

The Other, the New, and the Old. Three Images of Leith in Irvine Welsh's *Porno*

Deividas Zibalas

Department of English Philology
Institute of English, Romance and Classical Studies
Vilnius University
E-mail: deividas.zibalas@ff.vu.lt

Abstract. The present paper focuses on Irvine Welsh's novel *Porno* (2002), the sequel to *Trainspotting* (1993). Most of the events of the novel take place in Edinburgh, and the changing face of Leith, a working-class neighbourhood, becomes the central axis in the story. By drawing on Edward Relph (1976) and Harold M. Proshansky *et al.* (2014 [1983]), this reading of Welsh's novel attempts to show how the main characters self-consciously reflect on the neighbourhood's changing identity, as well as the implications these changes have for their own sense of self. Multi-perspectivity becomes the mode Welsh employs to project a nuanced image of Leith, as seen from the subjective perspectives of five internal narrators. What becomes of interest in the novel is not the identity of Leith *per se*, but the different images of Leith that emerge through the way the narrators identify *with* the neighbourhood. Specifically, three images of Leith are distinguished and explored in the paper.

Keywords: Welsh, *Porno*, Leith, Edinburgh, city, place, identity.

Kitas, naujas ir senas. Trys Leito įvaizdžiai Irvine'o Welsho romane *Porno*

Anotacija. Straipsnyje analizuojamas škotų rašytojo Irvine'o Welsho romanas *Porno* (2002), garsiojo romano *Traukinių žymėjimas* (angl. *Trainspotting*, 1993) tęsinys. Besikeičiantis Leito, vieno iš Edinburgo rajonų, portretas tampa pagrindine romano ašimi. Remdamasis Edwardo Relpho (1976), Haroldo M. Proshansky'io ir bendraautorių (2014 [1983]) mintimis, straipsnio autorius svarsto, kaip romano personažai, reaguodami į besikeičiantį Leitą, apmąsto savo tapatybę. Pasitelkdamas keletą skirtingų žiūros taškų, Welshas konstruoja daugialypį miesto portretą, tačiau straipsnio autorių domina ne Leito portretas, o tai, kaip konstruojami skirtingi Leito įvaizdiniai per penkių pasakotojų naratyvus. Analizuojant romaną išryškėja trys skirtingi Leito įvaizdžiai, kurie ir aptariami šiame straipsnyje.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Welshas, *Porno*, Leitas, Edinburgas, miestas, vieta, identitetas.

Received: 01/10/2021. **Accepted:** 26/10/2021.

Copyright © Deividas Zibalas, 2021. Published by Vilnius University Press.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

1. Irvine Welsh, *Porno*, and the city

Owing to the success of his debut novel *Trainspotting* (1993) and its film adaptation by Danny Boyle (1996), Irvine Welsh (b. 1958) has been deemed one of the most commercially successful contemporary Scottish writers. In his novels, Welsh tends to focus on those inhabiting the social peripheries of Scottish society. Colin Barnes, a prominent professor at the forefront of disability studies, helpfully specifies that “Welsh writes about the world of the outsider, the deviant, the criminal, the drug user, and the football hooligan” (Barnes 1997, para. 5). Welsh’s empathy for those on the margins of society stems from his personal experience with Edinburgh’s drug scene, which informs *Trainspotting*. In the novel, he is primarily preoccupied with the hardships of several young men from a working-class neighbourhood, mainly Mark Renton (or “Rent Boy”), Daniel Murphy (or “Spud”), Simon Williamson (or “Sick Boy”), and Francis Begbie (or “Franco”), most of whom struggle with heroin addiction.

In *Porno*¹ (2002), the sequel, the story is set ten years later. This time, as is clear from the title, the novel revolves around pornography. The main characters are involved in making a porn film, which, eventually, turns out to be an astounding success, receiving a nomination in the best newcomer category at the Cannes Adult Film Festival. The novel begins with Simon returning to Edinburgh after having inherited his aunt’s pub Port Sunshine, where he decides to shoot the aforementioned film. Nikki, a new character Welsh introduces in *Porno*, is a young English woman who studies cinema in Edinburgh, but, having become disillusioned with her studies, comes to Simon’s aid and agrees to star in his film. Simon’s old friends get involved as well, including Renton, who ran away with everyone’s money at the end of *Trainspotting*, Spud, who stayed behind in Edinburgh, and Begbie, who spent nearly a decade in prison.

Nearly all of the events of the novel take place in Edinburgh, Welsh’s hometown. As is agreed by critics, the city occupies a privileged position in his works. Jeffrey Karicky (2003), for instance, identifies the urbanised Scotland as the source Welsh’s creativity, and Robert Morace (2007a), similarly, argues that Welsh’s attachment to Edinburgh has brought him international acclaim. It is also noteworthy that, as is indicated by Berthold Schoene (2010), most of Welsh’s novels include characters from Edinburgh, specifically Leith, a formally independent port city, connected to Edinburgh in 1920. After the Second World War the neighbourhood underwent a severe economic decline due to the diminished importance of the port and became notorious for crime and prostitution. From a burgeoning, independent city, it was transformed into a peripheral space in Edinburgh. In the last two decades, however, the situation has been drastically improving.

In fact, I argue that the metamorphosis Leith is undergoing provides the central axis for the story in *Porno*. In the novel, Edinburgh does not function merely as a neutral background, a setting, against which Welsh sets the events of the story, but it becomes an object of interest in itself and in relation to character construction. By viewing *space*

¹ After Danny Boyle’s very loose film adaptation in 2017, *Porno* has been republished under the title *T2 Trainspotting*.

as active, I follow the theoreticians of the Spatial Turn, especially Henry Lefebvre (1991 [1974]), but also Michel Foucault (1986 [1967]) and Edward Soja (1989, 1996), among others, who, in different guises, rejected the traditional notion of space as a static container (see Warf & Arias 2009 for a detailed discussion of the Spatial Turn). In the novel, the characters not only reflect on their sense of self in relation to the problematic past of Leith and its relation to central Edinburgh, but also with respect to gentrification, a process that challenges any notion of place specificity. Although the notions of space and place are not always clearly delineated within the Spatial Turn, I employ the notion of place, relying on Edward Relph (1976), to refer to specific locations that generate meanings and/or are meaningful for individuals or groups of people.

By acknowledging how central Edinburgh is to the story, I am prompted to address *Porno* through the perspective of place, particularly focusing on different images of Leith that emerge in the novel. Multiperspectivity becomes the mode Welsh employs to project a nuanced image of the neighbourhood, as seen from the perspectives of five internal narrators, “characters in the fictional world [...] who take up a narrator role” (McIntyre 2006, 72). I distinguish and focus on three distinct images of Leith that appear in the novel, as seen by Nikki, who brings in an outsider’s perspective (3.1), Simon and Renton, who are primarily preoccupied with the new, gentrified Leith (3.2), and Begbie and Spud, who represent the old, pre-gentrified Leith (3.3).

2. Place identity as self-identity

Since I focus on Leith’s identity through the narratives of five narrators, specifically their sense of self in relation to the city, I draw on the works of Edward Relph (1976) and Harold H. Proshansky *et al.* (2014 [1983]), who provide a solid basis for a psychological conception of place identity. What I am interested in exploring is not the identity of Leith *per se*, but the different images of Leith that emerge in relation to how the narrators identify with it, to rely on Relph’s distinction in *Place and Placelessness* (1976). By “identity with” a place, he refers to different degrees of outsidership and insidership against which individuals or groups form meaningful relations with their surroundings. While being on the inside entails a strong sense of belonging, “outsidership refers to the lack of identity with a place” (Freestone & Liu 2016, 6), or what Relph (2016, 21) himself calls *placelessness*, or, in his words, “the experience of not belonging anywhere”. *Existential insidership*, according to him, exemplifies the highest degree of involvement with a place, i.e., “knowing implicitly that *this* place is where you belong” (Relph 1976, 55). Non-/belongingness, then, becomes the determining factor in how individuals experience and relate to their surroundings.

Relph’s conception of place identity resonates with that of Proshansky *et al.* (2014 [1983], 77), who construe it as a “cognitive sub-structure” of self, which consists of “cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives”. By cognitions, they refer to memories, attitudes, and beliefs we possess in relation to physical environments we inhabit. In their words, place identity “reflects in its clustering of cognitive components

the individual's experiences in each of these environments" (Ibid., 78). Their conception of place identity is especially relevant in relation to Leith, seen as a neighbourhood with a *blemish*, to use the phrase Tom Slater (2017) employs. He specifies that "the disgrace of residing in a *notorious place* can become affixed to personal identity and may prove to become [...] an indelible mark during encounters with outsiders" (Ibid., 113, my italics). Acknowledging the "nebulosity" of the notion of place identity as a "sub-structure" of self, an issue often raised in the literature (e.g., Dixon & Durrheim 2000), I narrow it down in the present context to refer to how notorious places become part of the sub-structure of self. For some of the characters in the novel, the internalised notoriety of Leith, indeed, becomes a hindrance in their relations with others.

In addition to Relph's (1976) and Proshansky's *et al.* (2014 [1983]) conceptions of place identity, Michel Foucault's (1986 [1967]) notion of *heterotopia* becomes relevant in the context of the novel, especially what he calls heterotopias of deviation. Literally translated as *other places*, heterotopias refer to "counter-sites" where "individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed" (Foucault 1986 [1967], 24–25). Foucault addresses the notion of heterotopia in contrast with utopias, which he describes as "sites with no real place"; heterotopias, however, are very real indeed, functioning as sites that are "absolutely different from all the site" (Ibid., 24). He uses the *mirror metaphor* to further explicate the difference between the notions, explaining that, on the one hand, mirrors reflect what is not real, a "placeless place", a place where you are not, but, on the other hand, the mirror does exist in reality, acting as a kind of "counteraction" on the positions we occupy (Ibid., 24).

Foucault also stresses the *temporal nature* of heterotopias. He posits that heterotopias are closely related to time, functioning as *heterochronies*. According to him, they become "slices in time" or places of "absolute break with [...] traditional time" (Ibid., 26). I interpret this as referring to situations where the logic of linear time breaks down, and different temporalities are imposed on one another.

The notion of heterotopia becomes relevant in the context of the novel, especially when reflecting on how the process of gentrification is changing the face of Leith, and the effects it has on Leithers' sense of self. As is argued by Michel Dehaene and Lieven De Caeter (2008), the notion of heterotopia has become indispensable in reflecting on the contemporary urban condition, and I find it to be the case when talking about the gentrification-induced placelessness explored in the novel, which results in "detachment from the particularity of place", to rely on Relph (2016, 21) again. As a place very different from the rest of the city, Leith serves as a powerful source of self-identification for some of the characters, but at the same time, as a peripheral space in the context of Edinburgh, it functions as a source of embarrassment for others.

3. The other, the new and the old: Three images of Leith

Welsh problematises a simple reading of Edinburgh by presenting the city from multiple perspectives and focusing on Leith, a dynamic neighbourhood to the north of the city centre.

As already mentioned, Leith, once an independent port city, incorporated into Edinburgh under the Edinburgh Boundaries Extension and Tramways Act in 1920, became notorious for crime and prostitution in the years following the end of the Second World War. In the 1980s, the situation in Leith deteriorated further due to the process of deindustrialisation accelerated by Margaret Thatcher's government, a process that, according to Ray Hudson (2013), was especially destructive to the northern parts of the UK. The late 1980s saw the increase of unemployment and the expansion of the heroin market², the period explored in *Trainspotting*. In *Porno*, set a decade later, Leith is shown on the cusp of gentrification, a process against which the residents of Leith attempt to (re)define themselves. The chapters narrated by different characters highlight different images of Leith: Leith as the other place (3.1), very different from the rest of the city, Leith as the new (gentrified) neighbourhood (3.2), and Leith as the old (pre-gentrified) neighbourhood (3.3).

3.1. The other Leith

In the novel, Nikki's narrative exemplifies the perspective of an outsider from England. As mentioned beforehand, she arrives in Edinburgh to study cinema, but, becoming disillusioned with her studies, she decides to become a porn star instead and agrees to perform in Simon's film. Her outsidership is clear from her superficial knowledge of Scottish culture and its people, steeped in stereotypes and hearsay. Rather than partaking of the local culture, she assumes a more detached position, observing how the locals behave. She, for instance, expresses indignation when she sees that a cricket match, a sport she thinks the Scottish detest, is being shown on TV in a pub.

Language, however, becomes the most prominent mark of her status as an outsider. Generally, language has received considerable attention in Irvine Welsh's works (e.g., Ashley 2010, Hames 2013, Morace 2007b), and it can shed some light on the attitudes the narrators of the novel maintain towards Leith and Edinburgh. Nikki's speech (e.g., in dialogues) and the chapters she narrates are written in standard English, which renders her linguistically distinct from the rest of the narrators, especially Spud and Begbie, whose chapters are written (and who speak) entirely in Scots³, which by some is treated as a dialect of English and by others as separate language (Sebba 2019). Renton uses a mixture of standard English and Scots⁴, and Simon's speech and the chapters he narrates are mainly characterised by standard English with some vocabulary items from Scottish English⁵. These linguistic variations reflect different attitudes the characters hold towards their hometown (this is elaborated on in sections 3.2 and 3.3). Renton and Simon, as will be argued, are the ones who feel particularly embarrassed by their association with Leith; hence, the standard variety signals their desire to distance themselves from other Leithers, whereas the use of Scots by Spud and Begbie shows their attachment to Leith.

² Available at: https://www.rcpe.ac.uk/sites/default/files/drugs_deaths_in_scotland_report_final_0.pdf.

³ E.g., "Ah'm walkin tae think, man, tae think about thon Dostoevsky cat, how it wis the perfect crime. The nippy auld moneylender thit naebody liked, or missed, jist like the dirty nonce Chizzie" (Welsh 2002, 394).

⁴ E.g., "I just had tae git the fuck away, Saimon, fae Leith, fae aw that junky shite" (Welsh 2002, 164).

⁵ E.g., "There's a skinny wee guy in tow with her, who I realise is actually a bird" (Welsh 2002, 6).

As an outsider, Nikki experiences the urban environment of Edinburgh significantly differently from the locals, such as Simon or Spud. For her, the neighbourhood of Leith stands out as a unique and charming place. Specifically, Simon's pub Port Sunshine, one of the key locations in the novel, completely captivates her due to its distinctiveness, which is vividly described by her in the following manner:

Sometimes the otherness of a place really hits you. [...] The cleansing air in your lungs, the purity of it, then turning to cold until you huddle together for warmth in the dimly lit bars away from the bland could-be-anywhere Witherspoons/Falcon and Firkin/All Bar One/O'Neill's-land that's the corporate, colonised social hub of every urban centre of the UK. Go a bit out though, and you find the real places. [...] This is one of those places, so overwhelmingly like stepping back into another age that its tawdriness dazzles. (Welsh 2002, 49)

Coming from one of those urban centres, she appreciates the uniqueness of the pub and views it as a place that possesses a distinctive character. Whereas Simon, the proprietor of the pub, views it as a "decaying slum" in need of renovation, for Nikki the interior very strongly contrasts with those bland, homogenised chain pubs that do not possess a unique identity. Nikki's perspective forewarns of the approaching gentrification and the sense of placelessness it will generate. Although the changes will bring new sources of profit and increase the prestige of the neighbourhood, it will destroy the distinctiveness of the place, turning it into another "could-be-anywhere", "colonised social hub".

Nikki's description of the Port Sunshine very much resonates with Foucault's (1986 [1967]) notion of heterotopia. To use his phrasing (Ibid., 26), the pub becomes a "slice in time", where the sense of linear time breaks down. Nikki feels as if she has stepped into another age. What contributes to the uniqueness of Simon's pub and makes it a "real place" is the fact that it seems not to be liable to the processes taking place outside Leith, in other urban centres of the UK.

From this perspective, then, heterotopias function as sites that counter the homogenising effects of gentrification. They become the opposite of the so-called *non-places*, spaces that Nick Jones simply defines as lacking "meaning or history beyond its purpose" (Jones 2015, 60). According to Marc Augé (1995), the one who coined the term, the contemporary urban world is characterised by these transitional spaces, such as airports and motorways, which stand in opposition to "the sociological" sense of place, sites where individuals can forge meaningful relations with their surroundings. Simon's pub, due to gentrification, faces the threat of become one of these non-places, where profit and utility are prioritised over human relations. The pre-gentrified Port Sunshine, as a heterotopia, generates a strong sense of place, a place individuals can identify with against the backdrop of global culture, which, according to Stuart Hall (1997), tends to subsume differences.

At the same time, another, more negative sense of the Port Sunshine as a heterotopia emerges. It becomes a space of deviations, to borrow Foucault's (1986 [1967]) expression once more. Nikki acts completely differently in the pub as compared to the "real" world outside the boundaries of Leith. In her spare time, she works in a sauna that doubles as a

brothel, where the clients can receive sexual services. She refuses to engage in penetrative sex and goes no further than handjobs: “I limit myself to handjobs. I’d never work the streets” (Welsh 2002, 152). Her reservations towards penetrative sex are suspended when she enters Simon’s pub and agrees to have sex on camera. However, when the film leaves the heterotopic space of the pub, it dawns on her that everyone she knows will see the film, including her parents, her university lecturers and her groupmates: “It hits me like an iron fist in the chest that in this global communications village, in some way, my father’s going to see...” (Welsh 2002, 374). In other words, the Port Sunshine is seen as a place that is surreal, but also very real, which echoes Foucault’s (1986 [1967]) mirror metaphor. Nikki does not reflect on the moral consequences of her actions as long as they are taking place within the confines of the pub.

Heterotopias, then, indeed become indispensable in making sense of and navigating in the contemporary urban world, as Dehaene and De Caeter (2008) have claimed, though as a conceptual tool it does become contradictory. On the one hand, heterotopic spaces are shown to function as spaces that counter the homogenising effects of gentrification, and, as unique places, they generate a strong sense of place. On the other hand, heterotopias are shown to function as peripheral spaces that can be exploited by such industries as porn. As one of the biggest industries, porn is reliant on what Edward Soja (1989) calls “uneven geographical development”, the existence of less developed areas where the industry can expand, and Leith becomes one of these spaces of expansion. These heterotopic spaces, then, that seem not to be affected by the processes taking place outside of them are very much part of those processes, a fact which highlights the paradoxical nature of heterotopias.

In this respect, then, I view the Port Sunshine as the embodiment of the entire neighbourhood of Leith, a place that is distinct and unique, but at the same time a peripheral space in the context of Edinburgh. Leith becomes a place where people, such as Spud, are disregarded in the context of commodity economy, still pervaded by the Fordist logic of production and consumption, where the most important things are productivity and efficiency (Archer 2013). This point becomes especially apparent in the way Simon treats his old friends from Leith as losers who have not achieved anything in their lives, the argument I develop in section 3.3. The only thing that brings Simon back are the prospects of gentrification (and making money), a process which will transform Leith, from Nikki’s perspective, into just another bland neighbourhood, another corporate urban centre.

3.2. The new Leith

A different image of Leith emerges through the narratives of Simon and Renton, who share similarly negative attitudes towards the neighbourhood of their youth. Having chosen what Wacquant identifies as one of the main coping mechanisms of the inhabitants of stigmatised neighbourhoods, namely “flight into the outer world as soon as one acquires the means” (Wacquant in Slater 2017, 119–120), Simon and Renton are unwilling to identify with Leith, a place associated with their shameful past. Their attitudes towards Leith manifest themselves through their incredulity at having come back home, the place they tried to escape. Simon thinks to himself: “Leith? I spent so many years trying to get out

of there. How could I set foot in this place again?" (Welsh 2002, 47). Renton expresses a very similar thought when talking with Simon: "I just had tae git the fuck away, Saimon, fae Leith, fae aw that junky shite" (Welsh 2002, 164). For them, it is associated with the "junky shite", the traumatic and embarrassing past they no longer wish to identify with.

Unlike Nikki, Simon and Renton do not romanticise Leith and the Port Sunshine since they possess insider knowledge she lacks, or, to use Proshansky's *et al.* (2014 [1983]) phrase, their environmental past of Leith is very different from that of Nikki's. While for her, as an outsider, the Port Sunshine stands for a place that possesses a unique character, Simon detests the desolate state of his pub, calling it a "decaying slum". He does not want to be associated with the pub or Leith as they are right now, and although he possesses insider knowledge, he does not experience existential insideness, meaning that he does not feel at home, or emotionally attached to his surroundings. His return to Leith is based solely on pragmatic reasons, mainly because he can sense that the neighbourhood is about to undergo drastic changes. As he confesses, "the place is a potential gold mine, just waiting for a makeover job. You can feel the gentrification creeping up from the Shore and forcing house prices up..." (Welsh 2002, 45). He can see that Leith is being transformed from a peripheral neighbourhood into one that will experience an economic boom due to "the creeping gentrification", and he wants to identify with this new, gentrified Leith. In an imaginary interview he gives to the *Evening News*, he says that "Leith is on the way up, and we want to be part of the success story" (Welsh 2002, 60).

Unwilling to identify with Leith as it is, Simon attempts to subvert the dominant, negative discourse about it, as well as to gain profit from this at the same time. By so doing, Simon disassociates from Leith's notoriety and tries to make the new image of Leith part of his identity. He plays with the popular beliefs regarding Leith as notorious for crime to improve his position, a desire that becomes apparent from the same imaginary interview he gives to the *Evening News*. The imaginary headline goes as follows: "Williamson, one of the dynamic new breed of Edinburgh entrepreneurs talks to the News's very own John Gibson, a fellow Leither" (Welsh 2002, 53). To subvert the way he is seen in the eyes of others, he appeals to the authorities. To secure his role as an honest and hardworking businessman, he goes to the local police station in order to report a concocted story about how he took off some tablets from people doing drugs on the premises of his pub. The police officer admits that the Port Sunshine is known for that and is impressed by Simon's actions.

His act, that of an honest businessman, pays off and he is not bothered by the police or the authorities at all. By showing that he is a new generation Leither, who will do things differently, he can shoot his porn film in the pub in peace. Hence, the name of the pub Port Sunshine acquires a symbolic dimension, marking the possibility for a better future, which is realised, when they are invited to the Cannes Adult Film Festival, where their film is nominated in the best newcomer category. Simon is absolutely ecstatic, and he feels that he and other "Leith boys" finally made it out of Leith: "C'mon, Mark, this our moment, mate. All our life we've been waiting for this. Leith boys in Cannes, for fuck sake!" (Welsh 2002, 433).

The name of the pub is significant in one other way, serving as an allusion to Port Sunlight, a village founded in 1888, next to the city of Birkenhead, near Liverpool. Inspired by the models of the ideal city that were circulating at the time, Lever brothers bought land where they moved their soap factory and built a village for the workers, providing them with decent living conditions (Samalavičius 2008). In *Porno*, the Port Sunshine, similarly, becomes an articulation of utopian aspirations for Simon and Renton, who project their desires to improve their status onto the pub. The Port Sunshine becomes their shot at more decent living conditions in the improving working-class neighbourhood.

3.3. The Old Leith

The other major characters and narrators, Begbie and Spud, represent the old Leith, notorious for crime and drugs. Unlike Simon and Renton, who tried to build a better life for themselves in London and Amsterdam, respectively, both Begbie and Spud remained in their home neighbourhood. The first spent eight years in prison and the second still struggles with heroin addiction. The fact that Spud stands for the old Leith is clear from the way Simon, his old friend, treats him. They have not seen each other for nearly a decade, yet during their first encounter Simon completely rejects him when he tries to ask for a favour:

I almost regretted my words as Spud looked incredulously at me for a second, let the hurt sink in and then sulked out in a broken silence. Fortunately, the rush of shame was instantly replaced by a surge of pride and relief as yet another lame duck hobbled out of my life. (Welsh 2002, 82)

He utterly detests Spud since he reminds Simon of his shameful past in Leith. Even after they supposedly reconcile, Simon still looks down on Spud and remains very critical towards him. He harbours very similar feelings towards Begbie, however, he remains more cautious in voicing his true feelings since Begbie is too unpredictable and dangerous. Nevertheless, he constantly turns over these thoughts in his head: “That cunt Begbie disnae even bring the empty fucking glasses up to the bar. Doe he think I’m here to wait on a fucking pleb like him?” (Welsh 2002, 119).

Simon clearly looks down on Leith and projects his resentment onto his old friends, who, in his eyes, stand for the old neighbourhood, one that continues to be ravished by crime and drugs. This serves as a kind of coping mechanism since he himself comes from Leith but refuses to associate himself with it. As Slater (2017) notes, those living in stigmatised neighbourhoods tend to avoid identifying with them and strive to somehow distinguish themselves from other inhabitants. Simon convinces himself that he is superior to the rest, specifically Begbie and Spud, and refuses to identify with his childhood neighbourhood. By overcompensating and degrading his friends, he tries to mask his own low self-esteem and insecurities. By denying Spud, he distances himself from his past and all the unpleasant memories.

Spud’s relationship with Leith is equally problematic, yet somewhat more nuanced and self-conscious. He reflects on the relationship between Edinburgh and Leith and his environmental past makes it difficult for him to identify in an unproblematic manner

with either of them. He feels that if one comes from Leith, one belongs to two towns: “So ah’m headin doonhill tae Leith, thinkin aboot how if ye come fae Leith, ye really belong tae two toons, Leith n Edinburgh, rather than just the one” (Welsh 2002, 396). It is significant that he is referred to not by his name or surname, but a nickname, which adds to his split self: as if in Leith he is Spud, but in Edinburgh he is Murphy. I believe it is not coincidental that he comes across a pub called *Scruffy Murphy* on the way to the library in central Edinburgh. He is trying to write a book on Leith and the sign triggers his insecurities of coming from a stigmatised area: “But when ah am oot, ah kin hear aw the voices in ma heid; aw laughin, sayin ah’m nothing, nowt, zilch n ah see that Scruffy Murphy’s sign and it hurts, man, it hurts that much that ah pure need tae git rid ay the pain” (Welsh 2002, 148). He projects his fears on the built environment, which he interprets as hostile towards him. He starts to question how scruffy Murphy will be able to complete his project and write a book.

He is acutely self-aware of his otherness. He has internalised the notorious reputation of his neighbourhood and it becomes a sub-structure of his identity. He has to constantly remind himself that he has done nothing illegal, when, for instance, the librarian simply asks how he could be of service. Since Spud is from Leith his Leith identity hinders him from smoothly communicating with others, especially those from central Edinburgh. It is not surprising, then, that out of the five narrators, Spud is the one who manifests most nationalist tendencies towards Leith in the light of globalisation and gentrification. As Slater (2017) points out, the ones living in the periphery tend to manifest pride towards their neighbourhoods as a counterbalance to stigmatisation from the outside. Spud calls the merger between Leith and Edinburgh in 1920 “the great betrayal”, the time when Leith lost its autonomy and power, when no one heeded the will of the citizens. He is, for instance, angry when he has to go to the library in central Edinburgh to get information on Leith’s history since there is no library in Leith.

In the light of the changes, Spud finds, or tries to find, his voice. As Hall writes, “the subjects of the local, of the margin, can only come into representation by [...] recovering their own hidden histories” (1997, 34–35). Spud becomes the chronicler of the old Leith, recording the neighbourhood’s history. As already mentioned, gentrification is fast approaching, hence Spud serves as the memory of the old city (the one where people like him will have no place). It is not surprising that Spud’s version of the local history is refused by the publishing houses, which they motivate with Spud’s poor language use. Spud’s fate becomes a powerful metaphor for the fate of the entire neighbourhood. His voice is ignored, as the voices of the inhabitants on the question of merger.

Begbie also finds it difficult to identify with the changing face of Leith. His life does not change in a decade and when he finally leaves prison he is back to his old devices; he gets involved in various robberies and murders a police officer. He cannot believe how drastically Leith has been changing and is shocked by the café that appears instead of an old shop: “Ah mean, it’s thaire, bit it’s aw fuckin changed. Intae some fuckin daft café” (Welsh 2002, 101). He cannot adapt to the new neighbourhood and instead is fixated on the past and Renton’s betrayal. He is possessed by his hatred, which eventually consumes

him. When he tries to attack Renton, he is hit by a car, and he ends up in hospital. The act could be seen as a metaphor, as the final assault on the gentrified Leith, represented by Renton, where there will be no space for Spud and Begbie. Interestingly, at the end of the novel, Begbie opens his eyes, and the reader is left to contemplate whether the old Leith is indeed lost.

4. Conclusions

Making use of multiperspectivity, Welsh has constructed a socially complex image of Leith in *Porno*. I have argued that three images become particularly prominent through the narratives of Nikki, Simon and Renton, and Begbie and Spud. Leith, as embodied by the heterotopic space of the Port Sunshine, is presented as highly ambivalent. On the one hand, it stands out as a place that has a distinctive character, very different from other highly homogenised neighbourhoods of Edinburgh and other urban centres of the UK. On the other hand, Leith emerges as a space of transgressions, where Nikki's moral inhibitions are suspended, and she engages in the kinds of sexual activities she would otherwise abstain from, such as penetrative sex for money. For Renton and Simon, Leith represents the shameful past they wish to distance themselves from, and the prospects of approaching gentrification offer them a different image of the neighbourhood they want to identify with, especially Simon who strives to come across as an honest businessman. For Begbie and Spud, the approaching gentrification evokes negative emotions since they feel that they are losing the neighbourhood of their youth. Seeking refuge in the past, Spud becomes the chronicler of the old Leith, the one who tries to record the history that will be misrepresented by the dominant publishing houses that reject his version of history.

Having been an independent port city, Leith, indeed, becomes a strong yet a problematic marker of self-identification. It is shown as a place that generates a fractured sense of self, for example, when Spud cannot identify with either Edinburgh or Leith. His split personality is also reflected in the fact that his real name is Daniel, but he is referred to as Spud. As a place, Leith also becomes a source of internalised stigmatisation when the notoriety of the neighbourhood becomes part of how one sees oneself and how one communicates with others, for example, when being in central Edinburgh makes Spud anxious, and he has to constantly remind himself that he has not done anything illegal, or how Simon overcompensates by humiliating and disassociating from his fellow Leithers. In this sense, then, place identity, especially the notoriety of the place, becomes a constitutive part of self-identification.

More generally, the notion of heterotopia becomes indispensable in making sense of the contemporary urban world, though, as a conceptual tool, it does become contradictory. On the one hand, the notion can be used to reflect on peripheral spaces in cities, spaces that can be exploited by such industries as porn. Capitalism, due to uneven geographical development, creates these peripheral spaces where it can later expand and develop less socially accepted industries. On the other hand, heterotopias can be construed in a more positive light and viewed as spaces of resistance where the homogenising effects of gen-

trification are negated, such as the Port Sunshine, which remains a “real” and authentic place in comparison to other urban hubs of the UK. Hence, heterotopic sites, can function as strong markers of self-identification.

References

- Archer, Kevin. 2013. *City: The Basics*. London: Routledge. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203084663>.
- Ashley, Katherine. 2010. Welsh in Translation. *The Edinburgh Companion to Irvine Welsh*. Berthold Schoene, ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 113–125.
- Augé, Marc. 1995. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. London: Verso.
- Barnes, Colin. 1997. *Disability in the Writing of Irvine Welsh. A Discussion Paper*. Paper presented at the Disability Studies Conference, Glasgow, Scotland. Available at: <https://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/library/Barnes-irvine-welsh.pdf>. Accessed: 6 September 2021.
- Dehaene, Michiel, Lieven De Cauter, eds. 2008. *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*. London: Routledge. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203089415>.
- Dixon, John, Kevin Durrheim. 2000. Displacing Place-identity: A Discursive Approach to Locating Self and Other. *British Journal of Social Psychology* 39, 27–44. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466600164318>.
- Foucault, Michel. 1986 [1967]. Of Other Spaces. *Diacritics* 16(1), 22–27. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/464648>.
- Freestone, Robert, Edgar Liu, eds. 2016. *Place and Placelessness Revisited*. New York: Routledge. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315676456>.
- Hall, Stuart. 1997. The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity. *Culture, Globalization and the World-System*. Anthony D. King, ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 18–39.
- Hames, Scott. 2013. On Vernacular Scottishness and its Limits: Devolution and the Spectacle of ‘Voice’. *Studies in Scottish Literature* 39(1), 201–222.
- Hudson, Ray. 2013. Thatcherism and its Geographical Legacies: The New Map of Socio-spatial Inequality in the Divided Kingdom. *The Geographical Journal* 179(4), 377–381. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/geoj.12052>.
- Jones, Nick. 2015. *Hollywood Action Films and Spatial Theory*. New York: Routledge. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01956051.2016.1242343>.
- Karicky, Jeffrey. 2003. Irvine Welsh’s Novel Subjectivities. *Social Text* 21(3), 135–153. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-21-3_76-135.
- Lefebvre, Henri. 1991 [1974]. *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- McIntyre, Dan. 2006. *Point of View in Plays. A Cognitive Stylistic Approach to Viewpoint in Drama and Other Text-types*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1075/lal.3>.
- Morace, Robert. 2007a. Irvine Welsh: Parochialism, Pornography and Globalisation. *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*. Berthold Schoene, ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 227–235.
- Morace, Robert. 2007b. *Irvine Welsh*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Proshansky, Harold H., Abbe K. Fabian & Robert Kaminoff. 2014 [1983]: Place-identity: Physical World Socialization of the Self. *The People, Place, and Space Reader*. Jen Jack Gieseking & Susana Saegert, eds. New York: Routledge, 77–81. Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-4944\(83\)80021-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-4944(83)80021-8).
- Relph, Edward. 1976. *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion Limited.
- Relph, Edward. 2016: The Paradox of Place and the Evolution of Placelessness. *Place and Placelessness Revisited*. Robert Freestone & Edgar Liu, eds. New York: Routledge, 20–34. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315676456>.
- Samalavičius, Almantas. 2008. *Miesto kultūra*. Vilnius: Technika.

- Schoene, Berthold, ed. 2010. *The Edinburgh Companion to Irvine Welsh*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Sebba, Mark. 2019. Named into Being? Language Questions and the Politics of Scots in the 2011 Census in Scotland. *Language Policy* 18, 339–362. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-018-9488-0>.
- Slater, Tom. 2017. Territorial Stigmatization: Symbolic Defamation and the Contemporary Metropolis. *The SAGE Handbook of New Urban Studies*. John Hannigan & Greg Richards, eds. London: SAGE Publications, 111–125. Available at: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412912655.n8>.
- Soja, Edward. 1989. *Postmodern Geographies. The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. New York: Verso.
- Soja, Edward W. 1996. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Warf, Barney, Santa Arias, eds. 2009. *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Abingdon: Routledge. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203891308>.
- Welsh, Irvine. 2002. *Porno*. London: Jonathan Cape.