schrift (New York: Routledge, 1997): 148-173. (p. 162).

⁵⁷⁸ BA, p. 190.

⁵⁷⁹ BA, p. 136.

⁵⁸⁰ BA, p. 189.

the Father figure in all his destructive power. Going away is escaping and destroying the father rather than family as the family is set to be rethought by Begbie: his second family, his wife and his girls bring him becomings rather than rooted Beings. Choosing life means for them first and foremost, leaving Scotland and moving to America sets the stage for an unbecoming-Scot, for a becoming-anomalous, a move towards the rhizome, a transient place, where they can be nomads. For Begbie and Renton, choosing is becoming: ‘It’s called choice. Ah chose tae be a bam. Now ah’m choosin no tae be. Simple as that. Ye go tae these meetings and they’re full ay so-called *sober* jakeys, wiring themselves full ay nicotine and caffeine and obsessing about peeve’.⁵⁸¹

Begbie’s perception of Renton’s betrayal therefore comes from the change from alliance to filiation, from becoming-animal to Beings, from equals to hierarchy amongst mates. Renton’s departure caused Begbie’s descent into deeper modes of violence, enclosing him more and more until his prison sentence. Begbie remembers his grandfather and in the following scene, it becomes clear that the nature of Renton’s betrayal changes in Begbie’s eyes; from betrayal in a hierarchical alliance in which Begbie functioned as the Father in the same way of his grandfather to the ‘uncontrollable’ need of departure, breaking ties:

– Ye loved that dug, mind? But it bit ye. Dug couldnae help it. Eh loved ye, but eh still betrayed ye.

I nodded. Viking sank his teeth into my ankle for no reason. We’d been running in Pilrig Park and he just turned oan ays and bit me. Probably got too excited and couldnae control himself.

– Wisnae really the dug’s fault. He took a big drag, blew the smoke oot into the cauld air. – Wis jist his nature. People are like that tae, boy. Thir yir friends... then he bared his teeth at me, - till thir no. ye understand that, pal?⁵⁸²

This extract also echoes the epigraph of the novel, Albert Camus’s ‘Man is the only creature who refuses to be what he is’. Here, Man needs to embrace the dog’s affects and impulses. Contrary to what Begbie’s grandfather is saying, there are no betrayals, only instinct and disconnection. The violence perpetuated throughout generations in a familial criminal organisation Begbie’s grandfather built led him to his imprisonment, following his father and uncles. Therefore Begbie’s experience of ‘betrayal’, that is Renton’s departure,

⁵⁸¹ BA, p. 124.

⁵⁸² BA, p. 194.

led him to extreme outbursts of violence. By embracing a becoming-animal, Begbie can be who he is, devoid of guilt and morality as well as molar identifications. Family is not rejected, but rather, renegotiated in the novel.

Additionally, Begbie's identity was always reified by violence in the novels, indicative of his lack of hesitation in beating his former girlfriend June while pregnant in *Trainspotting*, or in front of their sons in *Porno*: 'Ah pills up heid n she's blow in water n blood oot ay ther nose n thrash in aroond like a fish caught oan a line. Ah hear a voice n that wee Michael's standin in the doorway n eh goes: "What u rye daein tae Mum, Dad?"'⁵⁸³ In *The Blade Artist*, Begbie appears changed. And yet, he is not remorseful for his actions, as he demonstrates to June:

He turns to contemplate her. – I mind I battered you bad a couple ay times. Once when you were expecting him, Frank says. – That was just wrong.

– Christ, it's a bit late tae apologise now!

– Who's apologizing? It was wrong, he accepts, – but I'm not sorry I hurt *you*. I'm just indifferent. Always was. I had no emotional connection to you whatsoever. So can I be sorry.

– Ah'm the mother ay oor...you...June stammers, then explodes, – you've nae emotional connection tae *anybody*!

– Anger is an emotion, Franco says, opening the door and exiting.⁵⁸⁴

Here we see the erasure of family and of childhood through this unimaginable violence directed at women and children. Begbie is determined to break the inheritance of violence by unbecoming the hard-man identity set for him by Welsh and in Leith, which is a project of displacing his violence and hatred upon a different medium: art. For Roy, his displacement of 'white man's rage' was situated in the hunting of the Marabou Stork and the subsequent rape of Kirsty; for Begbie, his displacement takes place in the narcissistic trap of Nietzschean creation, in that of his art or that of his two daughters.⁵⁸⁵ Moreover, his attempt at displacing or deterritorialising himself as the Leith Head or the hardman therefore is a process of rewriting his vision of his new family in the U.S. as a loving venture, albeit in the most simplistic ways:

⁵⁸³ *P*, p. 327.

⁵⁸⁴ *BA*, p. 72.

⁵⁸⁵ *NP*, p. 123.

Then Melanie is in his arms, as they salsa across the floor, to the girls' enchantment. He wants to show his daughters that this is what real men do with their sweethearts – that this rapture, beauty and fun is what they are entitled to expect of love. He is breathing evenly, he is at peace.⁵⁸⁶

This scene testifies of Begbie's seeming unbecoming-father as he attempts to break away from his phallogocentric set of identities. Here, the children are others experiencing no violence, as Cixous explained above; children are not here to murder their parents in the mythic constructions of family, but on the contrary, they allow them to look towards life, to produce new becomings.

At the end of Begbie's investigation, Michael, his second son, will admit to murdering his own brother out of pure jealousy and thus following the example of his father. The fratricide recalls novels such as *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889) by R. L. Stevenson in which Henry murders his eldest brother James in a conflict of jealousy resulting from a polarising rivalry, also inspired by James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). The duality of Jim and Francis Begbie is therefore transposed to his own rejected sons, last remnants of his past:

It seems Sean was prone to mood swings, his life-and-soul-of-the-party flamboyance followed by June's brand of broken resignation, which made him an ideal candidate for junk's levelling ministrations. Michael, on the other hand, looks like he's picked up some of Franco's own brooding aggression. It's hard for him to work out who landed the worst inheritance. Once would be bent out of shape, then crushed by the world, offering no resistance to the heroin-and alcohol-soaked street. The other would attempt to bend it to his will, then be broken by it.⁵⁸⁷

The drama of the situation also relies on the inescapability of violence as Francis looks in his son's eyes and sees the same violence and rage he witnessed in his grandfather:

Francis once again sees his grandfather in his son's face, sees the macabre, spectral revenge of the old man, here in the docks. Indeed, under the thin light from above, Michael looks an incorporeal force, and Frank Begbie is stunned into silence. [...]

⁵⁸⁶ BA, p. 196.

⁵⁸⁷ BA, pp. 64-5.

Yes, it had been Michael who was originally the sweet wee lad, while Sean was the terror. Sean had bullied his younger sibling in much the same way Joe had with him, and Franco had been moved to dispense the traditional Begbie advice. But now Michael has taken this retribution to a new level. Francis Begbie pulls air into his lungs, regards his creation.⁵⁸⁸

The ghost of the grandfather in Michael's look is highly symbolic as it is the same ghost of the Father, the ghost of male power, of the State, coming back to haunt those trying to escape it. Rather, Begbie tells us we need to confront the paternal, instead of burying it at the image of James burial in *The Master of Ballantrae*. The ghost of the grandfather is also Begbie's ghost of his past which he has not resolved completely. Once again, Begbie stares at the abyss as he contemplates his creation, the destruction of his sons' becomings: Begbie stares into the horror of Man of the Father, of the Beings he has passed on, as Begbie tries to respond to Michael's homophobia towards his later brother: 'Michael screams in his face, - DINNAE GIES THAT SHITE! YOU TAUGHT AYS THAT! YOU! You said that they wir aw sick, diseased perverts!'⁵⁸⁹ This scene compelled Begbie to reflect and reject his former self, unable to recognise himself, making him aware of his becomings:

He'd considered homosexuals to be perverts and paedophiles, and yelled at them, spilling his roaring, demented bile in the street's full daylight. The terrified men quickly sought refuge in the bar. He remembers that the boys were scared too, or rather Michael was. Why? Why had he done that? Why had he been so twisted with poison? Why was it what strangers did *mattered* so much to him? Now in California, he and Melanie have gay colleagues and neighbours, and there's Ralph and Juan, who had become close friends.⁵⁹⁰

Confronted with the paternal figure of his son, Begbie finds it harder to resist the abyss as he feels himself being pulled back into a world of violent Beings: '– Well, that wisnae right... Franco can feel his words flop lamely out of his mouth. He is aware that he is soaked, stinking of piss, and that he needs to be home. *California. Melanie*'.⁵⁹¹ California, for Begbie, represents his becoming, becoming-woman, becoming-other as the image of

⁵⁸⁸ BA, pp. 241-2.

⁵⁸⁹ BA, p. 240.

⁵⁹⁰ BA, pp. 240-1.

⁵⁹¹ BA, p. 241.

the ocean and Eve in his arms from the opening line of the book comes back: California is the semiotic *chora* of the maternal and the feminine.⁵⁹²

California is, most importantly for Begbie, another New World, like Roy's South Africa. As he left Scotland and the deeply engrained circles of violence, Begbie traverses lines of flight and their becomings throughout his transformation into an artist. In doing so, Begbie seemingly challenges the gendered production of the Scottish State and the British Empire in order to move towards the end of hegemonic construction of masculinity. The confrontation with the paternal, with the horror of *man* is also about confronting History as we have seen in the previous chapter:

Bearing witness to his son's brutal, animal rage like being shown a 3D movie of his younger self in action. History repeated itself. The 'don't do the things I did' mantra was tiresome pish. The best way to make sure your children don't grow up as cunts is not to be one yourself – or not to let them *see* you being one. This is easier as a sober artist in Santa Barbara than as an alcoholic jailbird in Leith.⁵⁹³

Here, Begbie articulates that a patrilineal discourse of family is no different from the vicious production of majoritarian, hegemonic History:

– Only family are worth it, even the ones ye dinnae really like that much.
 - For sure, Tyrone agrees.
 - Funny how a prime minister can condemn a whole generation ay bairns tae a future ay poverty, or gie the order tae wipe out Iraqi women and children in a phoney war, and they cunts get described as *great men ay history*, Begbie muses.
 Then he laughs. – The likes ay you and me, we take oot a few radges that naebody misses, just fuckin pests tae their ain community, and we're the big villains.⁵⁹⁴

Therefore, in challenging the reproduction of History and its proliferation of violent men, Begbie's critique of Fatherhood, no matter how fraught, strikes the reader as sincere. Fatalistic, pessimistic, yet genuine. This then means that what one views as Begbie's attempt 'to make his future female' can be read as his way of reconciling with himself as a killer and the embodiment of that which he hates: 'the big villains' of Scotland.

⁵⁹² For more on the *chora*, see Kelly Oliver's *Kristeva and Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 48.

⁵⁹³ *BA*, p. 248.

⁵⁹⁴ *BA*, pp. 253-4.

However, any experience of unbecoming-Scot or of becoming-woman that Begbie purports to have in the novel must be viewed sceptically, like in *Marabou Stork Nightmares*. As an unreliable narrator who continually returns to his awful habits of killing men in the name of family and his own reputation, Begbie's self-othering as Father of Love over Father of Law serves as his inability to make peace with the violence of the molar composition of Man, which he perpetuates and enjoys throughout all of the novels. While readers may think he is reformed, Renton's hesitation to view him as such is reflected in his own observations at the end of *Dead Men's Trousers*. Begbie might even appear as a feminist to some, unable to watch violent pornography anymore, seemingly becoming wise to the awful nature of phallic violence, especially directed to women since now he has two daughters of his own. And yet, for all of these moments of what one might term as growth or maturation, of becoming and unbecoming, Begbie, like Terry as described in Chapter Two, is still a symptom of the sins of his father and himself as father. While Welsh obsesses on truth and reconciliation as the solution to the painful cycles of violence within his universe, he too reveals that Begbie has yet to unbecome anything – until he can truly face the Molar entity of Man and all of its truly horrifying rage and fury, can he find peace, Welsh seems to say in *The Blade Artist*.

The End of the Line?: The Last Lawsons, Williamsons, and Begbies of Edinburgh

As the Welshian mantra 'choosing life' echoes throughout his works, so too does it situate Begbie's attempted escape from the authority of Fatherhood as a choice of ending life, or at least, of ending the life of his patrilineal namesake, the end of the Begbies and the rise of the Francises. While it might be too seductive to define Begbie as the post-patriarchal, reformed man who has opened to the possibility of becoming-woman, Welsh does not allow Begbie to escape what he has not yet faced: his own oedipal contributions to a cycle of paternal alienation and patrilineal neglect. What is revealed in *The Blade Artist* is that Begbie – in a literal oedipal move – does not acknowledge his sons to avoid what he reveals is the self-perpetuating violence of his own existence as a glorified serial killer. In avoiding what he views as the fatalistic future of all-male Begbies propagating and killing off the entirety of Edinburgh, he challenges fate by ignoring his role as a caretaker as much as the authority figure he so terrifically despises. Like a modern Laius who left Oedipus exposed in the wilderness after learning from an oracle that he would kill him and take Thebes, so too does Begbie leave both his sons exposed to the violent winds of precarity, poverty, and the sectarian wilderness of Leith. Begbie is no real anti-oedipal character, no

matter how much he would like readers of his Californian awakening to believe. Even still, with two girls, his violent tendencies still exist, and are even latently displaced in his daughter Eve, as Renton notices at the end of *Dead Men's Trouser*:

Heading towards us, along the sand, is the artist-formerly-known-as-psychopathic, his wife and his two wee girls, one ay whom – the youngest yin – has a definite Daughter-ay-Begbie edge. At her urging, probably for the umpteenth time, he hoists her into the air, to her rapture.⁵⁹⁵

Even Eve has the 'Begbie edge', an edge as sharp as the knives Begbie wields as skilfully as an artist, and as a modern-day Edinburgh Jack the Ripper. Whether or not Renton's comment may be viewed as an innocuous or revelatory detail, the scene still indicates how Begbie's oedipal break from Sean and Michael was not revolutionary, but a sadly typical form of destructive patriarchal neglect, which Welsh indicates may affect Eve and Grace later in their lives. Begbie's killings in *The Blade Artist* and *Dead Men's Trousers* reveals that Franco has not changed, no matter how much he attempts to use his blades for sculptures or for the construction of a new identity as Jim Francis. Begbie is unreformed, and for Welsh, he is the quintessential figure of the self-perpetuating violence of the patriarchy, masking the scars of his neglect with the reconstitution of the bourgeois family in California, which feels more feminine, feels less vicious at first, but is simply another detonation point waiting to erupt over time.

We see these similar themes of paternal alienation and patrilineal extinction throughout the Welshverse, especially in *A Decent Ride* in which Terry, following the steps of his father Henry Lawson in *Glue*, abandons his children outright to deny the authority and responsibility of paternity. Terry, like Begbie, serves as the allegory for Welsh's end of patrilineal Scots as he refuses to endorse the role of father to the extent of ending his patrilineal name, which carries the weight of the horror of fatherhood that he experienced from his father: 'But I'm aw for Guillaume n the Ginger Bastard keepin their mas' surnames. Feminism, but ay [...] they wanted tae keep thum, ay, so thir here, nah've nae complaints, jist as long as the name Lawson's kept oaf the certificates'.⁵⁹⁶ As he tries to make amends and reform half-way through the novel, his oldest son reassures him: 'You were my best friend and the best big brother I could have wished for. And believe you me,

⁵⁹⁵ *DMT*, p. 419.

⁵⁹⁶ *ADR*, p. 33.

that was exactly what I needed right then'.⁵⁹⁷ Through Terry, Welsh articulates ways to escape the internalised violence of the family and the father figure which destroyed Andrew Galloway in *Glue* which left a scar in Terry's mind and approach to family. Therefore, running away from his responsibility was a way for Terry to cope and to live his libertine life in Scotland and avoiding the pitfalls of the 'white man's rage' and its oedipal duplication. Terry, aware of his limitation or rather his inability to endorse such a destructive role, prefers to be a friend, a brother to his sons in order to break the cycle of paternal alienation. Terry is one example out of many in Welsh's novels, yet it marks the beginning of a call for the end of the Lawson, the Williamson, the Renton, and the Begbie: the end of the line.

In *Dead's Men Trousers*, Sick Boy, also known as Simon David Williamson, goes back to London from his trip to Edinburgh and meets with his son Ben, introduced in *Porno*. Following the disaster of his relationship with his son's mum, Simon had barely managed to maintain a relationship with his son. Now older, Simon still struggles to find a balance between his aversion to fatherhood and a healthy relationship with his son. As he enters the bar and sits next to his son, Ben reveals the reason why he asked his dad to meet with him in central London:

- I told you I was seeing somebody.
- Aye, this wee bird you're knocking off, you sly –
- It's not a *bird*...he pauses, – it's a bloke. I'm gay. I have a boyfriend, and he spits the word out, indicating how he resolves a certain issue I now presume he has to contend regularly with. [...]

But all I feel is a warm, relieved glow. While I never saw this coming I'm absolutely delighted, as I've always secretly hoped for a gay son. I would have hated to have that heteroshagger competitive thing that my dad had with me.⁵⁹⁸

For Simon, hearing the news of his son's homosexuality becomes a relief as it signals Ben's removal from the arena of heterosexual competition that his father has revelled in throughout his entire life, noted in *Skagboys* but also in a couple of scenes from *T2 Trainspotting*, situating Renton as his sexual rival. Like Begbie, however, Sick Boy's reaction is entirely too narcissistic and entirely patriarchal, a response that is overcorrected for relief: a relief not in knowing that his son is able to come out to his homophobic father,

⁵⁹⁷ *ADR*, p. 311.

⁵⁹⁸ *DMT*, p. 181.

but rather, a relief in viewing Ben as the end of the line of the Williamsons, the key to Simon's paternal anxieties of castration through oedipal competition. What is perhaps most disturbing about this seemingly inclusive, accepting, and progressive scene is that Simon, like Begbie to his daughters, displaces his oedipal relations by reducing and othering his child's gender and sexual orientation as a way to wipe away his vocal homophobia. Begbie has daughters, so he cannot enjoy violent pornography or engage in daily domestic violence anymore. Sick Boy has a gay son, so he attempts to live vicariously through the stereotypes of queerness as a radical undermining of the heteronormative bourgeoisie that he cannot help but hate:

If you're gay, just be a *proper fucking poof*, would be my advice. [...] Be a lispng, gossipng, flamboyant, outrageous, scandalous queen! Don't be a suburban Charlie with a boyfriend called Tom, with whom you go kayaking at the weekends. Ram strangers in toilets! OD on Oscar Wilde! [...] I don't want you guys squandering your gift of homosexuality on dating apps, mortgage brokers, estate agents, architects, adoption papers, meeting with surrogate single hoors who will take you to the cleaners, and arguments about fucking fabrics!⁵⁹⁹

Simon's response is entirely alienating, even if it seems jocular at best. In associating his own limited vision of queerness in the image of the outlandish and rebellious 'punk' of the 1970s,⁶⁰⁰ he signals a misunderstanding of Ben's articulation of minoritarianism as a way to lampoon conformity by self-othering his class for Ben's sexual orientation. What is curious about this is that Simon perfectly embodies the conformity of what he despises, indicated by his attempts at transforming a brothel in London into an exclusive escort service where the sex workers are encouraged to have completed MBA degrees, so to appear as corporately suited for the high-paying corporate clientele, as Simon reminds the reader while explaining his business acumen to Terry: 'Nothing says success like having bright and gorgeous associates. Thirty-two percent of our girls are MBAs'.⁶⁰¹

While the problem of marginalising and othering Ben's sexuality can simply be described as ignorance and bigotry masked as liberal inclusiveness, it is important to note that Simon signals the crisis of capital in queer communities, which, as Peter Drucker

⁵⁹⁹ *DMT*, pp. 369-70.

⁶⁰⁰ For more on the relationship between punk's origins in London and New York, and the rise of LGBTQ activism, see Tavia Nyong'o's essay 'Do You Want Queer Theory (Or Do You Want The Truth)?: Intersections of Punk and Queer in the 1970s', in Donald Hall and Annamarie Jagose (eds), *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2013): 223-35.

⁶⁰¹ *DMT*, p. 47.

writes, is attributed to consumer capitalism's attempt at normalising gay men and women under post-industrial neoliberalism, whereby '[t]he rise of homonormativity by no means implies that the larger societies are less heteronormative; on the contrary, homonormativity reflects and adapts to the heterosexual norm'.⁶⁰² Furthermore, just as Begbie attempts to deterritorialise himself as the hardman in his art, his wife Melanie, and his daughters in California, Simon seeks to deterritorialise himself as the schemie, the successful product of the entrepreneurial class of the Thatcher era, designed exclusively for social mobility and the proliferation of individualism and greed, as Simon clearly states: 'Let's enjoy the benefits of neoliberalism before it goes tits-up, finally detonating this wretched planet from under our feet'.⁶⁰³

By wishing that his son does not fall for the bourgeois conformity of the neoliberal social order, which he even describes is defined by consumption (sex and drugs, mainly for him), his remarks about homonormativity stand opposed to the traditional nuclear family, which reflects both Terry and Begbie's attempts to kill the patrilineal line *in name only*. No matter how problematised this scene is, it is hard not to see that Simon has not changed from Sick Boy in the twenty years that have passed in the novels, just as Juice never grew into a thoughtful Terry, or Begbie never knew how to become Jim Francis properly as a reformed psychopath turned artist. Like Terry and Begbie, Sick Boy has yet to come to terms with sticking it out, 'staying with the trouble' as Donna Haraway says,⁶⁰⁴ and resisting the insidious nature of neoliberal capitalism, which like all three characters, induces complacency and complicity in the most easily vulnerable, perpetuating a new class of victims: the poisoned children of Leith.

The Redemption of the Murphys and the Rentons: Towards a Radical Ethics of Care

Welsh's pessimism of a post-patrilineal and post-reproductive future of Scotland is not what characterises the most important elements of *Dead Men's Trousers*, however. Starting and ending with the tale of Spud's tragic death, Welsh's novel demands a more nuanced approach to his anger and frustration with the propagation of the 'big villains' of Scotland, those like Terry, Sick Boy, and Begbie. In the previous chapters, Welsh's solutions often echo the ethical demands of truth and reconciliation, a political buzzword that simply

⁶⁰² Peter Drucker, *Warped: Gay Normality and Queer Anti-Capitalism* (Boston: Brill, 2015), p. 220.

⁶⁰³ *DMT*, p. 51.

⁶⁰⁴ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Cthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), p. 2.

blends together the Levinasian ethics of the Other with Marxian liberation politics (and even theologies) of the 1970s with metaphors of familial and social forgiveness.⁶⁰⁵ In a similar way in *Dead Men's Trousers*, Welsh undermines his initial polemic of the lineage of the broken patriarchal Scot by speaking through alternative family models that do not seem so alternative, indicative of the Murphys and the Rentons. At Spud's funeral, his son Andrew gives a stirring speech that Simon comments may be 'a bit too close to communism for the old priest, [who is] decidedly *not* a liberation theologian'.⁶⁰⁶ Welsh, speaking through Andrew, demands truth and reconciliation between sons and fathers, the poor and labour, and the broken families that must rewrite their positions as supportive and caring institutions rather than replicative forces of the State and its ISAs:

My dad wanted to work. But he had no skills or qualifications. It was important to him that I got an education. I did. Now I'm a lawyer. [...] Andrew Murphy changes the mood. – And in a few years, maybe five, maybe ten, I'll be as redundant as he ever was. The lawyer will be gone, like the labourer before him. Made obsolete by big data and artificial intelligence. What will I do? Well, then I'll find out just how much like him I am. And what will I say to my child, he points at his girlfriend, her belly swollen, - in twenty years' time, when there are no labourers' or lawyers' jobs? Do we have a game plan for all this, other than wrecking our planet in order to give away all its wealth to the super-rich? My father's life was wasted, and yes, a lot of it was his own fault. Still more of it was the fault of the system we've created. [...] What is the measure of a life? Is it how much they've loved and been loved? The good deeds they've done? The great art they've produced? Or is it the money they've made or stolen or accumulated? The power they've exerted over others? The lives they've negatively impacted upon, cut short or seem a really old man, because we'll all start dying again before we reach fifty.⁶⁰⁷

What Welsh introduces in this speech is the sincerest social and political statement made in all of his novels: the most radical move against capital is to *care and live* for one another. While it is cloaked in a critique of neoliberalism and the rise of automation, Andrew is not angry with his father, nor is he resentful about how Spud was unable to overcome the

⁶⁰⁵ For more on Emmanuel Lévinas and his relationship to liberation politics, theology, and history, see Brian Schroeder's *Altared Ground: Levinas, History, Violence* (New York: Routledge, 1996) and Simon Critchley's *Ethics, Politics, Subjectivity: Essays on Derrida, Levinas and Contemporary French Thought* (London: Verso, 1999).

⁶⁰⁶ *DMT*, p. 350.

⁶⁰⁷ *DMT*, pp. 348-9.

systematic destruction of his working-class community. Andrew acknowledges Spud as the best father that he could be in what is the most impossible situation. In trying his best by caring for his future, Spud gave Andrew a chance, perhaps unlike the perpetuation of Begbie or Sick Boy's own terrors and fears that have become instilled in their children. The Murphys, while just another patrilineal Scots-Irish working-class family, are surviving, living as well as one can, and seeing the world as it is: one gargantuan machine that consumes and breaks every element of life that challenges its powers of reification, in the State or in capital. Awoken to the violence of neoliberal consumption and the ruthless poisoning of the planet, Andrew critiques the nihilism of Simon, and in doing so, is labelled a communist, a political outsider, an idealist.

Here is Welsh's most profound model of redemption in all of his novels: rather than hacking off the patrilineal head of the State or the genitals of the great white men of History (Roy, Begbie's sons, etc.), Welsh (through Andrew) articulates that the reformation of the family must begin through truth and reconciliation. In addition to truth and reconciliation, Welsh too sees that there also needs to be a conscious normalisation of care that must be woven into each differing family unit so that they may grow beyond the confines of their social and filial ensnaring. Welsh turns to the Rentons as the most redemptive model for the filial version of what Carol Gilligan refer to as 'the ethics of care', which she describes is formed in the tensions of hierarchy and power defined by the institution of family itself:

The experiences of inequality and interconnection, inherent in the relation of parent and child, then give rise to the ethics of justice and care, the ideals of human relationship – the vision that self and other will be treated as equal worth, that despite difference in power, things will be fair; the vision that everyone will be responded to and included, that no one will be left alone or hurt. These disparate visions in their tension reflect the paradoxical truth of human experience – that we know ourselves as separate insofar as we live in connection with others, and that we experience relationship only insofar as we differentiate other from self.⁶⁰⁸

Importantly, what makes the Rentons far more radical as a family unit is the necessity of facing otherness in their children as a way to normalise the regime of care, specifically because Mark Renton's brother Wee Davie had cystic fibrosis and was intensely impaired by autism. Since Mark's eldest brother Billy dies fighting in the Irish Troubles, and his

⁶⁰⁸ Gilligan, pp. 62-3.

parents had to work, he was responsible for taking care of Davie, as mentioned previously in Chapter Three. Importantly, just as Welsh writes off the patrilineal lines of the Lawson, the Williamson, and the Begbie families, he also complicates the Renton family by granting Mark an autistic son named Alex. Thus, the Rentons, unlike the many other working-class families of Leith, had no choice but to survive post-industrial capital for the sake of those most vulnerable, like Davie and Alex. Reformed by necessity it seems, the Rentons are described in *Skagboys* by Mark as a modest family with simple ambitions, that at the time, a young Renton could not understand: ‘My ma and dad’s aspirations were decent. Ah fuckin hated that word. It made my skin crawl. But they cared’.⁶⁰⁹ Mark here, frustrated with his fears of replicating a nuclear family as a university student, equally lampoons and celebrates his family, who faced incredible loss with the death of Billy and of Davie. Yet, what sticks out in this quote is not Mark’s disgust of the domestic simplicity resembling the bourgeoisie, but his reconciliation with the fact that unlike the families of those he grew up around, his parents actively cared for their children. Following Gilligan’s establishment of the ethics of care in the family, Virginia Held also writes that the necessity of caring for the most vulnerable, including the disabled, is an incredibly reformative reimagining of the family, one that might challenge the social replication of the family in its reproduction of capital as much as its reinforcement of State ISAs:

It makes good sense, I think, to see care as primary in the family. What matters most are the caring relations that sustain the family as a provider of care without which infants do not survive or children grow. Care seems the most basic moral value, as basic as the value of life. There can be no human life or families without the actual practice of care, but we need to recognize *the value* of such care to properly understand this most basic practice. There can be care without justice, but there can be no justice without the care that has value.⁶¹⁰

In this theory of the ethics of care, the value of care is understood not as a duty, but as a desire to affirm life, as opposed to confirm death. In the case of Begbie and Sick Boy (and the State that they represent), neither character cares about care. The violence they inflict on the world confirms a nihilistic celebration of neoliberalism, a bleak acceptance of the end of humanity that allows Begbie to kill and Sick Boy to profit. The terror of Welsh’s

⁶⁰⁹ *S*, p. 172.

⁶¹⁰ Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 134.

works is perhaps in the realisation that choosing life is not a mere neoliberal demand to experience life beyond boredom, but rather, it is an existential call to preserve life, amidst the most impossible odds of survival, like Mark does for Wee Davie. This is what Haraway refers to as the vitalism of ‘making-kin’, a way of surviving the violent ends of not only postmodern or neoliberal capitalism, of post-industrialism, but of humanity itself: ‘The restoration and care of corridors, of connection, is a central task of the communities; it is how they imagine and practice repair of ruined lands and waters and their critters, human and not’.⁶¹¹ Welsh similarly describes the necessity for restoring care and the need for a rhizomatic truth and reconciliation, as he writes detailing Renton’s acceptance of choosing life over propagating life, of choosing the vitalism of the rhizome over the rooted decay of the tree while thinking of Wee Davie:

N ah’m sittin here in this hotel bar aware thit it’s aw bullshit. Tracin a line fae Wee Davie tae aw this; the junk habit, the soon-tae-be-single status when Fiona walks through that door. Cause Sick Boy, Matty, Spud, they nivir hud a Wee Davie. Nivir needed yin tae git oan the gear. Ma big brar, Billy, he hud yin, but he’s nivir even smoked a joint. Cunts that try and psychoanalyse the fucked-up miss the crucial point: sometimes ye jist dae it cause it’s thaire n that’s wey ye are Ah watched my mother and father tear themselves apart and rip each other’s family trees up at the roots, trying tae work oot where all Wee Davie’s bad genes came fae. But in the end, they grew tae accept that it doesnae matter. It just *is*.⁶¹²

Here, Renton articulates his parent’s care as an alternative to the guilt of linearity, causality and filiation, advocating the acceptance of a rhizomatic life, a tearing up of ‘a classification or genealogical tree’, whereby the rhizome ‘is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something; neither is it regressing-progressing; neither is it corresponding, establishing corresponding relations; neither is it producing, producing a filiation or producing through filiation’.⁶¹³ In doing so, Mark also is able to assess how choosing life and its affirmative qualities in care is not only a rhizomatic act, but it is a political act that challenges the logic of what Achille Mbembé refers to as the everyday experience of ‘necropolitics’, an updated revision of Michel Foucault’s famous concept of biopolitics.⁶¹⁴ By accepting care over the sovereignty of life, the Rentons regime of care resists the brutal ways in which the

⁶¹¹ Haraway, p. 140.

⁶¹² *S*, p. 183.

⁶¹³ *ATP*, p. 279.

⁶¹⁴ Achille Mbembé, ‘Necropolitics’, trans. by Libby Meintjes, in *Public Culture* 15.1 (Winter 2003): 11-40.

State systematically reproduces its power (sovereignty) in the killing of specific groups of minor communities, either through slavery,⁶¹⁵ colonial occupation,⁶¹⁶ infrastructural warfare,⁶¹⁷ police violence,⁶¹⁸ State-celebrated martyrdom,⁶¹⁹ political suicides,⁶²⁰ or social neglect.⁶²¹ Note that the Rentons have faced the violence of all of these elements of *necropower* (except presumably slavery) with Billy's death marked by the colonial history of Ireland and the violence of sectarian martyrdom, and the other elements of necropower that follow in its retributory wake, as Welsh reminds us as early as his first novel:

His death wis conceived by these orange cunts, comin through every July wi thir sashes and flutes, fillin Billy's stupid heid wi nonsense about crown and country n aw that shite. They'll go hame chuffed fae the day. They can tell aw thir mates about how one ay the family died, murdered by the IRA, while defending Ulster. It'll fuel thir pointless anger, git thum bought drinks in pubs, and establish thir doss-bastard credibility wi other sectarian arseholes.⁶²²

Beyond a mere refutation of martyrdom, Mark's desire to choose life also translates into his desire to reunite his son Alex, who is at an institution in Amsterdam, with him and Mark's father. In *Dead Men's Trousers*, Mark arrives with Alex, and the reunification of the vitalistic Rentons redefines the way forward in the communities that have been wracked by death and exploitation, scarred by the violence of necropolitics and neoliberalism. In the scene, Welsh reminds the reader that unlike Begbie and Sick Boy, Renton does not desire to repopulate his line as a way to grow beyond himself, extending the roots of filiation as means of his own desire for renewal. Instead, Welsh highlights how the reunion of three generations of Rentons is bound by his desire to care indefinitely for his aging father and his autistic son, motivated by love and life, rather than law or duty:

Alex obviously reminds the old man ay Wee Davie. He's indulgent with him, more than I am, certainly more than I ever was ay my wee brother. I hated all the gob, snot, shit, pish, sound and general radge behaviour that emanated from him; saw Davie as little mair than a human excrement factory, designed tae facilitate ma

⁶¹⁵ Mbembé, p. 21.

⁶¹⁶ Mbembé p. 27.

⁶¹⁷ Mbembé, p. 29.

⁶¹⁸ Mbembé, p. 29.

⁶¹⁹ Mbembé, p. 35.

⁶²⁰ Mbembé, p. 37.

⁶²¹ Mbembé, p. 40.

⁶²² *T*, pp. 278-9.

constant social embarrassment on the streets of Leith. Never got how the old man could stand it. Well, that's one ay the benefits ay developing a thick skin. I've learned to accept it all, even love it, in my own kid, not that he's as clarty or as full spectrum as my brother was. He's never gaunny play for Hibs, though, or front a happening band, or, saddest of all, know the rapture ay making love wi somebody. But he's never gaunny be a skagheid, or spend his adult life having to babysit DJs. Most of all, he'll live wi the sun in his face as long as there's a breath in my body.⁶²³

In Mark Renton's construction of *any-community-whatever* (wherever), his own queered, alternative family, he challenges the superficial reterritorialising of the neoliberal family that Begbie and Sick Boy engage with, as mentioned in the earlier sections.⁶²⁴ Welsh emphasises the utopian vision of a family bound by the respect and care for one another, as much as the blending of filiation with alliances, additionally noted by the inclusion of his friends and his girlfriend, Victoria, who does not want children of her own:

We make an odd quartet, me, Vicky, Alex and the old boy. Fishing off Santa Monica Pier, catching zero wi our solitary cheapo rod, compared tae mair dedicated anglers with their specialist equipment and bait. But this is about nothing mair than being together.⁶²⁵

Learning both from his family (which fell apart after the death of Wee Davie), as well as his experiences of becoming-skag, becoming-woman, and unbecoming-Scot, Mark Renton becomes the Welshian archetype of renewal and life, a character that often does the right thing, is referred to as a 'nice guy' constantly by others in the novels, and maintains the welfare of the communities that he is stuck with as much as the ones he chooses to be a part of. It is because of Renton's dedication to care that Welsh's work is able to find light

⁶²³ *DMT*, p. 417.

⁶²⁴ My use of 'any-community-whatever' is a Deleuzian phrase that describes the possibilities of the production of an unknowable assemblage, something existentially new in its formulations, even in the slightest difference of its becoming. As Nick Davis writes, "This locution of the 'any-whatever' that Deleuze introduces [in his works...]" highlights the virtual prospects of challenging false images or clichés of newness, i.e., the foundations of the homonormative queer family. The Rentons' radical nature is in their ability to bind anyone that comes into contact with them, especially those who are vulnerable, and in need of care, thus, forming a community that has yet to exist in that specific context. The production of this any-community-whatever is a Deleuzian formulation that as Davis concludes, articulates the construction of non-binary possibilities or causalities, 'so as to distinguish philosophical essences from false idealizations': from *The Desiring-Image: Gilles Deleuze and Contemporary Queer Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 19.

⁶²⁵ *DMT*, p. 417.

in the dark, or at least some seed of renewal in the poisoned wastelands of post-industrial Scotland. In choosing life, Welsh challenges the ontological primacy of violence and death in neoliberal capitalism, or the essence of national identity as defined in Chapter Five. In doing so, he affirms the possibility that, once we face what Mbembe refers to as our contemporary *death-worlds*, or the ‘new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*’, we can then face a new regime of renewal in granting the value of care and of life back to the living dead, to the ones who fell through the cracks, and to the ones we lost along the way, as The Proclaimers’ famous song ‘Sunshine on Leith’ (1988) – the victory song of the Hibernian F.C. ‘Hibs’, and the Catholic funeral song used at Spud’s wake – symbolises in Welsh’s work: ‘Your beauty and kindness / Made tears clear my blindness / While I’m worth my room on this earth / I will be with you’.⁶²⁶

⁶²⁶ The Proclaimers, Reid, C. & Reid, C. ‘Sunshine on Leith’, in *Sunshine on Leith*, Chrysalis Records Ltd, (1988). For a discussion of Welsh’s affiliation with Hibernian FC: John Kelly and Alan Bairner, ‘The “talk o’ the toon”? An Examination of the Heart of Midlothian and Hibernian Football Rivalry in Edinburgh, Scotland’, *Soccer & Society* 19, 5-6 (2018): 657-672, esp. 666-7.

Conclusion: Irvine and Me

Throughout the entire doctoral thesis, I have attempted to illustrate that the writing of Irvine Welsh is minor, eternally minor in its *usage* of the Leith vernacular, its Marxism and its vision of a community yet to (un)become. It is not only Spud's voice that crackles through the pages and screams out to the reader; Welsh speaks in a tongue of thousands of minor voices in the world that would not get to speak and would disappear without a sound if it were not for his attuned ear to their everyday plight. Just like Renton, Welsh too finds the value in giving life to the minor, giving them a voice. As he reflects on his life in Miami, Welsh sees in the city an Ellis Island, a city of migrants – many deemed 'illegal, alien' in their own homes – where the perspective of the migrant, getting off the boat, is as relevant as anybody else's: they too deserve a voice, a life.⁶²⁷ In a global era of intense hostility to the minor (the worker, the woman, the migrant, the child, the homeless) throughout the world, especially in Trump's America and an increasingly right-wing Europe, it is in these nomadic voices that Welsh articulates for those who cannot speak, write or share their stories. As we have seen at the beginning of this thesis, Spud the nomadologist, Renton and Begbie the artists-philosophers, and Sick-Boy (now the Lost-Boy) are no longer waiting for a train in the middle of nowhere on an empty platform; they have told their story out of History. By presenting Spud and Renton as authors, Welsh shows the drifting potential of the minor voices. Renton does not use Spud so as to get rich by 'stealing' his novel at the end of *Dead Men's Trousers*; he instead recognises himself in Spud, recognises his voice for the first time. It is his, too.

Spud's voice is not only Renton's voice, or Welsh's voice for that matter. It is also my voice, and the voices of my brothers. When I began to read Irvine Welsh, I was a student at the Sorbonne-Nouvelle University in Paris, commuting everyday between Mitry-Claye and Gare du Nord, experiencing two different worlds, which produced a palpable sense of alienation in the viciously segregated urban jungle of Paris, as well as in the striated halls of the Sorbonne, which privileged the dominant, male, bourgeoisie voice of the Parisian intellectual tradition. Studying in Paris, I felt exactly like Spud, innocent until proven. The sudden experience of elitism, classism and misogyny at university started with the way I talked, my vocabulary; a mixture of argotic phrases, *verlan*, and Breton words that picked up from my parents and my grandmother, the last Breton speaker of our family,

⁶²⁷ Laurent Goumarre, 'Le Rendez-vous avec Irvine Welsh', *France Culture*, (29 April 2014) <<https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/le-rendez-vous/le-rdv-du-290414-avec-irvine-welsh-michel-gondry-et-la-session-de-sophie>> [accessed 15/05/14]

and the people I grew up with between Bobigny and Claye-Souilly in the north of Paris. I realised little by little the difference in upbringing and education of my classmates in Paris, and the way I grew up. Just like Welsh, I do not see my own voice in a standardised language, a dominant Parisian French. Like Spud entering the library in Edinburgh, I was conscious that I did not have a voice, and yet I was fighting a system that was designed to make me remain silent and slowly foreclosing my future and the future of my brothers. When I was young, I saw family members rendered obsolete, working in the factories in Brittany, making sandwiches, phones and cars, like in any industrial hinterland. One by one, they had ‘to retire’ early as the factories were closing down. My dad was able to keep his job until 2014, as the Aulnay-sous-Bois car factory (Peugeot, Citroën, DS, Opel and Vauxhall brands) that he had been working at for the most of his life finally closed down. As I am fully aware that I am extremely lucky to see my parents now living comfortably after years of trying to make ends meet, I cannot help but think about the future of my brothers in an era where global neoliberal capitalism is being challenged in the streets of Paris and is fiercely and steadily making ground for the destruction of liberal democracies, the suffocating reality of precarity, and a polarised political climate that has left many confused, angry, and terrified. In writing about Renton’s experience in the battle of Orgreave as the end of the union in the face of institutional violence and repression as well as opening the pathway for the unhinged release of neoliberal policies in the U.K., I could see the same ‘end of an era’ for the French *gilets jaunes*. Here, I shared Toni Negri’s worries towards the French State’s use of repressive violence against its own citizens. A fascism disguised under a ‘*Make Our Planet Great Again*’.⁶²⁸

In all of these experiences, and those of my families and my communities, the voices of Welsh’s novels rang true to me: the voices of Spud, Renton, Nikki, Nina and Kelly stuck to my experience as a woman, coming from a working-class family who did not feel French, nor *Bretonne*, nor Parisian. Therefore, this thesis sought to read Welsh for what he is for me: a writer who speaks minor, speaks for the minor and challenges the Major forces in our world that are ensnared in the wickedness of Capital and the blindness of political disappointment. I hope this thesis will convince more readers to read his work not as ‘non-Scottish’, but as the unbecoming Scot that he is, or as *the Scot abroad* as R. L. Stevenson beautifully described in his eponymous essay. Reading *Trainspotting* had the same effect on me as reading for the first time Faïza Guène’s *Kiffe Kiffe Demain* (2004), a

⁶²⁸ Toni Negri, ‘Les gilets jaunes sont à la mesure de l’écroulement de la politique’ interview by Amélie Poinssot in *Médiapart* (29 January 2019) <<https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/290119/toni-negri-les-gilets-jaunes-sont-la-mesure-de-l-ecroulement-de-la-politique?onglet=full>> [accessed 30/01/2019]

short novel from the perspective of Doria, a fourteen years old French girl of Moroccan origins living in the *banlieue* of Paris with her mother. She shares with us her own voice, a deterritorialisation of French as she uses a mixture of *verlan*, Moroccan Arabic words and argotic words, a language that felt almost exactly like mine. As she narrates her everyday life, we hear the voices of the people of her neighbourhood through her experience of poverty and precarity and her feeling of unbelonging. As she evolves and connects with the community around her, she starts flying, she becomes-woman. *Kiffe-kiffe demain*, drawing from the Arabic phrase *kif-kif* meaning same old ('same old' or 'so and so') becomes at the end *kiffe-kiffe* from the verb *kiffer* in *verlan* French, meaning 'to have fun' and 'to love something'. Following her becoming-woman, she chooses to *kiffe* tomorrow, to choose life. So too did I in reading Irvine Welsh. And so too do I hope many more readers of Welsh's novels find many lines of flight out of the everyday terrors that we face together.

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