

# The relationship between football and literature in the novels of Irvine Welsh

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## **The Relationship Between Football and Literature in the Novels of Irvine Welsh**

This article examines the relationship between football and literature in the novels of Irvine Welsh, taking a cultural materialist approach in treating all cultural production as equally significant in the construction of societies. Irvine Welsh's novels are chosen to demonstrate the value of this approach as they discuss football extensively. Within Welsh's work, the Edinburgh club Hibernian are depicted positively as having intelligent, independently minded fans. They reject Unionism as a political and cultural ideal, following Welsh's own personal views. Fans of Hibernian's rivals, Heart of Midlothian (Hearts) and Rangers are continually derided as Unionist, racist and sectarian. Welsh depicts socialisation in the values associated with football clubs as a key element in the development of Scottish males. The values he ascribes to clubs are exaggerated but due to the popular success of Welsh's work, they can have a strong impact on how individuals perceive Hibernian, Hearts, and Rangers.

### **Keywords**

Football; Literature; Irvine Welsh; Scotland; Cultural Materialism; Hibernian; Heart of Midlothian; Rangers

### **Introduction**

This article will demonstrate the value of examining cultural forms in terms of their relationship to each other, rather than as separate entities. The distinction made by some theorists between "high" and "low" forms of culture is unhelpful to anyone attempting to analyse cultural production. In order to demonstrate the value of examining the relationships between cultural forms, the work of the novelist Irvine Welsh will be analysed. Welsh's novels, from 1994's best-selling *Trainspotting* to the 2015 novel *A Decent Ride*, all feature football as a vital element in the lives and socialisation of the characters. In attempting to demonstrate that discussing relationships between different forms of culture can be an essential part of analysing them, it makes sense to select forms where there is a clear and strong relationship. This is the case with the work of Irvine Welsh.

This article repudiates the idea that some processes are less significant than others, a notion that has formed the basis of theoretical traditions which favour the study of "high" culture over the serious study of popular culture. Cultural production is the result of interactions

between different forms and this is a fluid and dynamic process. It is of course extremely difficult within the limited scope of a journal article to examine all the processes that are important within the production of culture, but in examining the relationship between two processes in detail, this article aims to demonstrate that considering processes in terms of their relationship and interactions is an approach with methodological value.

## **Methodology**

“Culture” is a term that can be used to refer to the ‘signifying system’ which is ‘essentially involved in all forms of social activity’ and is the means through which ‘a social order is communicated, experienced, reproduced, and explored’.<sup>i</sup> Culture encompasses both ‘the shaping of societies and the shaping of human minds’; the latter is a process that informs the former (Williams, 1979, p.17). Both these processes will be examined in this article, within which the influence of Raymond Williams is significant. Williams (1979, 1981) argues that the identity of any society is the result of all social processes, rather than just those that directly relate to political, legal, or economic processes. All social processes are important and cultural forms should not be treated as abstract concepts.

Further to this, Williams states that ‘we produce ourselves and our societies’.<sup>ii</sup> Imagination and thought are described as social processes leading to the production of culture, which is crucial for this article. Imagination is linked to social conditions, but equally, social conditions are linked to the way in which we imagine our society. As Williams (1979) argues, all processes play a role in the construction of culture. To abstract processes out and analyse them in isolation can lead to a skewed or flawed analysis. As all social processes are involved in the construction of societies, then it is not useful to ascribe a greater or lesser importance to certain processes.

Football is a popular form of culture, and such forms are still too often considered to be “low” culture, unworthy of serious analysis. This is due to the invidious influence of, amongst others, the literary critic F.R. Leavis who argued that it is possible to place a value upon culture depending on the form that it takes (Edensor, 2002). Classical music, fine art, and “canonical” literature are all considered (by those who accept the term) to be “high” culture. Canonical literature is that which is deemed to be concerned with questions of “universal” morality; ideas about what is “universal” are of course based upon value judgements.

The movement with which F.R. Leavis is associated, liberal humanism, has fallen out of favour, but the argument that “high” culture exists and is particularly worthy of analysis remains influential. Such arguments tend to have a basis in issues of class; “high” culture tends to be produced by those of a middle or upper class background. In contrast to “high” culture, “low” forms of popular culture are, as Edensor (2002) discusses, those of “the masses”. F.R. Leavis argued that “mass” culture was inherently harmful to those who produce it and receive it, and that as such, it was worthy of study only in order to ascertain the level of harm it was doing to society in general.

The bias towards those processes most commonly engaged in by members of social elites, and against those of the “masses”, has tended to provide a false picture of societies within academic publications. Despite this problem, the ideas of F.R. Leavis still influence many academic publications that examine literature, which remain strongly influenced by the notion that it is a “high” form of culture. The number of publications dedicated to relatively obscure prose, poetry and plays in terms of their perceived literary merit is vast in comparison to those that examine literature’s significance as a cultural form, or indeed in comparison to those that study popular literature (popular in the sense that it has been bought and read by a large number of people).

Two recent academic conferences, “Literature and Physical Culture” (2014) and “Football and Culture 2014” were dedicated to these relationships. The 2015 event “Scottish Sport and the Arts” also contained papers on football and literature, and there seems to be scope for wider discussion and publication from the papers presented. Relatively few academic publications have been produced specifically examining the relationship between football and literature. Other sports such as cricket, American football, and baseball have been examined in greater detail. The high volume of work discussing the latter two sports can be explained by the fact that the majority of publications that examine the relationship between sport and literature have been produced by North American scholars, and explicitly discuss North American contexts. Early contributions to the field include Messenger’s (1981) *Sport and the Spirit of Play in American Fiction: Hawthorne to Faulkner* and Oriard’s (1982) *Dreaming of Heroes* which both examine the importance of sporting heroes to American culture, arguing that archetypes developed through sport influence ideas about American identity.

Messenger (1981) utilises the fiction of some of the best-known American writers in his work, including F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway. Oriard (1982) primarily

examines American sports including baseball, basketball, and American football, arguing that sport represents ‘the best and worst in American culture, because it is at the centre of American experience’.<sup>iii</sup> Both texts are arguably influenced by earlier work carried out by Umphlett (1975) whose *The Sporting Myth and the American Experience: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* was a landmark in what is now a fairly well established field of investigation within North America. The United States-based “Sport Literature Association” produces a journal, *Aethlon*. The index to this journal reveals that the vast majority of material published relates to American sports; by way of example, 586 of the 1731 critical essays and works of fiction published by the journal relate to baseball, 187 to American football, and 174 discuss basketball. Just 38 examine football (soccer).<sup>iv</sup>

Non-American investigations of the relationship between sport and literature are becoming more common, with significant contributions including Hill and Williams’ (2009) co-edited special edition of *Sport in History* containing articles on cricket poetry (Westall), surfing (Martin) and cycling (Griffin) amongst others. Of these articles, only two (Bairner’s work on Robin Jenkins’ *The Thistle and the Grail* and Dart’s work on football travelogues) explicitly examine football.<sup>v</sup> Tadie, Mangan and Chaudhuri’s (2014) *Sport, Literature, Society: Cultural Historical Studies* is another significant landmark in the examination of literature about sport as useful source material for the analysis of history. Tadie examines literature about football, but his is the only contribution in the text to examine the world’s most popular sport.<sup>vi</sup> Additionally, Long et al’s 2013 publication *Fields of Vision: The Arts in Sport* is another significant publication in what is a growing field of investigation in Europe.

The two cultural forms examined in this article are football and literature, but many other forms could have also been examined – football has a symbiotic relationship with painting, graphic art and film to name but three areas that one of the most influential cultural sociologists of recent times, John Hughson, has examined.<sup>vii</sup> Additionally, the relationship between football and sculpture has been examined by Stride et al and the artistic representation of football on postage stamps discussed by Adedze.<sup>viii</sup> Despite the production of the above-named texts and the useful insights they contain into the relationships between football and cultural production, in his recently produced taxonomy of football fiction McGowan (2015) argues not unreasonably that although fiction ‘provides opportunities for readers to digest and reflect on [football’s] meaning [...] it has largely been invisible’ in scholarship that specifically examines football.<sup>ix</sup> Of the above-named publications, the only one to be discussed or referenced positively is Bairner’s work on *The Thistle and the Grail*.,

McGowan only cites Oriard in order to reject the latter's contention that 'sport should be indispensable in the sport's fiction's overall effectiveness' as being 'too broad for purpose'.<sup>x</sup>

Other early influences on the analysis of the relationship between sport and literature are not discussed at all in McGowan's work, and examinations of other sports influence what has to be considered the most significant recent intervention in the analysis of the relationship between football and literature to a rather limited extent. Despite this, McGowan's taxonomy includes work that is not solely about football but which includes it as a 'substantive element', an approach that allows for analysis of the cultural and social importance of football outside a directly sporting context, and is thus extremely useful for any attempt to examine the sport from a socio-cultural perspective.<sup>xi</sup> Welsh's work is not solely about football, but the sport is significant within many of his novels.

Bairner notes the tendency for articles on sport literature to emanate from scholars of history. It can be argued that barring McGowan's taxonomy of football literature, all the work discussed above utilises fiction as material of significance to an appreciation of cultural history, and as Bairner notes, 'what works for sports history may not work for sociology'.<sup>xii</sup> Noting that fiction 'can be interpreted sociologically', Bairner sets out in his (2015) article "Sport, Fiction and Sociology: Novels as Data Sources" to set out ways that novels can be examined in terms of 'the sociological insights that the works themselves can offer', a somewhat different enterprise to that most regularly attempted when the relationship between sport and literature is discussed, a process that Hill describes as 'study[ing] literary texts as historical evidence'.<sup>xiii xiv</sup>

This enterprise is still, as Bairner notes, a developing field as currently the 'sociology of literature has relatively little traction'.<sup>xv</sup> This is in part because sociologists have tended to consider "real" situations rather than imagined representations of them, despite Anderson's well-established contention that communities and societies are in themselves "imagined".<sup>xvi</sup> In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson describes the nation as a 'cultural artefact' which is produced and developed by all its citizens.<sup>xvii</sup> Works of literature contribute to the way in which societies are imagined and produced. Statements about the nation that are made within novels enter the public consciousness and can shape and alter the way in nations are perceived, as this article will demonstrate. The nature of the "imagined community" described in fiction is often a cultural and political statement about the community discussed; this is certainly the case in Welsh's work. As Hearn states, 'national identity [...] has a

tendency to be imagined in narrative forms' and the story that is told about Scotland in Welsh's fiction is that while Unionism as a political and cultural ideal has a detrimental effect upon the nation as a whole, more palatable alternatives are available.<sup>xviii</sup>

This article is part of a developing field which Bairner discusses, as it is influenced most strongly by the aim to discover material that is of sociological value in terms of examining its representations of nationally defined identities. It also aims to set out ways that the application of sociological and cultural theory, specifically the cultural materialism of Raymond Williams, can aid analysis of literature. This article hopes to add something to existing knowledge in examining one iteration of the relationship between football and literature, although there are myriad other possible studies that could be carried out.

In order to examine the relationship between football and literature, a cultural materialist perspective will be taken, influenced by the work of Williams and Edensor's (2002) argument that in studies of contemporary societies, the separation of cultural production into "high" and "mass" categories has hindered attempts to examine the social processes involved.<sup>xix</sup>

Williams acknowledges the power of culture to transform societies; indeed, he argues that 'the most interesting and difficult part of any cultural analysis' is to uncover the processes set involved in the production of culture.<sup>xx</sup> The essence of this article is to carry out this kind of analysis.

Williams' cultural materialist theories offer a useful schema for understanding the relationship between cultural processes. There is a fundamental difference between the cultural materialism of Williams and traditional Marxist cultural theory which is, as Williams (1979) discusses beholden to the idea that social conditions are produced by the economic "base".<sup>xxi</sup> Everything that is not directly related to capital belongs in the "superstructure"; this is the realm of culture, ideas, beliefs and customs. These are seen as having no direct effect upon the material conditions which determine the nature of any society, and are treated as secondary. Cultural materialists argue that this approach is the result of a misunderstanding of the work of Marx and Engels.

One of the fundamental elements of cultural materialist theory is that "base" and "superstructure" are inextricably linked and should not be separated out from each other. Further to this, all social processes should be seen as material, according to Williams (1979), rather than just those that relate to the production of capital.<sup>xxii</sup> This means studying culture as a significant factor in the construction of society and socialisation of individuals, rather than

abstracting cultural production out from these processes. This approach is central to the methodological approach taken, which discusses the two main cultural elements examined as being of equal merit and significance.

### **Why Irvine Welsh?**

Welsh's work is very useful in demonstrating that the dichotomy between "high" and "low" culture is a false one. His novels discuss football as a significant factor in the construction of society. They also utilise ideas and viewpoints that are most frequently expressed within football contexts in Scotland, and introduce them to literature. Welsh's novels engage with popular culture and do not pay any heed to arguments about "high" and "low" culture. Perhaps not coincidentally, novels such as *Trainspotting* (1994) and *Filth* (1998) have attracted strong popular interest, sold hundreds of thousands of copies, and been converted into commercially successful films. They have also been the subject of sustained academic analysis, with Kelly (2005), Morace (2007) and a collection edited by Schoene (2010) all examining Welsh's work. As Paget (1999) argues, *Trainspotting*, in both novel and film format, is one of the most significant cultural products of the twentieth century in terms of impact and influence. Welsh, therefore, has gained prominence not just in literature and in academia, but in wider culture as well.

It is very difficult to determine the extent to which a work of literature has an effect upon the reading public, but in the case of novels that have become politically and culturally significant, this task becomes easier. Once novels and authors attain a level of cultural visibility and significance outside the field of literary studies, it is fair to say that the ideas they discuss have reached a wide enough audience to have had an effect upon the wider culture in which they were produced. New ideas can enter the public domain when they are written and discussed by what Habermas (1989) termed "public intellectuals"; within this article, Welsh's work is examined in the light of this argument.

Novelists can attempt to mediate the way that culture is understood through their writing, and Welsh certainly does this. However, there are very few references to literary works within Welsh's fiction; his characters are not influenced by literature, but by popular culture. Films and popular music are both significant to their identity, but they do not come with the same kind of group identity that football provides. Despite working as a novelist, within his work Welsh actually privileges football as a form of culture which is more significant to the lives of his characters than literature is. This matches the hierarchy of cultural influence not just in



Scotland, but across Europe. In discussing popular culture as an equally significant cultural form to literature Welsh is not alone among his contemporaries; good examples of this include the work of Hanif Kureishi whose 1996 novel *The Black Album* heavily references forms of culture that develop through popular music fandom. This text itself references the work of another author whose fiction incorporates elements of film and popular literature, Salman Rushdie.

Another author whose work focuses strongly on popular culture is Welsh's contemporary Nick Hornby. McGowan (2015) argues that *Fever Pitch* (1992) is 'often credited with making football fashionable', and points to the work of Redhead on "the soccerati" as his evidence.<sup>xxiii</sup> As McGowan discusses, Redhead describes *Fever Pitch* as part a 'burgeoning movement of football writing which was essentially seen, self-consciously, as a new bourgeois genre in literature'.<sup>xxiv</sup> The contention that Hornby's work is bourgeois in its themes and style is significant because, fairly or unfairly, *Fever Pitch* has become associated with growing middle class interest in football in England. *Fever Pitch* does not tackle the same social issues as Welsh's work and is often more of an investigation of existential angst than an examination of the wider society it is based within. Hill (2008) notes Hornby's unwillingness to 'stand outside his subject', and arguably the author focuses more on the rituals of fandom themselves than on what the rituals reveal about the society they are the product of.<sup>xxv</sup>

Such is Hornby's level of focus on his own feelings that while Hill argues that *Fever Pitch* is 'the classic bourgeois novel', McGowan (2015) sees it as a biographical work.<sup>xxvi</sup> If McGowan's view is considered correct, comparing Welsh's novels with Hornby's *Fever Pitch* becomes less instructive as while Welsh is never far from the surface of his most sympathetic characters, his work is never openly biographical. The disagreement critics have regarding the exact classification of Hornby's work is also an issue when attempting to classify Welsh's novels, however. McGowan (2015) discusses Welsh as both a writer of "hooligan fiction" and a producer of "literary football fiction".<sup>xxvii</sup> This difficulty in terms of classification is common for work that can be considered postmodern in terms of style and structure. Multiplicity of perspectives is a common feature of postmodern fiction and Welsh frequently uses multiple narrators in *Trainspotting*, *Glue*, and *Porno*, all of which concern football as a central element of the characters' experience of Scottish society.

Welsh's use of multiple narrators and non-standard English in *Trainspotting*, *Filth*, *Glue* and *Porno* is arguably postmodern in formal terms, but his work can also be effectively examined through the lens of other theoretical approaches.<sup>xxviii</sup> As Hughson discusses, postmodernism is itself a 'contested term' and there is 'no decisive line either historically, intellectually or aesthetically' where postmodernism can be said to begin (or end).<sup>xxix</sup> Strategies used by postmodernist theorists, critics and writers often echo those found in earlier work, despite claims to the contrary which Hughson discusses in "The Postmodernist Always Rings Twice".<sup>xxx</sup> Certainly the examination of culture's significance within society is as much a cultural materialist concern as it is a postmodernist one.

Welsh's work examines culture as a central element of socialisation and according to Hutcheon (1989) this is a common feature of postmodern fiction:

'the postmodern's initial concern is to de-naturalise some of the dominant features of our way of life; to point out that those entities that we unthinkingly experience as 'natural' (they might even include capitalism, patriarchy, liberal humanism) are in fact 'cultural'; made by us, not given to us'.<sup>xxxi</sup>

*Trainspotting* in particular has been examined using theory that could be considered postmodernist. A good example can be found in the work of MacLeod, which uses theory developed by Bauman to argue that in the novel, 'Renton's contempt for Scotland is symptomatic of a postmodern uneasiness with [...] the "grand certitude" of the nation state'.<sup>xxxii</sup> This reading is somewhat typical of the postmodern concern with arguing against what are often termed "grand narratives" or "metanarratives", and as Hutcheon (1989) argues, one of the features of postmodern cultural productions is that they stand firmly against the reproduction of cultural and political formations through which societies are traditionally ordered, such as religion and national identity.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Famously in *Trainspotting* Mark Renton describes the Scots as 'the lowest of the fuckin low, the scum of the earth [and] the most wretched, servile, miserable, pathetic trash that was ever shat into creation', and *Trainspotting* is some way from being a work of Scottish nationalist fiction.<sup>xxxiv</sup> However, the novel, along with other Welsh productions such as *Filth* (1998) and *Porno* (2000) does continually attack one form of political and cultural identity, Unionism. While Welsh is undoubtedly influenced by recognisably postmodern narrative strategies, there is also a level of political commitment in his work which relates directly to ideas about the nation as a political and cultural construct. Arguably through his fiction Welsh promotes a

metanarrative himself, albeit a metanarrative that is most strongly influenced by negative ideas about Unionism.

As this article primarily engages with Welsh's political commitment it is arguably closer in spirit to the cultural materialism of Williams than the work of Foucault or Baudrillard. My own acceptance of the validity of "metanarratives" places my work some way from elements of postmodernist theory (particularly that most heavily influenced by poststructuralism), as I agree with the view of Simon During that 'the nation-state is, for better or worse, the political institution that has most efficacy and legitimacy in the world as it is' and therefore 'to reject nationalism absolutely is to accede to a way of thought by which intellectuals cut themselves off from effective political action'.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Hutcheon's work undeniably helps to break down distinctions between "high" and "low" forms of culture in a similar way to the work of Williams and other cultural materialists. However, the opposition to "metanarratives" in the work of some (although of course not all) theorists of the postmodern is at odds with the political commitment of cultural materialists, and also my own particular concern with the expression and development of nationalistic ideas through culture.<sup>xxxvi</sup> The aim here is certainly not to argue that those who utilise postmodernist theories are wrong about Welsh's work, but to demonstrate that despite novels like *Trainspotting* being produced in an era during which postmodernist theory was arguably at its zenith, the application of theoretical approaches developed at an earlier stage in history can offer equally useful insights into the expression of identities, particularly nationally defined identities.

Cultural materialist approaches can certainly reveal the significance of culture to social and political identities and the aim of this article is primarily to utilise an available critical and theoretical strategy to reveal the extent to which the rituals of fandom contribute to ideas about the wider society they are produced in. Welsh's characters, perhaps most notably Mark and Billy Renton, learn many of their cultural ideals through socialisation at football matches. Fiction, in this sense, can help to reveal the processes through which ideas sometimes described as "natural", such as national identity, are in fact learned through culture.

The discussion of football as a social process for the expression and construction of identity is an important trope within Welsh's work, and the author often uses examples from football to examine social issues in Scotland. Football is an ever-present element within Irvine Welsh's novels. Watching football, either at the stadium or in a pub, is a pastime enjoyed by

protagonists in all his work, from 1994's *Trainspotting* to the 2015 novel *A Decent Ride*. Playing the game itself is often a little beyond Welsh's characters, especially when they are battling various addictions, but watching the sport is an essential part of their lives to the extent that in *Trainspotting* (1994), Mark Renton speculates that he may have actually lapsed into drug abuse as a way of blocking out Hibernian's 'poor performances throughout the 1980s'.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The sport is central to many of the experiences that the characters have, and plays an important role in their socialisation as young Scottish males.

Football's role in Scottish society is frequently discussed in Welsh's novels and rather than discussing football in an abstract way, or using a game as a metaphor for the experiences that his characters have, Welsh describes the ways in which football is significant to the socialisation processes that his characters undergo. It is this element of Welsh's writing that this article primarily focuses on. Welsh tends to write about the meaning of football to his characters, rather than describing actual matches in detail, an approach taken by his contemporary James Kelman in *A Disaffection* in order to provide a sporting reflection of the cluttered mind of the main protagonist Patrick Doyle. His novels discuss the rituals of football fandom in Scotland, with particular reference to those which involve conflict and rivalry between clubs.

Rivalries between Celtic and Rangers, and in particular the Edinburgh clubs Heart of Midlothian (Hearts) and Hibernian are discussed in terms of the socio-cultural factors that drive them. Welsh's characters are ascribed very specific reasons for supporting their clubs, and it is off-field factors that are significant, rather than on-field success. In Welsh's work, football is used as a mechanism through which wider social relations can be examined, and the sport is depicted as playing a significant role in the development and maintenance of community identities in Scotland.

Rather than solely through mainstream politics, it is also 'at major sporting events that modern men proclaim their loyalties' in Scotland; these loyalties remain sharply defined and often aggressively defended, and this causes fissure between Scotland's various cultural groups.<sup>xxxviii</sup> The cultural divergence between hardline unionists and other Scots is prominently displayed at football matches, and demonstrates the existence of separate national identities in Scotland. Likewise, the expression of Irish, as opposed to Scottish identities appears to challenge the Scottish nationalist ideal of Scotland as a culturally united nation. The cultural nationalism expressed through football in Scotland often appears to be

directed in not one, but three ways – to Scotland, to a particular vision of the United Kingdom, and to Ireland. However, as will be discussed below, there is more sympathy and congruence between Scottish and Irish identities in Welsh's work than there is between Scottishness and Unionism.

The rivalry between Rangers and Celtic, and to a lesser extent the one between Heart of Midlothian and Hibernian was once simply based on supporters, officials, and players belonging to different denominations of the Christian church. In the contemporary era, the cultural affiliations associated with these denominations have come to the fore. It is generally accepted that identities in Scotland and Ireland are becoming increasingly secularised, and religious affiliations are often understood to be a strong marker of national identity, rather than providing their own separate context.<sup>xxxix</sup> While religious identities are still important to many people in Scotland, it is fair to argue that conflict which was once primarily religious is now based on the existence of different national identities. Religious observance is no longer the sole marker for membership in a certain community, and although it does have some significance, religious belief is now less central to many people's identity than nationalism is.<sup>xl</sup> This influences Welsh's work directly, particularly as the author places most of his characters firmly on one side of a cultural divide within which national identities play a central role.

While Scottish nationalism is seldom openly praised or promoted in Welsh's work, its alternative in Scotland is continually denigrated. Unionism is continually described in negative terms and as will be discussed below, Welsh can be seen as using his fiction to attack the very idea of the Union. He also uses his work to develop an idealised community within which Irish identity is, if not dominant, then at least viewed with sympathy. This reveals antipathy to the Union not just in terms of its effects on Scotland but also its effects on the island of Ireland. Many of Welsh's characters hold what can be considered a pluralistic identity in that they are both Irish and Scottish. However, the identity that they hold is also exclusive in its opposition to Unionism.

Welsh is well known to be a football fan; like the majority of his characters, he supports the Edinburgh club Hibernian. Lewis MacLeod notes that 'every sympathetic character in [Welsh's novels] is a Hibernian supporter', but stops short of fully analysing why this might be the case, declaring that he has 'no particular desire to defend football violence or to establish one side of an athletic/sectarian divide as morally superior to the other' (98).<sup>xli</sup>

Welsh himself appears to have this desire, and to ignore this means missing one of the most significant and consistently used tropes in novels such as *Trainspotting* (1994), *Filth* (1998) and *Porno* (2003). It also means missing one of the main ways in which Welsh's imagined Scotland is developed, and without understanding the way the author utilises the identities that are associated with Scottish football clubs, it is very difficult to fully comprehend the world that Welsh's characters occupy.

MacLeod's refusal to fully engage with the football references (even with the moral caveats he provides) in Welsh's work is indicative of the problems brought about by traditional literary analysis of novels like *Trainspotting*. Dismissing football or failing to analyse its importance to Welsh's work leads to ineffective discussion and reinforces unhelpful critical boundaries. Viewing all cultural processes as being equally important, as Raymond Williams suggests, is useful in the study both of football and of literature. This is the case because relationships between processes can be analysed effectively, adding new layers to knowledge and extending the value of research. This article will now proceed to demonstrate how analysing the importance of football adds to understanding of Welsh's work, and also how reading literary texts can impact on an individual's understanding of football. This will begin with an analysis of the way that Welsh discusses Hibernian.

### **Welsh's Hibernian and "Irishness"**

Welsh develops an 'imagined community' around Hibernian, in which the club's fans are ascribed a particular set of values.<sup>xlii</sup> Welsh utilises the existing identity of Hibernian and develops it around a set of prejudices and preferences, and in the process creates a particular type of identity which is present in all his novels. Characters developed within this identity commonly have sympathies to Irish nationalism, and are also both socialist and egalitarian in outlook. Rituals and ideals that are presented as being common to Hibernian supporters play a central role in defining the identities of some of Welsh's best known protagonists, including *Trainspotting* and *Porno*'s Mark Renton, Francis Begbie, and "Sick Boy" (Simon Williamson).

It is not just in *Trainspotting* that Welsh's most sympathetic protagonists are Hibernian supporters, but in seven of his nine novels (the exceptions are *Crime* (2008) and *The Sex Lives of Siamese Twins* (2014)). The values associated with support for Hibernian are generally positive; Hibernian fans such as Mark Renton are portrayed as independent and intelligent thinkers, if not necessarily respectful of conventional morality. Hibernian are

portrayed as a club whose fanbase is commonly working class, socialist, and pro-independence (in many different senses). Socialisation in the rituals of support for Hibernian is depicted positively by Welsh. It is worthwhile to note that the number of people who read Welsh's novels is far higher than those who regularly attend Hibernian matches, and for many people, the depiction of the club in his work is the only one that they have knowledge of. The relationship between literature and football is uneven in this case, but not necessarily to Hibernian's detriment.

Hibernian was originally founded in 1875 as a club for Irish Catholic migrants to Edinburgh, and Welsh's early novels are especially concerned with stressing the importance of Hibernian's Irish identity to the ideals and beliefs of his characters. Irish rebel songs appear in *Trainspotting* on several occasions; Mark Renton, Begbie, Tommy, and a number of their friends sing them on New Year's Eve, including the pro-Irish Republican Army (IRA) song "The Boys of the Old Brigade". The Hibernian supporters also perform an old song that celebrates the life of the Irish freedom fighter James Connolly, who is described as 'a fuckin great rebel, a fuckin great socialist and a fuckin great Hibby' by one of the characters (Connolly was born in Edinburgh and is known to have supported Hibernian FC).<sup>xliii</sup>

It is clear that these three qualities are those that many of Welsh's characters aspire to, and that the three are also seen as strongly interlinked. In all of Welsh's novels, to be a Hibernian supporter is also to be a supporter of socialist ideals, and to be in favour of the reunification of Ireland. None of the main protagonists were actually born in Ireland, but Mark Renton and Daniel "Spud" Murphy were both born into Irish families who migrated to Scotland. Spud's nickname is one that has been regularly given to people of Irish descent in the United Kingdom, and is often considered to be offensive, albeit in a relatively mild way. He is more obviously of Irish descent than Renton, whose name contains no clear markers of Irish heritage.

This is the case because Renton's mother is a Scot of Irish Catholic descent, but his father is a Protestant from Glasgow. His support for Hibernian is indicative of his identification with the Irish side of his family. It is never made explicitly clear whether Renton supports Hibernian as an expression of his sympathies with "Irishness", or whether he develops these sympathies because he is a Hibernian supporter who becomes socialised in the rituals associated with support for the club. What is clear is that Welsh depicts a strong link between football and culture, and the rituals and traditions associated with the sport play a key role in the

development of his characters. Within *Trainspotting*, football is central to the identity of the main protagonists.

Even those who do not really have any direct affiliation with Ireland itself sing the rebel songs. The half-Italian Sick Boy sings as loudly as everyone else, and it is suggested in *Trainspotting* that as he is a Hibernian supporter, he supports the cause of Irish reunification. In Welsh's novels, the football team that characters support plays a key role in deciding their political affiliation, rather than political affiliation deciding the team that is supported. The characters are all too young when they adopt Hibernian to have done so for political reasons, but they all become socialised into a particular set of social, cultural and political values. Welsh presents football support as a cultural affiliation in itself, and one which plays a key role in defining an individual's cultural and political ideals.

At a young age, Renton chooses to support Hibernian along with his friends, and he is sympathetic to certain ideals which are presented as being common to Irish Catholics in Scotland. These ideals include opposition to the continued British presence in Ireland, and a broadly left-wing approach to concepts such as social justice. Renton is also depicted as strongly anti-Protestant, despite the fact his father is from a Protestant family. He says that he would 'rather huv an ayesur (a slang term for a Catholic) than a soapdodger (a Glaswegian Protestant)' on his side if given the choice, and goes out of his way to antagonise his Protestant relatives whenever he sees them.<sup>xliv</sup>

Catholicism and Irishness have become intertwined to the extent that they are often understood as two integral parts of the same group identity. This is the case not just for Hibernian but for Celtic, the more famous Glasgow club that was also founded for the benefit of Irish migrants, and which has become the most visible symbol of Irish identity in Scotland. At Celtic Park, Irish songs are sung, and the most common flag on display is the Irish tricolour. It is true to say that in Scotland:

'For many Catholics of Irish extraction, football provides an environment in which to make known otherwise repressed or unarticulated political attitudes, cultural affinities, national allegiances and prejudices. The prestige afforded by victories in the football arena cannot be underestimated in terms of their value for many in that community'.<sup>xlv</sup>



Welsh's discussion of football should be understood in this light. Football is a mechanism that allows the author to discuss identity within a context that is nuanced, but easily understood by a Scottish audience used to the expression of identity through football. The discussion of football allows Welsh to make points in a relatively simple way, using a form of cultural shorthand in which certain affiliations will be presumed and understood.

Despite their sympathies for Irish nationalism, none of Welsh's characters claim that their primary identity is Irish rather than Scottish, and perhaps the strongest expression of their Irish heritage is that many are against unionism in Northern Ireland as well as in Scotland. Following the work of Hussain and Miller (2006) it is possible to suggest that Welsh's novels portray the prevailing trend in Scotland because most people from the "Catholic" community now regard their national identity as their primary identity, with their religious identity being of secondary importance.<sup>xlvi</sup> That primary national identity is, according to Hussain and Miller (2006), Scottish, and those with an Irish family background have 'mutated' any Irish sympathies into a Scottish nationalism which is now more accepting of those with a Catholic background.<sup>xlvii</sup>

Within Welsh's fiction, Irish nationalism is portrayed as a model for Scottish nationalism rather than a competitor to it. Mark Renton admires the people of the Republic of Ireland and feels an affinity with them. He states:

'some say that the Irish are the trash ay Europe. That's shite. It's the Scots. The Irish hud the bottle tae win their country back, or at least maist ay it'.<sup>xlviii</sup>

MacLeod suggests that for Renton 'Irishness offers the "oppositional notion of identity" Scottishness cannot', but the position is more complex than this and for Mark Renton, ideas about Ireland and Scotland merge together into a more pluralistic than oppositional form of identity.<sup>xlix</sup>

Kidd (2008) argues that for much of the nation's recent history 'unionism [has been] inescapably linked to Protestant sectarianism' and anti-Catholic prejudice in Scotland.<sup>1</sup> Unionism is the true "other" for many Scots of Irish descent, and Hussain and Miller (2006) argue that one of the qualities that is transferable between Irish and Scottish nationalism is a dislike for the United Kingdom as a political state.<sup>li</sup> In terms of binary opposites, Welsh's work can be considered nationalistic in that it portrays the Union and Unionism negatively. However, the identities of many of his protagonists are influenced by both Irish and Scottish identities, and can therefore be considered pluralistic to an extent. The identity that Welsh

most commonly writes positively about is certainly not exclusively Irish or exclusively Scottish, and this is increasingly reflective of modern ideas about identity amongst those of Irish descent in Scotland.

### **Welsh's representations of Unionism**

Irvine Welsh is in favour of Scottish independence, and has written a number of articles discussing his support for an independent Scotland and distaste for the Union with England.<sup>lii</sup> The depictions of Unionists in Welsh's novels are usually very negative and he often portrays Hearts and Rangers fans as bigoted and racist. Welsh characterises Hearts as a "Unionist" club to a similar degree as Rangers, despite Hearts being much less associated with Unionism than Rangers are. Supporters of Rangers tend to utilise Unionist iconography, waving Union flags and singing songs such as "Rule Britannia". This is in contrast not just to the largely Irish display at Celtic Park, but also to the norm at most other stadiums in Scotland, where Scottish flags and iconography are the order of the day, and pro-Union symbols are conspicuous by their absence.

Welsh's characters tend to discuss Hearts and Rangers as being culturally very similar; they perceive supporters of both clubs to be pro-Union, and therefore they see both clubs as a thing to despise. Hearts and Rangers both traditionally draw their support from the Protestant communities in their respective cities, although the extent to which Hearts are truly a Protestant-affiliated club in the contemporary era is debatable. As is the case with Hibernian, the sales figures for Welsh's novels are way in excess of the numbers of Hearts supporters. The depiction of Hearts in Welsh's work arguably has more influence on the way the club is perceived than the actual behaviour of fans does, because far more people read Welsh's novels (particularly *Trainspotting*) than attend matches that Hearts play.

Literature can be used to portray a community in a particular way which many fans would not recognise as being accurate, and this is very clear from Welsh's depiction of Hearts. The relationship between literature and football in this sense is uneven, in that Hearts fans have little right of reply to the way they are depicted in Welsh's work. Welsh's best-known character, Mark Renton, calls Hearts and Rangers supporters 'Nazi scum', and this is a relatively common insult in Welsh's work.<sup>liii</sup> The author depicts supporters of both clubs as having fascist tendencies and despite there being few documented incidents of outright

fascism at either club, the sectarian elements within hardline Unionism are continually stressed within Welsh's novels, and compared to Nazism.

With this in mind, Mark's brother Billy Renton is a particularly interesting character. Billy supports Hearts, and while Mark is pro-Irish and anti-Protestant, Billy has strongly pro-Union and anti-Catholic opinions. It is suggested that this divergence between the Renton brothers is, in large part, a result of their socialisation in the traditions of different football clubs. Billy's Unionism is described in exceedingly negative terms, and it is particularly instructive that he is depicted as having learned how to think and behave not so much in the parental home but at Tynecastle, the home stadium of Hearts. The fact that their parents have married across the religious and cultural divide has little bearing on the attitudes of the Renton brothers, who pick opposite sides in everything they do.

Billy Renton is involved with the Protestant Orange Order, a movement based in Northern Ireland but with influence in Scotland. Welsh presents the Orange Order as supremacist, racist, and sectarian. The chapter "Na Na and other Nazis" in *Trainspotting* depicts a gathering of Orange Order members in an Edinburgh pub. Amongst their number are Hearts and Rangers fans, skinheads, and neo-Nazis wearing t-shirts of the band Skrewdriver who were known for their fascist sympathies and Nazi iconography. This is designed to make the link between Nazism and hardline Unionism clear. Billy Renton is among those present at the gathering.

Mark Renton says that his brother's sectarian beliefs were his main reason for joining the British Army, and he makes it clear that he despises both his brother's ideals and the British Army itself as a representative of the British state. Billy eventually dies whilst on active service, and Mark describes the place where his brother is killed as 'Crossmaglen in Ireland, the part under British rule'.<sup>lv</sup> He adds that Billy died as 'an ignorant victim of imperialism', and whistles "The Foggy Dew" at his brother's funeral, partly to annoy the Orangemen and military personnel who attend but also to make a political point.<sup>lv</sup>

Billy Renton is one of many unsympathetic characters in Welsh's novels to support Hearts. Bruce Robertson, the main protagonist of *Filth* (1998), is designed to be an amalgam of everything Welsh dislikes most in his fellow Scots. He votes Conservative, idolises Margaret Thatcher, routinely expresses racist, sexist, and sectarian opinions, and joined the police force with an aspirational desire to work in a traditionally middle-class occupation. The majority of Welsh's characters are of a recognisably working-class background and Robertson's

aspiration to be seen as middle-class is lampooned in *Filth*. He adopts the values that he believes are requisite to his profession; these are the conservative ideals of Margaret Thatcher and her government. Robertson's lonely death as an alcoholic whose treatment is cut is a result of neoliberal government policies is grimly ironic, and his attempts to become middle-class fail due to his own personality flaws.

Welsh frequently links Hearts to racism and sectarianism, sometimes to an absurdly exaggerated extent. Robertson uses the term 'fenian scum' to describe people of Irish Catholic descent in Scotland, as well as 'bog-wog' and 'Romanist'.<sup>lvi</sup> He suggests that all Catholics are criminals, and calls the only Catholic policeman that he encounters 'a dirty carrot-topped bastard' and 'an odious piece of racial vomit'.<sup>lvii</sup> In some ways, Welsh's negative presentation of Hearts fans has an intended comedic effect; the veteran television personality and comedian Ronnie Corbett is described as a 'Jambo (Hearts fan) Cunt' in *Porno*, but one does not suspect that Welsh personally detests Corbett or thinks he is a pseudo-fascist.<sup>lviii</sup> However, in the case of Billy Renton in particular, Welsh depicts socialisation in certain rituals associated with support for Hearts as leading to the club's fans holding bigoted views. In Billy Renton's case, this bigotry is what led to him joining the British army with the express intention of fighting against Catholics. It is suggested that he saw the "Troubles", as the conflict in Northern Ireland has become known, as an extension of the Hearts vs Hibernian battle, and an opportunity to fight for the supremacy of ideals that he learned through football rivalry.

While Welsh depicts Hearts fans extremely negatively, his treatment of Rangers as an institution in Scottish society, and of the club's fans, is even more scathing. Rangers have been described as a 'totemic' symbol for those Scots who wish their nation to remain in the United Kingdom.<sup>lix</sup> Welsh presents those who hold such views as corrupt and bigoted, and there is not a single sympathetic character in his work who supports Rangers. He presents the club as having received special favours from members of the Freemasonry movement, particularly in *Filth*. In the novel, a senior football referee discusses his bias towards Rangers and in a conversation with the main protagonist Bruce Robertson, he discusses an incident in which he denies the visiting team at Rangers' Ibrox Park stadium a clear penalty, allowing Rangers to win the league title.

The referee argues that if he had given the penalty, it would have been badly received at the lodge. He also states that the linesmen were similarly biased, allowing a Rangers goal which

was clearly offside. He describes the day as being characterised by a ‘gala atmosphere’ with ‘everyone singing “we’re up to our knees in Fenian blood”’.<sup>lx</sup> Welsh presents anti-Irish and anti-Catholic attitudes as the norm within Masonic lodges, and depicts the Freemasons as exerting a corrupting influence across Scottish society.

While *Filth* is a work of fiction, similar allegations about refereeing bias have been made by other cultural figures in Scotland. One year after *Filth* was published, the composer James MacMillan made a particularly famous and culturally significant speech in which he alleged that sectarianism is widespread in Scotland. The speech was called “Scotland’s Shame”, and within it MacMillan argued that the most frequent and obvious manifestation of sectarianism can be seen within ‘the activities of [Scotland’s] referees and sporting bodies’.<sup>lxi</sup> This opinion has been commonly held amongst Catholics in Scotland for decades, as the work of Bradley (1998) confirms. The speech inspired an edited collection entitled *Scotland’s Shame?* which examined sectarianism in Scotland from a number of different viewpoints, and featured T.M. Devine, Rosie and McCrone, and MacMillan himself.

There is an overlap between the exaggerated depiction of refereeing behaviour in *Filth* and sociological investigations of sectarianism. As with *Trainspotting*, *Filth* reached a wide audience both as a novel and in 2013 when it was adapted for film. The allegations made by Welsh in his novel did not just back up those made by MacMillan, but were accessible to a wider audience. Literature can be used to make suspicions known and to allege the existence of cheating without fear of legal reprisals. In this sense, it is a powerful weapon, and one that Welsh has used against Rangers on a number of occasions.

The “1690 scam” in *Porno* (2002) particularly illustrates Welsh’s negative and disdainful depiction of Unionists in general, and Rangers fans in particular. The genesis of the scam revolves around an acquaintance of Daniel “Spud” Murphy’s, Cousin Dode. This particular character is a Rangers supporter and a Protestant supremacist. He suggests that his healthy bank balance is the result of his strong work ethic, and is symbolic of the difference between the ‘enterprising Proddy and the feckless Pape’; Spud is angered by this triumphalism and states that if you ‘act aw high and mighty, somebody’ll cut ye doon tae size’.<sup>lxii</sup>

Spud finds himself wishing that he knew Dode’s pin number so that he could steal the money from his account, and shortly after this Dode removes his jacket, revealing two tattoos. One of these is a lion, the symbol of Rangers and also a symbol of the United Kingdom, and the other is a representation of King William of Orange (“King Billy”), with “1690” written

underneath it. Spud realises that 1690 must be Dode's pin number, as his bank (the Clydesdale) allows its clients to select their own number, and Dode will have chosen something that is significant to him. This leads to an incident in which Spud and Sick Boy invite Dode out for drinks, and then drug him so that he is rendered briefly unconscious. They steal his bank card and, guessing his pin number correctly, completely empty his account before putting the card back in Dode's pocket.

Spud is satisfied at his gains from this, but Sick Boy realises that a much bigger scam is possible. He bribes an employee of the Clydesdale Bank to give them a list of all of the account holders in his central Glasgow branch. It is then a matter of finding the season ticket holders who bank in central Glasgow, and then getting into their online bank accounts. 182 Rangers supporters bank at the branch that Sick Boy targets; of these, 137 have 1690 as their pin number. Sick Boy and Mark Renton eventually steal thousands of pounds from these accounts.

This episode depicts Rangers fans as overtly triumphalist and also stupid; picking a pin number that is so easy to guess indicates a collective lack of intelligence. Welsh presents Rangers supporters as deserving targets of the scam, and it is particularly telling that the characters choose to attack the totem of the Unionist community, whose supporters are described as 'morons'.<sup>lxiii</sup> Celtic supporters are similarly described by Sick Boy, but ultimately it is Rangers supporters who are the target of the scam. Welsh's work rarely criticises Celtic supporters in the same way that it attacks Rangers fans, largely because Celtic and Welsh's own favoured team, Hibernian, both grew out of Irish Catholic communities while Rangers are arguably the most visible cultural symbol of Unionism in Scotland.

## **Summary**

The examples given from Irvine Welsh's novels demonstrate that a strong relationship between literature and football can exist. This relationship is not always even, and it is possible for authors to depict clubs or events in a light that is not strictly supported by reality. This does not necessarily mean that fiction is of little value in sociological terms because because as Brennan (1991, p.61) argues, ideas developed in 'fiction seep quietly and continuously into reality' and in the process they influence ideas about identity, community, and nation.<sup>lxiv</sup> As Anderson discusses, it is impossible for people to know every individual within the communities that they form part of (whether willingly or otherwise) and therefore

those communities are, by necessity, imagined. Literature plays a key role in transmitting ideas about communities, and therefore the analysis of fiction can help sociologists to understand communities more fully, particularly when the fiction analysed has reached a wide audience as Welsh's has.

Welsh's discussion of Unionism contains the metanarrative that it is a political and cultural ideal held by violent bigots. He achieves this by taking well known symbols of Unionism (in Rangers' case) and depicting them as sectarian and pseudo-fascistic. Welsh's novels use artistic licence but frequently suggest that Unionism, sectarian opinions, and racism are all interlinked, and that the kind of extreme Unionism expressed by Rangers supporters and followers of Hearts commonly leads to violence. In *Trainspotting*, *Porno*, and *Glue*, Welsh employs "Rangers supporter" or "Hearts fan" as an insult; support for either club is frequently described as a driver for bigoted or racist behaviour. It is suggested that fans are socialised in an environment which inculcates them with certain ideals; these include support for the Union, and hatred for people of Irish descent. The clearest example of this is Billy Renton in *Trainspotting*, although Bruce Robertson in *Filth* is also a useful study.

The alternative identity to Unionism held by Welsh's Hibernian-supporting characters is depicted far more positively. The imagined community that Welsh develops around Hibernian can be considered representative of an "ideal type" for Scotland as a whole; anti-union, pro-Irish, socialist, and largely working class in background. Neither nationalism nor the idea of nations as political and cultural constructs are discussed entirely positively, and Welsh's fiction certainly cannot be considered to be wholly nationalistic in content. Nevertheless, his work presents the identity held by an imagined community of Hibernian fans as an idealised alternative to Unionism, and Irish nationalism is a particularly positive influence on this because as Mark Renton argues, 'the Irish [have] had the bottle to win their country back'.<sup>lxv</sup> This idea, when written by a confirmed supporter of Scottish independence from the Union like Welsh, can certainly be considered to have a nationalistic element to it.

Welsh uses his novels to stretch existing affiliations held by Hearts and Hibernian fans to develop depictions of the clubs as binary opposites. These depictions are actually better known globally than the reality of the affiliations held by the two clubs' fanbases. Examining relationships between different forms of culture can help to reveal connections between them and create a clearer picture of the significance of those forms within society. In the case of Welsh's work, an approach influenced by cultural materialism in which all forms of culture

are considered significant, leads to a stronger analysis than would be the case if the influences of popular culture were ignored.

Welsh's depiction of Scotland utilises football as a key element and demonstrates the cultural power and resonance of football. The relationship between literature and football is itself important as an example of two processes which can both influence an individual's understanding of culture and society. Literature becomes a vehicle through which the culture of football, and indeed the wider culture of Scotland, can be described in such a way as to influence an audience's understanding of events and processes. In Scotland, football is not just a sport, but a social mechanism which Welsh presents as playing a key role in defining both individual and group identities.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Williams, *Culture*, 13

<sup>ii</sup> Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 91

<sup>iii</sup> Oriard, *Dreaming of Heroes: American Sports Fiction, 1868-1980*, 21

<sup>iv</sup> *Aethlon* index, available at <http://www.uta.edu/english/sla/aethlon.html>

<sup>v</sup> All articles appear in Hill and Williams (eds) "Sport and Literature",

<sup>vi</sup> Tadie et al, *Sport, Literature, Society: Cultural Historical Studies*

<sup>vii</sup> Examples include Hughson, "Not just Any Wintry Afternoon in England: the curious contribution of C.R.W. Nevinson to 'football art'", "The Friendly Games—The 'Official' IOC Film of the 1956 Melbourne Olympics as Historical Record", and "The Cultural Legacy of Olympic Posters".

<sup>viii</sup> Stride, Wilson, and Thomas, "Honouring Heroes by Branding in Bronze: Theorising the UK's Football Statuary" and Adedze, "Visualizing the game: the iconography of football on African postage stamps"

<sup>ix</sup> McGowan, "Marking Out the Pitch: A Historiography and Taxonomy of Football Fiction", 76

<sup>x</sup> *Ibid*, 77

<sup>xi</sup> *Ibid*, 77

<sup>xii</sup> Bairner, "Sport, Fiction and Sociology: Novels as Data Sources", 2

<sup>xiii</sup> *Ibid*, 2

<sup>xiv</sup> Hill, *Sport and the Literary Imagination: Essays in History, Literature, and Sport*, 33

<sup>xv</sup> Bairner, "Sport, Fiction and Sociology: Novels as Data Sources", 3

<sup>xvi</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 4

<sup>xvii</sup> *Ibid*, 4

<sup>xviii</sup> Hearn, *Claiming Scotland* 11

<sup>xix</sup> Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, 28

<sup>xx</sup> Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 114

<sup>xxi</sup> *Ibid*, 114

<sup>xxii</sup> *Ibid*, 114



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- xxiii McGowan, “Marking Out the Pitch: A Historiography and Taxonomy of Football Fiction”, 78
- xxiv Ibid, 78
- xxv Hill, *Sport and the Literary Imagination: Essays in History, Literature, and Sport*, 132
- xxvi McGowan, “Marking Out the Pitch: A Historiography and Taxonomy of Football Fiction”, 78
- xxvii Ibid, 79
- xxviii A useful discussion of the effect of Welsh’s use of non-standard English, particularly on international audiences can be found in Karnicky, “Irvine Welsh’s Novel Subjectivities”. Welsh discusses his reasoning for the use of Scottish dialect in his fiction in Peddie, “Speaking Welsh: Irvine Welsh in Conversation”, 137. Notably, national identity is a key factor, as Welsh argues that ‘Standard English is an Imperial language’ and his use of dialect is a reaction against this Imperialism.
- xxix Hughson, “The Postmodernist Always Rings Twice”, 37
- xxx Ibid
- xxxi Hutcheon, *A poetics of postmodernism: history, theory, fiction*, 2
- xxxii MacLeod, “Life Among the Leith Plebs: Of Arseholes, Wankers, and Tourists in Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting*”, 99
- xxxiii Hutcheon, “Once again, from the top: More pomo promo”, 172
- xxxiv Welsh, *Trainspotting*, 78
- xxxv During, “Literature: Nationalism’s Other? The Case for Revision”, 139
- xxxvi Houliang, “Constructing postmodernism with incredulity to metanarrative: a comparative perspective on McHale’s and Hutcheon’s postmodern poetics”, 291
- xxxvii Welsh, *Trainspotting*, 150
- xxxviii Bairner, “Football and the Idea of Scotland”, 11
- xxxix May, “An ‘Anti-Sectarian’ Act? Examining the Importance of National Identity to the ‘Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act’”, 3
- xl Anderson, *Imagined Communities*
- xli MacLeod, “Life Among the Leith Plebs: Of Arseholes, Wankers, and Tourists in Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting*”, 98
- xlii Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 4
- xliii Welsh, *Trainspotting*, 115
- xliv Ibid, 209
- xlv Bradley, “Sport and the Contestation of Cultural and Ethnic Identities in Scottish Society”, 142
- xlvi Hussain and Miller, “The Auld Enemy”, 68
- xlvii Ibid, 68
- xlviii Welsh, *Trainspotting*, 190
- xlix MacLeod, “Life Among the Leith Plebs: Of Arseholes, Wankers, and Tourists in Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting*”, 100
- <sup>1</sup> Kidd, *Union and Unionisms – Political Thought in Scotland 1500-2000*, 14
- li Hussain and Miller, “The Auld Enemy”, 68
- lii Examples include “Is There Such a Thing as a National Culture?”, written for *Bella Caledonia*, “Sneers and Self Loathing”, and “Murder Most Predictable”. The latter two pieces are available on Welsh’s website.
- liii Welsh, *Trainspotting*, 133
- liv Ibid, 210
- lv Ibid, 210
- lvi Welsh, *Filth*, 293

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- lvii Welsh, *Filth*, 322  
lviii Welsh, *Porno*, 22  
lix MacMillan, “Scotland’s Shame”, 16  
lx Welsh, *Filth*, 190  
lxi MacMillan, “Scotland’s Shame”, 14  
lxii Welsh, *Porno*, 115  
lxiii Ibid, 332  
lxiv Brennan, “The National Longing for Form”, 61  
lxv Welsh, *Trainspotting*, 190

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