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COMPLUTENSE

A City of Betrayals: Irvine Welsh's Minor Literature of Leith

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Abstract: This article examines the representation of the city and communities of Edinburgh in Irvine Welsh's works, more specifically his *Trainspotting* saga: *Trainspotting* (1993), *Porno* (2002), *Skagboys* (2012) and *Dead Men's Trousers* (2018). While Welsh is an integral part of a broader literary tradition of the contemporary urban Scottish novel, which blends together the crime novel genre with the localised concerns of post-industrialism, gripping poverty, Thatcherite austerity, substance abuse and nagging questions of Scottish identity (gender, sexuality, class, nationhood, etc.), his depictions of the former port-town of Leith and its forgotten histories exposes Edinburgh as two distinctly separate and striated communities and geographies: one of opportunity and one of betrayal. Specifically, this essay reads Welsh through the literary, spatial and political theories of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari with regard to Leith's contentious historical relationship with Edinburgh. In this analysis of Welsh's Leith as a vernacular, rhizomatic and anti-institutional force, this essay hopes to illustrate how Welsh's work redirects the popular notions of Scottish national identity and statehood toward a *minor literature*, a linguistic, political and historical divergence from the dominant Scottish literary experience.
Keywords: Irvine Welsh; Gilles Deleuze; rhizome; minor history; contemporary Scottish urban fiction.

[es] Una ciudad de traiciones: la literatura menor de Irvine Welsh sobre Leith

Resumen: Este artículo examina la representación de la ciudad y las comunidades de Edimburgo en la obra de Irvine Welsh, en concreto en su saga *Trainspotting*: *Trainspotting* (1993), *Porno* (2002), *Skagboys* (2012) y *Dead Men's Trousers* (2018). Si bien Welsh forma parte integral de la amplia tradición literaria de la novela urbana escocesa contemporánea, que aúna el género de la novela negra con cuestiones relacionadas con la post-industrialización, la pobreza acuciante, la austeridad thatcherista, el abuso de sustancias y aspectos recurrentes sobre la identidad escocesa (género, sexualidad, clase, sentimiento nacional, etc.), su representación del antiguo pueblo porteño de Leith y sus historias olvidadas muestra un Edimburgo dividido en dos comunidades y geografías separadas y marcadas distintivamente: una de oportunidad y otra de traición. Específicamente, este artículo estudia la obra de Welsh a la luz de las teorías literarias, políticas y espaciales de Gilles Deleuze y Félix Guattari, en relación con la conflictiva relación histórica que Leith ha tenido con Edimburgo. El análisis del Leith de Welsh como una fuerza vernácula, rizomática y anti institucional que se lleva a cabo en este artículo pretende ilustrar cómo su obra reconduce las ideas populares sobre la identidad nacional escocesa y el estado hacia una *literatura menor*, una divergencia lingüística, política e histórica respecto a la experiencia literaria escocesa dominante.
Palabras clave: Irvine Welsh; Gilles Deleuze; rizoma; historia menor; novela escocesa urbana contemporánea.

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1. Introduction

Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1993) and his representation of Edinburgh in the 1980s not only sparked a debate on the representation of drugs in the anglophone novel, but it had a clear impact on bringing the issue of drug policies to the attention of the wider media. The novel was further responsible for an increased awareness of the issue of the HIV epidemic, which touched all categories of the population. Welsh's *Trainspotting* stresses not only the horrifying everyday consequences of Thatcher's neglectful and moralistic response to this epidemic throughout post-industrial Scotland, but most importantly the socio-cultural origins of such suffering. Throughout his novels, Welsh shows the devastating impact of British austerity measures on the most vulnerable categories of the Scottish urban population by depicting widespread poverty and precarity at

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its worst through the lens of a group of individuals who are dependent on a shrinking welfare state led by a government that advocates individualism and self-reliance.

Trainspotting tells the stories of a group of young people, or "schemies", named after the housing schemes they inhabit in Leith. Welsh provides an insight into the historical, social and cultural context of contemporary urban Scotland by describing the lives of this particular working-class community. Exploring interconnected social problems such as drug use and addiction, following the HIV epidemic in Edinburgh in the 1980s and 1990s, which affected all generations in Scottish urban society, Welsh reveals how the people of Scotland, particularly many 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 under the ethos of *laissez-faire* economic policies and austerity. Welsh's ghettoes 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 by its people. 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. (2004: 88)

In this vein, in the works of Irvine Welsh, we are shown groups of people not exclusively in terms of the Victorian understanding of class, but in terms of employment status, ranging from the privileged to the disadvantaged, which marked the rise of a new class, not that of the ship-building, steel-working, coal-mining proletariat, but rather, of what Guy Standing refers to as the *precariat* (2011: 1).

Following the tradition of the Scottish urban novel popularised by William McIlvanney's *Laidlaw* (1977), Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* (1981) and James Kelman's *The Busconductor Hines* (1984), Welsh exposes the remnants of the working class they once knew, through the lives and voices of his characters. Indeed, for Welsh, there is an urgency to give a voice to the voiceless beyond mere utterances, to reveal the memories and experiences of those lost to a post-industrial Scotland, as he explains in plain terms in an interview: "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* (1989) by Martin Amis, the narrative voice is unmistakably the authorial voice, with the working-class characters almost exclusively confined to dialogue" (Welsh 1996: 13). Beyond simply speaking in the Leith dialect as a mere anglophone novelty, Welsh recovers the Leith dialect through all elements of his novels, in omniscient narration, internal monologues and urban descriptions. Because of Welsh's reclaiming of the Leith voice, his characters also further articulate a profound reclamation of autonomy, of historical agency and of subjective liberation against the dominant, majoritarian and imperial hegemonies of traditional representations of Scots in literature.

Thus, throughout his novels, Welsh reveals another face of the city, on the other side of Princes Street, by taking the reader downhill, to the end of Leith Walk, seeking to engage with "the realm of ordinary people's lives and activities that have become increasingly disaffected from the major institutions of state and society" (Kelly 2005: 2). Like his predecessors before him, Welsh plays with the colonial tourist's eye. Instead of exploring the north/south divide of Edinburgh, Welsh takes his readers to the east of the city, away from the more prosperous west. This is a reconfiguration of coordinates 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 generally plays 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 to the east.

We are brought to a little port in the east of the city, where divisions and disconnections are no longer seen, felt or experienced. In the chapter of *Trainspotting* entitled "Inter Shitty", Welsh depicts a scene where his two protagonists, Mark Renton and Francis Begbie, 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.
> 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 in the council jist laugh n stick the cunt n one ay they hoatline joabs in West Granton, thit nae cunt else wants. (Welsh 2013a: 146-7)

The language barrier is not the only obstacle described here; there is also 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 Edwin Muir's notes on his first arrival in the city: "The whole town was (…) an unforetellable 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" (Muir 1979: 8).

Like Welsh, Muir, in *Scott and Scotland*, describes the Scots as a populace overcome by a linguistic, economic and cultural subjective schism, or as he calls it, a "divided consciousness" (1936: 114). This crisis of identity captured by Welsh in the Waverley anecdote and Muir in his description of Edinburgh is also expressed in the Scottish crisis of national identity, notably the creeping Anglicisation 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. Consequently, unifying Scottish history under the banner of Britishness is impossible because of the colonial trauma of Scots speaking a coloniser's language in their own home. According to Muir, then, Britain can hardly be called a "home" for Scots because they are alienated, othered and speak a minor language.

From this position of internalised colonisation, Welsh, like Muir, further reveals that an internal element of colonisation has taken root within Edinburgh itself. To overthrow these false choices between colonised/coloniser, Scottish/English, we might argue that Welsh advocates for a *minor literature* of Leith, then, or what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari refer to as the revolutionary practice of decentralising literature from multiple institutional grasps, starting with language. As they see it: "[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 literature in any case is that in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization" (1986: 16). In this mode of deterritorialising language from national or regional fixity, Welsh's desire to promote a transformative, reflective literary expression of the lost voices of the working class is inherently a project toward a minor literature. By assessing new subjectivities (becomings, assemblages) and revolutionary models for identity, Welsh's works importantly guide readers through Edinburgh beyond the strict roles designated by the dominant language, political representation and collective cultural identifiers of Scotland, as Deleuze and Guattari explain: "[b]ecoming-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" (2013: 124). Hence, as Deleuze and Guattari articulate, Welsh does not simply seek to write in Leith dialect in order to represent the locality of its linguistic difference; his mobilisation of linguistic variety, a complex political discourse and a desire to uncover lost histories of the working class is, therefore, his path toward a minor literature, a literature of autonomy, a literature of and for the minor, or as Deleuze and Guattari write, a reminder that "*literature is the people's concern*" (1986: 18, emphasis in original). As Welsh projects this call for a Leith-focused autonomy from the limits of language and the predominance of stereotype, he reshapes both Scottish literature and Scotland's capital city against its own illusory image, challenging the institutionalised and politically violent history of the "Athens of the North".

Therefore, as this article examines, Welsh specifically writes from a host of silenced tongues, projecting the forgotten, ignored, or repressed memories and experiences of the minoritarian victims of Scottish history. In Welsh's practice of reclaiming Edinburgh from the tourists, the English and the international gentry, he, too, unearthed the lost memories of Leith, once an autonomous port-town that was absorbed into greater Edinburgh in 1920. This is the radicality of Welsh's reimagined Edinburgh; as he digs through the colonised, the lost, the disposed, Leith itself reveals what Rosi Braidotti (2011) calls *nomadic memories*. In the *Trainspotting* saga, then, readers witness Welsh offering a minor literature that "gives the 'wretched of the earth', as Fanon put it, a head start toward the world-historical task of envisaging alternative world orders and more humane and sustainable social systems" (Braidotti 2011: 32). It is in these nomadic memories that Leith functions as both the creative and political heart of his *Trainspotting* saga, the formulative *rhizome* that explores and interrelates the *minor* voices of Welsh's oeuvre, further exposing the linguistically, politically and historically alienated populations of Edinburgh and Scotland as a whole as a vitalistic force.

2. The Minor Literature of Leith

Beyond the first element of minor literature—one that alienates the reader from a fixed and perceived national, linguistic and subjective identity—, for the purpose of this essay Leith, as the rhizomatic centre for the eruption of minor language, may more aptly be explored beyond Deleuze and Guattari's other two elements that, for them, constitute the production of a minor literature: the formulation of a political discourse and a commitment to the collective value of the minor work (1986: 17).

In Welsh's case, envisioning a minor literature reveals the split between dominant-dominated populations based on specific criteria that differentiate gender, race, class, religion and other identarian markers of minority, which, in itself, is an ethically and politically motivated move. Deleuze and Guattari note that the problem of minor literature is not so much a debate about canon or popularity, but rather about how literatures have become institutionalised as extensions of the state, in that they replicate state ideologies and identities beyond the aesthetic realm. To speak in minor English (Scots), French (Picard), 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" (Deleuze and Guattari 2013: 123). In the parlance of Deleuze and Guattari, minor languages, therefore, disturb the centralised structures of the major, unsettling the state as much as its ideologies and its political ontologies whereby the being of dominance and hegemony remain as they often are in Eurocentric or occidental contexts: white, heterosexual, male, adult and Christian.

This then, 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" (1986: 17). As a minoritarian artist, Welsh engages with politics through his use of language as much as in his narration, characterisation and allegories, all of which gives the voiceless many voices at once. Welsh's political discourse 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, which is simply framed by a complicated, yet robust, post-industrial Marxist critique of Scottish nationalist identity and its continual recycling under the tenets of late capitalism.

It is in the form of this anti-institutionalist New Left political engagement that Welsh's project 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" (Welsh 2013a: 83). Note that Renton's self-loathing in the *Trainspotting* saga is not directed at the self, but at the impossibility of escaping the misconception, the violence and 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 that is yet to be created. By rejecting one idea of Scottishness, Welsh does not disregard Scottish identity as much as challenge its current majoritarian iteration. Due to Welsh's non-institutional political discourse, his ideologies are often described as divisive, or, as John Walsh notes in a criticism of Welsh's widely read journalistic writings on social and political commentary, "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" (1995: 5).

From the very start of his literary career, Welsh was a figure of opposition to the power of the state, a behaviour later to become more and more defined by what Deleuze would call a *society of control* (1992: 3). One of Welsh's first appearances in the media already testifies to this: "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" (Welsh 1993: 3). 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 apparatuses in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (1971). For Deleuze, societies of control are replacing Foucault's *disciplinary societies*, which were defined by confinement, such as the prison, but extended to the hospital, the school and the factory, for example. Individuals would move through various confined milieus over their life. Deleuze and Guattari's vision of a society of control evolved out of Foucault's theorisation of the panopticon prison architecture, as well as Paul Virilio's study of twentieth-century cities and crowd control in his seminal political work *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology* (1977), in which he contends that the bourgeoisie directs the flow of people, especially the marginalised political voices that engage outside of bourgeoise norms (Deleuze 1992:4).

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 in 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" (2013a: 385). In this brief description of the station, Renton comments on the ruin 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 had killed off peripheral train stops, lines and stations that were deemed unnecessary. As Robert Morace points out:

> 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. (2007: 41)

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 different ways while they are in the station, those who are from Leith, stay in Leith, trapped in the centre of a ghost town, or "a place of phantoms", as Renton describes it in *Dead Men's Trousers* (Welsh 2018: 343). A society of control that manages where people (and therefore their labour and someone else's capital) go inside 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. As Deleuze puts it, "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" (1992: 6-7). Indebted and chained to austerity, the populace of Leith, for example, is bound to the place that it used to sustain through 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 (rather than Foucault's theory of discipline) can also be ideologically driven as much as infrastructurally engineered. As Deleuze argues, "we are in a generalized crisis in relation to all environments of enclosure – prison, hospital, factory, school, family" (1992: 3-4). Welsh identifies many institutions as being failed minor communities, including the five mentioned by Deleuze in this quote. Welsh takes on the Scottish state literally in his political writings besides in his already politically charged novels, often criticising the way Scottishness is the centre of problematised ideologies and institutional apparatuses, or what Louis Althusser calls the *ideological state apparatus* (1971: 243), which includes religion, education, family, law, political parties and cultural expressions (sport, art and literature). The state replicates the means of production through the 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" (2013: 394). Hence, a state apparatus makes people responsible individuals, individuals who will, of their own initiative and without realising it, want to conform to the given social norms that are established by the dominant class, the bourgeoisie. This idea is tied to what Althusser calls *ideological interpellation* (2014: xxvi).

The last chapter of *Skagboys* (2012), "Trainspotting at Gorgie Central", sees Renton, Sick Boy and the rest of their friends walking from Leith to Gorgie, in South Edinburgh, with the purpose of reaching the pharmaceutical company from which some employees had stolen heroin to sell in Edinburgh. As they walk and enter Gorgie, they decide to reach the company following the railway line: "[t]he opium factory. Those railway lines seeming to define the place, one set dividing the plant from the distillery, the other bisecting it" (2013c: 525). However, in order to get into the factory without being seen, Renton follows 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. (2013: 525-526, emphasis in original)

Renton's experience of trainspotting at Leith Central Station changes in Gorgie Central. From the disaffected central station, in ruins and littered by decaying wagons, here Renton must 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, awakening for the first time to a harrowing vision of the highly controlled urban landscape, as he now sees it, in which he imagines the extent of the rhizome he lives in, or rather, how the state is itself rhizomatic, a quietly dehierarchising and exploiting machine that benefits from its occlusion and omnipresence, whereas its citizens are slowly dying 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 Enlightenment. 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…* (2013c: 533-4, emphasis in original)

Renton sees the connection between the Scottish Enlightenment, which made Edinburgh not only the 'Athens of the North' but also, through the contributions of Adam Smith and David Hume, 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 had 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" (2013a: 100) does not refer to the English, but the Humes and the Smiths. Roberto del Valle Alcalá also points out that Welsh's most profoundly clear political arguments throughout *Trainspotting* and *Skagboys* highlight the evils of neoliberalism as a form of existential colonisation:

> 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. (del Valle Alcalá 2016: 126)

Thus, as this reading of Welsh through Deleuze and Althusser illustrates how impossible it is to conceive of any liberation discourse regarding the minoritarian when the majoritarian voice of the state is consistently realigning the identities of its constituents and subjects, the only revolution Scotland will see is when its national identity is confronted as a British product and rejected wholesale as such. *Unbecoming-Scottish* is a process of deterritorialising the image of the Scot through Edinburgh, moving it beyond the confines of emptied districts like Leith, so that the image of Scottishness might finally escape the Scottish state's means of capture, enclosure and exploitation. It is this sense of being controlled that Welsh's characters are desperately trying to escape, as mentioned previously regarding the trainless Central Station of Leith. Renton, often the voice of Welsh, clearly articulates the necessity to confront and reject state-manufactured ways in 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. (Welsh 2013a: 237)

The mind-numbing sense of control is the same as that described by Deleuze and Althusser which serves to reproduce the ideological maintenance of the working-class and more importantly for Welsh, helps to divide minor populations that are pitted against each other. Here, it is not only the consumer society that is exposed and rejected, but also the nuclear or bourgeois family and the new cycle of control through debts as pointed out by Deleuze. Beyond this simple, yet profound, declaration of anti-consumerism, Welsh's politics goes much further. His critiques of British and Scottish politics tackle the rote clichés that the state deploys to undermine and demonise the working class, which reveals a true lack of democracy in the UK. Thus, from this point onward in the *Trainspotting* saga, Welsh's political opposition to government cuts are clearly depicted in *Skagboys* (2012) and his view of the global, neoliberal capitalism of Britain and Europe becomes the hallmark of his politically charged ethos in *Dead Men's Trousers* (2018).

3. The People's History of Leith

While the second element of minor literature is the deployment of a radical political charge, Deleuze and Guattari's last category expresses "the collective assemblage of enunciation", whereby the minor artist aesthetically offers a communitarian call to action, a profound reminder that "literature is the people's concern" rather than an individualist's pursuit (1986: 18). In this vague expression of the collective, one may note that the collective value of Welsh's novels about Leith under the shadow of Edinburgh specifically functions as a collection of vernacular and accessible theories of philosophy, art and history that are best expressed by the character of Spud, who we might term the manifestation of the rhizome and nomadology in Welsh's narrative universe. Spud, the nickname of 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), as well 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. (2013: 5)

As 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 in a damp environment, will begin to erupt from the centre, reaching out to the bright sky rather than digging into the dark earth. Spud is, to 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 they social, political or environmental. A nomadologist studies the minor. Deleuze and Guattari explain nomadology thus: "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" (2013: 24). 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* and the prequel to *Trainspotting* with the main narrative arc of the film. In the second half of the film, we see Spud writing the events of *Trainspotting* in yellow notebooks, with the opening line of the novel being read out loud by him as he reads it to Begbie: "First, there's an opportunity. Then, there's a betrayal". In an integral scene, Spud pastes and tapes the pages of his novel all over his flat to remember the order of events of *Trainspotting*.

The events of *Skagboys* and *T2* are further complicated by Welsh's sequel to *Trainspotting*, *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 "[i]nnocent until proven", as he marches into the library (Welsh 2013b: 146). 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" (Welsh 2013b: 147). Spud displays not only nostalgia for the past, but an acute 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, equates 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—in 1920 and into 2002—reveal Spud's nomadological curiosity as much as his desire to write about the lost history of a people 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. (Welsh 2013b: 257)

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

> 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. (2013b: 25-26)

Spud's nomadology of Leith is just that then: a roving history that is in-between oral and written, in-between English and Scots, in-between Edinburgh and Leith, in-between memoir and fiction and most importantly, in-between the real and the representational.

As he explains to Begbie (Franco), Spud—like Welsh—feels the need to write his story in his own voice and about the people living in Leith, because 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 aboot the real Leith, ken, aboot some ay the *real* characters. Like you, man. Everybody in Leith kens you. (Welsh 2013b: 260)

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 gadges like me n you left doon here. (Welsh 2013b: 261)

Porno, set and published in 2002, comes back to the characters of *Trainspotting* in a post-Devolution Scottish society, one which is more cosmopolitan and with a gentrified Leith as a result of its new European student culture which has developed under the recent university policy waiving tuition fees for Scottish students and those from the European Union. In the extract above, Welsh emphasises how the process of devolution had given a glimpse of what a Scottish state could be like and, in Spud's opinion, that means things would only get worse as neoliberal policies would begin to threaten the existence of the working-class in Leith. Spud and Begbie, 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 became in the twentieth century.

After Spud finishes his manuscript, which 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 is set on replicating, specifically by barring minor voices in the grand discussion of the national or historic narrative. Later in the novel, Spud's manuscript is rejected without explanation. When Spud phones the publishing house, the interlocution provides us with a violent 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?
> – 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
> yob culture and of people who haven't achieved anything noteworthy in the local community. (Welsh 2013b:
> 380)

Silenced by the voice of the majority based on the majoritarian concerns of standard British language, Spud's history is once again displaced, perhaps even erased. And yet, Welsh persists in his quest to write his own anti-history, his nomadology, of Leith, disguising it as Spud's wayward manuscript.

In fact, through the collective value of unearthing exactly these nomadic memories of Leith, Welsh's latest book, *Dead Men's Trousers*, is an ode to Spud and his long-lost manuscript, unpublished and left to Renton after Spud tragically dies. When Renton returns home to visit his father in Edinburgh twenty years after the events of *Trainspotting*, he discovers what Spud has left him: his late brother's jeans and a manuscript. Welsh masterfully describes Renton's discovery and enjoyment of 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. (2018: 345)

Reading Spud's minor telling of his nomadic memories, Renton begins to reflect on Spud's life differently, as the centralising force in the decentralising experience of neoliberalism and post-industrialism. Inspired by Spud, Renton decides to, once 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. Renton sends Spud's manuscript off for publication in London 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 he sent it off to that publisher in London, with some minor modifications" (2018: 349). Although in *T2*, director Danny Boyle makes the Bulgarian sex worker Veronika the one character wise enough to send Spud's expressive, vernacular history of Leith to publishers, Welsh's original version in *Dead Men's Trousers* gives this initiative to Renton. It is significant that it is Renton that "shares" Spud's life with the world, because again, it reflects Welsh's vitalistic, existential and ethical worldview. This is illustrated by the phone call Renton receives from the publisher in London in which Renton assumes ownership of Spud's work again:

> 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? (2018: 420)

In the final scene in the entirety of the current Welshverse (at least for now), Renton articulates an affirmative response in his 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 is once again using Spud through the theft of Spud's authorship, the scene is, once again, a powerful reminder of the problem of nomadic histories and their authorships. Renton, in an ingenious move, is just as much of a minor artist and historian as Spud here in this scene, regardless of questions of morality, ethics or authenticity.

What Welsh offers Renton and his audience is a collective call to take back the literature and history of a locality quickly forgotten, to write in rhizomatic ways, to trace the rhizome on a map, or to speak in rhizomatic tongues. The cycle of opportunity and betrayal is a divisive one and Welsh's final call for an ethics of care and community challenges the notion that Renton and his schemie chums are simply individuals lost to the world of post-industrialism: Renton's final betrayal of a dead Spud is a collective recapitulation of his own people's literature on and history of Leith.

4. Conclusion

As Irvine Welsh writes in an article published in *The Guardian* entitled "Scotland's Murderous Heart", Scottish stereotypes of inner-city violence and self-destruction are not givens, are not innate qualities of the Scots: "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" (2005: 8). In this article, Welsh draws on a set of consequences of government policies and neglect which led to more and more division in Edinburgh, Glasgow

and all of Scotland from the dawn of industrialism to its decline in the late 1970s. Furthermore, Welsh explains that since Glasgow was quickly remodelled publicly as a City of Culture, Edinburgh was forced to market itself as an international festival city. As both cities shambled their way out of the post-industrial morass, the poor of both urban environments were swept away from the city centres, further and further removed from their traditional homes: "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" (Welsh 2005: 9). Welsh points to economic segregation and displacement, as well as the current effects of gentrification, as the primary factors for the savage breaking up of centuries old communities. Against a Thatcherite command to install an individualistic mentality of self-reliance in the swamps of late capitalism, Welsh further explains that the disastrous psychological effect of individualism that took root in society became a psychosis, a schizophrenia, a paranoia of late capitalism, similar to what Deleuze and Guattari write about in their works. Welsh's depiction of Leith in his *Trainspotting* saga, therefore, is not only a realistic account of the historic socio-economic alienation of the working-class or the precariat from their language, their history, their homes and their cities. As their *raison d'être* of working and surviving is challenged, so too is their masculinity, their sovereignty and their position in civil society. It is here that Welsh writes a minor literature against Edinburgh, as much as for it, to illuminate the distant realities of the Toronto tourist and the Leith schemie.

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