

**“The lowest of the fuckin low, the scum of the earth”:
Identity and Image in Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting***

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1 INTRODUCTION

Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* is a well-known novel depicting Scotland, and more accurately, late twentieth century Edinburgh and its drug problems among the working class citizens of the Leith suburb. Its visible status in popular culture, enhanced greatly by the success of the feature film based on the novel, makes it an interesting subject for research in the fields of imagology and cultural studies: how are the creation of identity and image portrayed in literature. The argument is that the creation of identity and image require polar opposites, and that identity is formed through the establishment of a dichotomy. The sense of the 'self' is created in opposition to something that is imagined as the 'other'. Identity and image are thus the results of comparison and contrast that are based on imaginary and stereotypical qualities rather than empirical facts.

Image and identity are important phenomena to understand in the modern world. Leerssen (2007) has stated that identity is an "autonomous force in social, political and cultural relations" (2007: 24-25). The increasingly multicultural and transnational communities demand for an investigation of what a national, cultural or an individual identity mean and how they are constructed. Politics, according to Beller (2007: 14), demand a merging of nation-states into regional and international political associations. However, increasing numbers of people are divided into religious, ethnic and social subcultures who struggle to maintain their individual identities in the globalizing world (Beller 2007: 14). Having said that, Anderson (2002: 3) is of the opinion that nations and their images and identities are likely to maintain their significance.

Although the focal point of *Trainspotting* is mostly in the disenfranchised drug addicts in the suburbs of Edinburgh, their properties are metonymically transferred into an image of an entire nation. Their problems have their origins in the politics of

the Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s, so in a way, they are both the product and a representation of a nation. Traditionally Scotland positions itself and forms its identity in relation to its southern neighbour, England. Often Scottish problems are attributed to the English. In *Trainspotting*, England is not seen as the most obvious source of Scotland's problems. Instead, among other reasons, the Scottish themselves are criticised.

In addition to England, the Scots of the novel position themselves against immigrants from India and Pakistan, to some extent connecting the novel to the tradition of post-colonial literature. Scottish subcultures are portrayed as well: the drug addicts and the unemployed compare themselves to the law-abiding, working citizens. The Catholics compare themselves to the Protestants, and create their self-image by contrasting them with the opposing religious group. The Scotland of *Trainspotting* is a meeting point of different subcultures that form their identities in relation – and particularly in contrast – to one another.

The reason for choosing *Trainspotting* as the subject of this study is its considerable popularity. Both the original novel by Irvine Welsh and its film adaptation were commercial successes. According to Wood on the website *The Culture Trip*¹, Welsh's texts are viewed as one of the most well-known examples of Scottish literature and cinema. It can therefore be argued that for people of a certain generation, *Trainspotting* is the most recognisable representation of Scotland and urban Scottish culture. In addition to the cultural significance, the subject matter of the novel focuses on issues of identity through resistance and refusal to take part in the conventions of society, therefore providing a fruitful subject for research in cultural studies, identity and imagology.

¹ <http://theculturetrip.com/europe/united-kingdom/scotland/articles/trainspotting-for-filth-irvine-welsh-s-portrayals-of-contemporary-scotland/>

In this study, the general distinction used is that identity is used to refer to the inner construction of the self, whereas image is the façade presented to others. However, the concepts of image and identity are intertwined to an extent and cannot be entirely separated. Being aware of the importance of products of popular culture to the perception of a national image is very important. The novel has examples of inherent racism and xenophobia based on the imagined qualities of nationalities. Similar attitudes are displayed in relation to whatever groups that are seen as different from oneself.

Particularly now, in 2014, the concepts of identity and image are extremely relevant for Scotland, since another referendum for Scottish independence is due in September 2014. Should Scotland declare itself independent from the United Kingdom, it would be prudent to be aware of how one sees and re-creates one's identity in the context of the twenty-first century politics, the European Union and other transnational communities. Not only national identity and image, but also those of subcultures and individuals are important subjects of study in this context.

2 THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF *TRAINSPOTTING*

This section will introduce the author of the novel and his place in the contemporary literary field. In addition, a brief outline of the novel and its characters is presented. This will be followed by a discussion on the socio-historical context of the novel. The aim of this section is to contextualize both the author of the novel and the novel itself, and to show how the position and image held by the author and the novel mirror those of the characters represented in the novel.

Irvine Welsh is a Scottish author of novels, short stories, plays and screenplays. According to the BBC Two website's *Writing Scotland* page², Welsh was born in 1961 in Leith, a suburb of Edinburgh. Most of his work is set in and around Edinburgh and particularly his native area of Leith, a district and former municipal burgh to the north of the city of Edinburgh. However, there is controversy concerning his date of birth. According to an article published in *The Observer* (McKay 1996), he claims to have been born in 1958, but it is mentioned in the article that police reports after an arrest show his date of birth being in 1951. McKay argues in his article that Welsh' own biography is an effort to create a certain image of himself as a writer. This image includes him involved in drug abuse, violent behaviour and the underground punk music scene.

Welsh has tried to create an image of himself as a working-class, lowbrow writer who is well aware of the social conditions of the people about which he writes. The article mentions that the reality may be slightly different. The reason for mentioning this piece of biographical information in this thesis is the argument that similar ways of image creation are at work with both the author and the characters in his work. Regardless of his date of birth, according to his official biography found on his website³ he eventually worked for the Edinburgh city council in the housing

² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00mr8yj/profiles/irvine-welsh>

³ <http://www.irvinewelsh.net/biography/>

department, and received an MBA at Heriot Watt University. This would argue for the fact that his image as a working class author is imagined and artificial.

Trainspotting was Welsh's debut novel, and it was published in 1993. It quickly became a cultural phenomenon. According to Welsh's official biography cited above, the novel was nearly shortlisted for the Booker Prize, but was rejected "after offending the sensibilities of two female judges"⁴. The biography mentions that the novel received "as many good reviews as ones swathed in disgust and outrage – establishing a tradition that continues to this day"⁵. It can be argued that the biography itself tries to create a certain image of the author as an outspoken outlaw who both delights and offends his readers to the same extent. The biography positions the author outside the mainstream literary world and its conventions as an enfant terrible.

Welsh's subject matter and the language used in his novels – a broad Edinburgh dialect as opposed to standard English – come from the work of James Kelman, according to Petrie (2004: 89). Kelman's work also dealt with the margins of society and the use of non-standard language provided his followers, such as Welsh, with "both a thematic and a formal direction" (2004: 89). Petrie continues the analogue to Kelman by saying that Welsh reaffirms that the vernacular language is required in order to challenge the hegemony of standard English, a language from which the characters in Welsh's novels feel estranged (2004: 90). Language is closely related to one's identity, and Welsh takes a stand with the choice of language used in the novel for a distinctly Scottish identity, not an English one.

The main protagonists in the novel include Mark Renton, Sick Boy, Begbie and Spud. These are also the characters discussed in this pro gradu thesis. They are all from Leith in Edinburgh and have known each other since childhood. Renton, Sick

⁴ <http://www.irvinewelsh.net/biography/>

⁵ <http://www.irvinewelsh.net/biography/>

Boy and Spud are heroin addicts, whereas Begbie does not use drugs. They all consume copious amounts of alcohol. None are seen to be working, although their backgrounds would suggest belonging to the working class. They are part of a disenfranchised social class who are disappointed in society and in their own lives as part of it. It can be argued that they wish to distance themselves from the conventions of society, since it has nothing to offer for them. As Renton says: “Ah choose not tae choose life” (Welsh 2004: 188). The concepts of society, and inclusion and exclusion from it in the context of identity creation will be discussed below in section 3.2 and in the analysis in section 4.

The form of the novel is more closely related to that of a collection of short stories than a novel with an overarching storyline. The chapters have their own titles and they do not form a strictly coherent narrative. Nearly all the chapters are written from a first person perspective in a language that emulates the spoken urban dialect of Edinburgh. The degree of the Scottish dialect varies according to the character. For example, the chapters narrated by Begbie and Spud use a much more pronounced Scots dialect than the chapters narrated by Mark Renton. A few chapters have an omniscient third person narrator, and those chapters are written in standard English. Arguably the choice of language for Welsh is a matter of portraying a distinctly Scottish point of view. The point of view in the novel, although varying from chapter to chapter, cannot be limited to just the Scots and their national identity. Different subcultures within Scottish culture are represented simultaneously. Some of the characters even famously distance themselves from their Scottish heritage. The choice of language in the novel is a choice of representing different cultures and different subcultures in a particular light.

The protagonists of the chapters vary, with some characters having more chapters devoted to them than others. The character of Mark Renton has the most chapters as a narrator. Some characters and protagonists appear only in one chapter. *Trainspotting* deals with other identities in addition to a national identity, such as different subculture identities. The study of the different identities and images aims

to show how they all are constructed and whether they share certain characteristics or not.

The BBC Two website's subpage *Writing Scotland* has the following description of the reception and content of Welsh's debut novel:

Trainspotting gained notoriety for its depiction of Edinburgh heroin culture; the novel is set at a time when Edinburgh was thought to be the 'HIV capital of Europe'. While heroin is undoubtedly crucial to many of the narratives in Welsh's first novel, *Trainspotting* draws its readers' attention to aspects of Scottish and British culture which are perhaps even more uncomfortable. *Trainspotting* talks about poverty, sectarianism, racism and attitudes towards disability, above all insisting that if there is no such thing as society, there is certainly no such thing as a classless society.⁶

While on the surface *Trainspotting* is concerned with heroin and heroin addicts, underlying the narrative is a social commentary on the circumstances in 1980s Scotland, and in a larger perspective, British culture. Issues of sectarianism and racism mentioned above will be discussed in this thesis as well in relation to the creation of an identity.

Although published in the early 1990s, the novel is set in the 1980s. During that decade, Margaret Thatcher was the prime minister of the United Kingdom, and she and her Conservative government are described by Welsh in an interview as the "invisible authors" of *Trainspotting* and that "she created the conditions and the hubris whereby that whole culture flourished" (Acharya 2013). Arguably Thatcher's neo-liberal politics affected Scotland heavily in the late 1970s and 1980s. Scotland has traditionally been a pro-Labour party constituent of the United Kingdom, regardless of the party politics in the rest of the country. According to Finlayson (1987: 153), the last time the Conservative party held a majority of constituencies in Scotland was in 1955, when the Conservatives won thirty-six of the seventy one Scottish seats in the House of Commons. Arguably, the disillusionment that the Scots had in the 1980s concerning the British government is echoed in the sentiments of

⁶ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00mr8yj/profiles/irvine-welsh>

the characters. They do not trust the authorities and choose not to agree with the conventional rules and norms of society.

After this contextualisation of the novel studied in this thesis, the next section will introduce the theoretical background used in this study. The section will first briefly discuss previous studies on the subject and then move onto introducing the theories and tools used in the interpretation of the novel.

3 THEORIES OF IDENTITY AND IMAGE

Since the title of this pro gradu thesis has two terms in it, identity and image, the section discussing the theoretical background of the thesis is also split into two larger subsections. The main theoretical methods used in this thesis are cultural studies (the “identity” portion of the title) and imagology (the “image” portion of the title). They share similar ideas but with different points of view and slightly differing terminologies. They both offer an insight into the literary representation and construction of identities, as well as how identities and images are constructed and perpetuated in everyday life. The aim of this section is firstly to point out how the different theories presented here talk about the same phenomena with different terminology. Secondly, the aim of the section is to assemble a single working tool from these two branches of theory in order to analyse the novel in question.

The first subsection briefly introduces the field of study relating to *Trainspotting* and the study of images and identity. The aim of the subsection is to define the position of the current study in the field of literary and cultural studies. Questions of identity and image have been prevalent in many different fields, including postcolonial, feminist and queer studies. The section provides sources for further discussion on these matters and shows what points of view other scholars have taken on the subject. The novel itself has been the subject of several studies from different perspectives. The section introduces some of them briefly and contrasts the current study with them.

The second subsection will first focus on the concepts of culture and identity and define them through the works of cultural theorists. Arguably culture is integral to the formation of identity. The field of cultural studies can incorporate many kinds of research, including the study of race and gender, identity, popular culture and advertising. This section will first briefly introduce some of the main focal points of cultural studies before concentrating on its key concepts in relation to *Trainspotting*:

culture and subculture identity, representation and binary oppositions. The distinction between the different aspects of cultural studies and their influence on the creation of identities is not always clear-cut. Instead, they tend to work in tandem. This section has different subsections for each aspect, but it should be noted that they repeat and share similar ideas as well. The main thread of argument should lead to binary oppositions and how they are the key element of identity creation.

The section on imagology will follow a similar structure, with an emphasis on how national identities – rather than the more general study of identity presented earlier in this section – are portrayed in literature and how imagology helps to unravel and analyse them. The section shall devote some space to the discussion of images as how they are portrayals of identity to others. The section will also consider the ideas of stereotyping and imagined communities formulated by Lippmann and Anderson, respectively. While although they do not explicitly use the terminology of imagology, their work is inherently connected to the field and share similar themes. The overall aim of the section is to show how imagology shares similar concepts with cultural studies and how they can be combined to work as tools of literary analysis.

3.1 Previous Research

This section briefly introduces what kinds of study have been conducted previously on identity, image and *Trainspotting*. Questions of identity and culture have traditionally been the preoccupation of postcolonial studies (see for example Hall 1997, Hall & du Gay 1996). In postcolonial studies, identity has been studied in the context of the colonies of imperialist powers since their gaining independence during the twentieth century. Identities of the subaltern and the dominant ethnic groups have been studied by theorists such as Bhabha, Spivak and Said (see for example Ashcroft et al. 1989 and 2006). These studies focus on national and subcultural identities held

by the colonised and the colonisers. Questions of identity have also been the subject of many feminist theorists and scholars studying sexual identity. For discussion on these, see for example Butler (2006), Zack et al. (1998), and Warnke (2007).

Imagology is also a field of research which focuses on national identity above all. Beller & Leerssen (2007) have compiled a list of national stereotypes in their jointly edited work cited in this thesis. However, the tools of imagology can be used in the study of other images and identities as well. This has been discussed by, among others, Johnson (2005). In relation to imagology, Aho (2011) has studied images of Englishness represented in popular culture. This idea of a national image in popular culture is something that this thesis also taps into in sections 4.1 and 4.5. The difference here is that although national images are created in opposition to other nations and their images, they can be created through introspection and creating opposition inside the national image.

Trainspotting has been the subject of several papers and theses in the fields of literary, cultural, imagological and linguistic studies. Farred (2004) studies the novel as a “rejection of the post-colonial”. McLeod (2008) focuses on the suburb identity of Leith represented in the novel. Although the novel explicitly positions Scottishness against Englishness and the subculture of the addicts against the mainstream culture of the conventional society, McLeod focuses on the distinction between Leith and Edinburgh. The suburb of Leith is seen as different from its parent city of Edinburgh and, to the characters, ultimately more important. What these studies have in common with this thesis is the idea of opposition and of contrast, to which the sections below will return repeatedly.

Talasmäki (2000) has studied *Trainspotting* from a linguistic perspective, focusing on situational code-switching and swearing in the novel. Poutiainen (2006) has studied *Trainspotting* from a similar perspective to this thesis, by focusing on subculture identities. However, the difference between the theses is in the point of

view and the scope. While Poutiainen focuses on subculture identity, this thesis focuses on how image and identity are created through difference, contrast and opposition, and how the novel portrays this. Several identities are compared in order to find out if the same mechanisms are at work every time.

After this brief introduction to the field of study and this pro gradu thesis' position in it, the next sections will focus on introducing the theoretical background and the tools used in this study. Cultural studies and its use of the term 'identity' will be introduced first, followed by discussion on culture, subculture and binary oppositions as a means of creating images and identities.

3.2 Identity and Cultural Studies

As stated above, the field of cultural studies is wide in its scope, and the name 'cultural studies' can be used to describe varying subjects of study. The origins of the term are in the 1960s. The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies was founded in the 1960s in the University of Birmingham. Its goals were to deconstruct views on social class that were represented by popular culture⁷. Although social class is not at the centre of this study, it does play a role in how the characters form their identity. Some aspects of Marxism relevant to this study will be introduced below.

Openly political theories of culture and their tools should not be taken at face value. An agenda might mould the writer's perspective and therefore skewer the findings of the study. This does not mean, however, that the tools of a political cultural theory are useless. One important and useful tool in cultural studies and its Marxist tradition is the idea of ideology as a means of creating and maintaining a culture.

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<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/departments/history/research/projects/cccs/index.aspx>

In the tradition of Marxist interpretation, Ryan (2010: 42) sees ideology as the means for a wealthy and politically powerful elite to subordinate the poor. This idea of an elite and a subordinate and oppressed people is a simplified dichotomy, but it does serve a purpose for this study. Ideologies are simple ways to make the world understandable through dichotomy, but they are also often irrational, inaccurate and unscientific (2010: 41). Ideologies are perpetuated by historiography and school systems, and they easily become the only available truth. They are never questioned and always accepted at face value. The truth-value of the ideology is based on language and persuasive arguments, not necessarily in any objective, universal reality (2010: 55). Section 3.3.1 in this study discusses stereotyping, and it is well worth to keep in mind what Ryan says about ideologies and compare it with stereotyping. The similarities are striking.

According to Storey (1996: 3-4), Marxism informs cultural studies in two fundamental ways:

First, to understand the meaning(s) of a cultural text or practice, we must analyse it in its social and historical conditions of production and consumption [...] cultural texts, for example, do not simply reflect history, they make history and are part of its processes and practices [...] The second assumption taken from Marxism is the recognition that capitalist industrial societies are societies divided unequally along, for example, ethnic, gender, generational and class lines.

The scope of this study does not allow for a more in-depth reading of Marxism. For current purposes, these two key points should suffice: that the historical context must be taken into account, and, perhaps more importantly, that societies consist of unequally divided poles. The importance of consumption to identity will be discussed below in section 3.2.2 considering subcultures. The division of societies and struggle for power and dominance will be discussed here.

Storey (1996: 4) continues his interpretation of Marx that “culture is a terrain on which there takes place a continual struggle over meaning, in which subordinate groups attempt to resist the imposition of meanings which bear the interests of dominant groups”. The meanings imposed by dominant groups over subordinate groups seem to be ones that are easily accepted at face value, perpetuating concepts of identity and image without questioning them. The dichotomy of dominance and submission is one that appears, for example, in the discourse of Scottish identity being oppressed by British, or more importantly, English rule. It would follow that Scottish culture is formed from this struggle against the meanings imposed by the English. This example will later on lead to a discussion on national identities below in sections 4.1 and 4.5. Dichotomies in general and identity-through-difference are recurring themes crucial to this study.

The focus points of cultural studies have changed over the years, following social change and trends in research. According to Storey, “cultural studies has always been an unfolding discourse, responding to changing historical and political conditions and always marked by debate, disagreement and intervention” (1996: 2). From the focus on social class in the 1960s to the study of sex, gender, feminism and racial issues in the 1970s and onwards, the study of culture and identity has developed (1996: 2).

Although cultural studies seems to transform itself every few decades according to changing political and social conditions, the core of the field is unchanged. Current focus points of the field seem to be subculture identities. In order to study subculture identities, a definition of the terms ‘culture’, ‘identity’ and ‘subculture’ is needed. The next sections shall define these terms.

3.2.1 Defining Culture and Identity

Ryan (2010: ix) sees culture as something that produces “a commonality of thought and behaviour, as well as reigning standards, norms and rules”. The people who agree with said standards, norms and rules and live by them, form a unified culture. Culture therefore requires some form of shared experience in order to be formed. From this shared experience stems the idea of belonging together with other people from similar surroundings.

Culture can be seen to refer to high culture, art and other aesthetic achievements of mankind. Storey (1996) and other cultural theorists see it as a wider field. Storey, in the context of cultural studies, defines ‘culture’ politically rather than aesthetically, and understands it as the texts and practices of everyday life (Storey 1996: 2). For example, Hall (1997a: 2) sees culture as referring to “whatever is distinctive about the ‘way of life’ of a people, community, nation or a social group”. This definition of culture is not quite political, as Storey puts it, but communal.

However, pinpointing how a culture belongs to a certain group is not without its problems. Grossberg (1996: 88) points out three different aspects of this problem. If culture is considered historical, for example if American culture is considered European, what easily follows is a conservative interpretation that can lead to structures of racism, imperialism and ethnocentrism. If it is considered ethnic, every culture can be seen as multicultural. If culture is considered spatial, modern mobility across borders renders the problem of culture unsolvable. Therefore, defining culture as specific to a certain group of people is problematic. The definition needs to be wider and to encompass different aspects as well.

Since the 1960s, the study of popular culture in particular, in contrast to the study of high culture, has featured more prominently in cultural studies. This does not mean,

however, that all study of culture is focused on popular culture, although arguably the subject of this paper, *Trainspotting*, can be seen as a work of popular culture.

What is important to note about cultures is that they are based on difference; ‘we’ are somehow different compared to ‘them’, and thus they belong to a different culture. This is one of the key arguments of this thesis: culture and identity are formed, created and perpetuated based on difference, contrast and contradiction. In this the thesis follows Hall (1997b: 236): “The marking of ‘difference’ is thus the basis of that symbolic order which we call culture”.

To establish the ‘us’ in contrast to ‘them’, we need to look at how a sense of the self, an identity, is formed. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘identity’ as “the sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances; the condition of being a single individual; the fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else; individuality, personality”. While it is a usable definition of the word, Hall and du Gay (1996: 3) are not in favour of such an essentialist view of identity. Instead, they view identity as contrary to its semantic meaning: identity does not signal a stable core of the self that unfolds through history without change and remains constantly identical to itself across time.

This study follows the lines set by Hall and du Gay (1996) in that identity seems to be not a unified concept, but a fragmented and fractured one constructed across different, intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions (1996: 4). More importantly, Hall and du Gay maintain that “directly contrary to the form in which they are constantly invoked, identities are constructed through, not outside, difference” (1996: 4). This idea of identity-through-difference is what can be seen as the main building block of the characters’ identities in *Trainspotting* as well.

Grossberg (1996: 89) argues that the first model of producing any identity requires some intrinsic and essential content to it, defined by either a common origin, structure of experience, or both. The second model emphasizes how impossible it is for such separate and distinct identities to exist: "Identities are always relational and incomplete, in process" (1996: 89). If this view is accepted, the formation of identity is a constant process.

Hall and du Gay (1996: 6) remind us that identities are always a representation. They are a manufactured front, rather than an essential and organically constructed entity. This is also what imagologists see as the crucial point to be made about identity; that it is always imagined to a certain extent, as is the image we perceive of others. This is not to say that they are without any meaning or effect on people's lives. As Ryan (2010: 59) puts it: "identifications have very real material, bodily effects; in identifying with these symbols we become consubstantial with other people who have made the same identification."

Bauman (2001) compares and contrasts identity to community. In the section on culture above, it was discussed that a shared culture is a key element of forming an identity. Bauman argues that identity is a surrogate of community. In the breakdown of the globalising world that is privatised and individualised, community has lost its meaning. Margaret Thatcher famously said that there is no such thing as society (Keay 1987), and Bauman seems to agree with her to a certain extent. Identity and community are, according to Bauman (2001: 15-16), both imagined shelters that protect us from the disjointed and ultra-individualised reality. He also argues that identity, as opposed to community, does not bring people closer together, but instead separates people from each other in their quest of being different and standing out from the crowd (2001: 15-16).

If identities are, as said above, fragmented and imagined, problems are bound to arise concerning their meaning. Bauman (1996: 18) says that while before the problem of

identity was in how to construct it and keep it solid and stable, now, in the postmodern era, the problem lies in avoiding fixation and keeping all the options open. Identities seem to be in constant, fluid motion and always reconstructed in relation to other people and other contexts.

With this idea of how cultures and identities are formed in mind, the next section will look more deeply into subcultures and how they are formed. They exist inside cultures and are formed in a similar way, but there is a stronger tendency towards dichotomy and separation from the parent culture.

3.2.2 Subcultures

Cultures can be divided into subcultures on the same principles as cultures are defined. A subculture identity is formed from shared experience and shared standards, norms and rules. Different subcultures must have something in common that they can be considered to exist under one culture, but they must differentiate themselves from it in some way. It is a process of setting oneself in opposition to the majority culture.

This opposition is the key element of how subcultures are formed. According to Ryan (2010: 92), the 'sub' in subculture "connotes dissent and dissonance, something at odds with conservatism and with the conservative ideal of a society ruled by the tough and the thoughtless for the purposes of material accumulation by a minority". This would imply that subcultures are always somewhat oppressed and taken advantage of by the majority. But this is precisely the position that subcultures take in order to separate themselves from the mainstream. It may or may not be based on actual fact, but it nevertheless is a view accepted by the subculture itself.

In *Trainspotting*, the most prevalent example of subcultures would be the drug addicts portrayed as the novel's protagonists. They are the most obvious subculture in the novel, but others can be seen as well: underground music enthusiasts, ethnic minorities, the unemployed and the uneducated, Catholics and Protestants or the Scots themselves as an entire nation under the subjugation of the English, the traditional antagonists for the Scots. The idea of a subculture being at odds with the majority applies to all of these varying subcultures. Although they are seemingly unrelated, what they have in common is the idea of opposition.

Subcultures are often, but not always, formed amongst the young generations. According to Storey (1996: 120), they "engage in symbolic forms of resistance to both dominant and parent cultures". More often than not, the parent cultures are also part of the dominant culture in question. Therefore, the rebellion expressed by the young generations in their youth culture is targeted at both their parents and the dominant culture in general.

Storey (1996) finds a connection between youth culture and working class culture. After the 1960s, the traditional working class culture was breaking apart. However, according to Storey (1996: 118), the youth desired to uphold certain aspects of traditional working class community in order to create their own identity. At the same time, youth subcultures took part "through selective appropriation and consumption in the opportunities presented by the affluent society" (1996: 118).

Storey (1996: 102) argues that consumption is a key aspect in the formation of a subculture identity. Consuming products of a particular kind forms and strengthens the sense of a group identity. Storey uses music as an example: the consumption of a particular subgenre of music is a means through which a subculture forges its identity and marks its distinction from the majority culture. He continues, while paraphrasing Marx, that "men and women are denied identity in (uncreative) production, and are therefore forced to seek identity in (creative) consumption" (1996: 114).

In *Trainspotting*, music features heavily in chapter titles, the characters' dialogue and serves even as part of the milieu where the story in some chapters takes place. Particularly the characters seem to identify themselves with American underground and punk music from the 1970s and 1980s, for example Lou Reed, Iggy Pop and David Bowie. Their song titles are referenced in the chapter titles "Growing Up in Public", "Scotland Takes Drugs in Psychic Defence" and "Station to Station", respectively. Their music is far removed from the mainstream popular music of the 1980s, where the novel is set. The characters identify themselves with the drug-consuming, sexually experimenting outlaw image of the underground artists rather than the glossy pop artists of the day. It is well to note that the music the characters talk of in the novel is not Scottish. This would imply an identification based not on nationality, but on a subculture. It can also be seen as a form of rebellion to the status quo, to the habits of the mainstream and to the expectations of the older generations.

After this discussion, the next section will look more closely at how binary oppositions function in the creation of culture, identity and subcultures.

3.2.3 Binary Oppositions

One of the most important factors in creating and maintaining an identity is to form it in relation to something that can be seen as its counterpart or its opposite. Binary oppositions – such as men versus women, black versus white, east versus west, north versus south – are dichotomies which form our view of the world around us. They are an easy, simplified way of grasping difficult and multifaceted concepts of identity by juxtaposing one simple keyword against another. According to Hall (1997b: 229):

People who are in any way significantly different from the majority – 'them' rather than 'us' – are frequently exposed to this *binary* form of representation. They seem to be represented through sharply opposed,

polarized, binary extremes. [...] And they are often required to be *both things at the same time!* [italics in the original]

The concept of binary oppositions has traditionally been explored by postcolonial theorists and orientalists (see for example Leerssen 2007: 24). While they bring useful concepts to the table concerning this study, the focus is not on postcolonialism itself.

As has been stated above, difference is crucial to the formation of identity. Difference is constructed on the basis of these binary oppositions. According to Hall (1997b: 234), “‘difference’ matters because it is essential to meaning; without it, meaning could not exist”. Therefore, meaning depends on the difference between opposites. However, Hall (1997b: 234-235) acknowledges the problem that binary oppositions and either/or extremes are a crude and reductionist way of establishing meaning, although we do not seem to be able to live without them.

The French philosopher Jacques Derrida (as cited in Hall 1997b: 235) says that there are very few neutral binary oppositions. One of the poles of the binary is dominant and includes the other within its field of operations, resulting in a relation of power and of dominance and submission: “We are not dealing with [...] peaceful coexistence [...] but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs [...] the other or has the upper hand” (Derrida, as cited in Hall 1997b: 258). This idea would suggest that identity is born out of the discourse and discord between the binary poles.

This agrees with the idea of ‘us’ versus ‘them’, of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’, where the ‘us’ and ‘self’ are usually in control and the dominant poles of the binary opposition. They are the active components of the binary opposition, leaving ‘them’ and the ‘other’ as the background against which the self is highlighted. According to Hall (1997b: 237), the ‘other’ is “fundamental to the constitution of the self”.

Difference does not necessarily mean a negative contrast. Instead, Hall (1997b: 238) sees it as ambivalent:

It can be both positive and negative. It is both necessary to the production of meaning, the formation of language and culture, for social identities and a subjective sense of the self as a sexed subject – and at the same time it is threatening, a site of danger, of negative feelings, of splitting, hostility and aggression towards the ‘Other’.

Whatever the value assigned to the perceived the difference – positive or negative – the difference matters. Positive interpretation of difference can create a sense of belonging and meaningful existence: a group of people can find their sense of self-worth in being different from others. Negative views of difference can obviously lead to segregation, racism, xenophobia and other phenomena that can create violence among groups of people who view each other as different. According to Grossberg (1996: 96), there is power in reducing and simplifying an entire multi-faceted culture to merely ‘the different’. Thus the dominant pole of the binary opposition is able to control and subjugate the other pole.

Partly the ideology of difference is formed through ‘naturalization’, making the difference seem natural and unchangeable. According to Hall (1997b: 245), it is a “representational strategy to *fix* ‘difference’, and thus *secure it forever*” [italics in the original]. If the discourse of difference is maintained throughout generations, it becomes self-evident and unquestioned. Arguably, when the discourse becomes unchangeable and accepted at face value as the truth, the view of a certain people becomes the image of a certain people. Of course it must be remembered that in order for this to happen, the discourse must be maintained for a long time. The next generation might as well contradict the discourse as accept it.

The next section shall focus on the idea of ‘image’, and how it compares to the discourse of identity above. One key difference is how the study of imagology has, at least traditionally, focused on national images and identities. The aim of the section is to show that imagology offers usable tools for the study of other identities as well.

3.3 Image and Imagology

This section will introduce the study of imagology as a tool for studying the representation of national character. It seems to share certain characteristics with methods discussed above, such as its founding principle of image creation through binary oppositions. Some space is dedicated to discussing how image is portrayed to others as well as to the person himself or herself.

The term ‘image’, as used by imagologists such as Beller (2007: 4), refers to the “mental silhouette of the other, who appears to be determined by the characteristics of family, group, tribe, people or race”. Beller (2007: 4) continues that this image forms our opinion of others and affects the way we behave towards them. According to Beller (2007: 4), cultural discontinuities and differences, which are the result of different languages, religions and everyday habits, can trigger positive or negative judgements and images. Beller (2007: 4) also clarifies that “the truthfulness of such images should be questioned”. This is the definition of and approach to image employed in this study.

Karvonen (1997: 32) reminds us that the term ‘image’ is not limited to visual images, but can also refer to verbal and nonverbal communication, literature and music. Concepts of imagology can therefore be used to study a myriad of interdisciplinary subjects from literature to pieces of music, cinema, newspaper articles, photography and advertisement. Due to space restrictions, the corpus of this study is limited to a work of literature, but it could easily be expanded into a study of, for example, the film adaptation of the novel in question.

According to Beller (2007: 5), the images we have in our heads of foreign cultures are derived from selective value judgements. They are, in turn, derived from selective observation, since we cannot perceive every single detail all at once. Our observations of foreign cultures are often based on literary representations of them,

rather than facts perceived and experienced by us ourselves. Once the partial image is established, it represents the whole. This, to quote Beller (2007: 5), is “an issue of information, or information processing, which, together with our tendency towards value judgements, will generate prejudices”.

The term ‘imagology’ refers to the study of images, most often images of national identities. According to Beller & Leerssen (2007: xii), “the term [imagology] is a technical neologism and applies to research in the field of our mental images of the Other and of ourselves.” One of the key ideas of this field of study is the idea of the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ (capitalisation used by Beller & Leerssen): how for example national identities are constructed in comparison to images of other cultures (see Beller & Leerssen 2007: 79-258 for more detailed discussion on different national stereotypes and images). This same idea was discussed above in section 3.2.3 on binary oppositions.

As has been established above in section 3.2, often identities are constructed as dichotomies, as being in opposition to something else. The choice of what becomes the Other is often based on geographical proximity or close historical ties. In the case of this current study and Scotland, England is the obvious Other for the Scottish Self on both these accounts. Scottishness, or the Scottish Self, can be defined as being something different from Englishness. However, the difference is imagined.

As discussed above in section 3.2.3 on binary oppositions, one pole of the opposition is usually dominant compared to the other. It was mentioned above that the dominant one is highlighted against the background of the other. Beller & Leerssen (2007: xii-xiv) define the dominant one varyingly as ‘the Self’, ‘self-image’ or ‘auto-image’, which is contrasted to ‘the Other’ or the ‘hetero-image’. Another pair of terms introduced by Beller & Leerssen is ‘the spected’ and ‘the spectant’. The ‘spected’ refers to the represented nationality. The nationality is “silhouetted in the

perspectival context of the representing text or discourse” (xiii-xiv), which is defined as ‘the spectant’. The spected requires the spectant as its context.

Since imagology is primarily concerned with national images and stereotypes, Beller and Leerssen (2007: xiv) use the term ‘ethnotype’ to refer to stereotypes formed of ethnicities or nationalities, or, rather, the images of them. These ethnotypes are formed in a discursive and rhetorical environment, and they represent literary and discursive conventions rather than social realities. They exist outside empirical reality and statements of fact. Instead they are created in the world of the imagination. (2007: xiv)

This imagined discourse singles out one nation from all others as being different. It also suggests, according to Beller & Leerssen (2007: xiv) “a collective-psychological motivation for given social or national features”, therefore helping to create a sense of the image as always having been in existence and being the way it is because of inherent psychological motivations. An entire nation sharing a similar psychology is arguably a very dubious theory, and it should not remain unquestioned.

Leerssen (2007: 27-29) reminds us that some key elements of imagology should always be remembered. These include that imagology is concerned with representation and discourse, not society itself. It is a study of images and how things are perceived, not necessarily how they actually are. Images are always subjective, as is their interpretation. The context and conventions of the text in question and the historical context of the image should always be taken into account. The study of imagology is not a study of verifiable truths, but rather the study of stereotypes, as has been stated above. With the concepts of the Self and the Other in mind, we can study how images are formed.

Beller (2007: 7) states that images are important, since we are not always able to distinguish between what we have actually experienced ourselves and what we have derived from culturally accumulated images. The images we have in our heads inform our opinions. However, our opinions are often based on merely stereotypes. The term ‘stereotype’ has been mentioned above, and since it is closely related to the study of images, the next section will focus exclusively on stereotypes.

3.3.1 Stereotyping

Stereotypes are akin to images discussed above in that they refer at least as much to what is imagined as to what is actually perceived (Hall 1997b: 263). According to Lippmann (1991: 79), “our opinions cover a bigger space, a longer reach of time, a greater number of things, than we can directly observe”, and therefore our opinions have to be constructed from what we hear from others and what we imagine ourselves. It can even be said that what we perceive to be facts are often partly made (Lippmann 1991: 80). We imagine most things and form our opinions often before our observations based on experience are made (Lippmann 1991: 90). These are based on things that we have heard previously that have formed into stereotypes in our heads: “we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture” (Lippmann 1991: 81).

Opinions based on stereotypes can be transmitted from one generation to another without question for so long that they no longer seem to be stereotypes, but biological fact (Lippmann 1991: 93). They guarantee our self-respect, since they project upon the world “our own sense of our own value, our own position and our own rights” (Lippmann 1991: 96). Since they are easily digestible simplifications of fact, they make us feel safe and secure in a changing and complex world. This aspect they share with ideas of community and identity discussed above.

Stereotypes can be formed of the Self as well as the Other. Zacharasiewicz (2010: 15) seems to consider the terms ‘autostereotype’ and ‘autoimage’ as interchangeable. By this he refers to the image held by the Self of itself, which is based on simplified imaginings of the Self in contrast to the Other. In any case, he points out that the autostereotype and heterostereotype are formed on prejudices, the origins of which have been studied long before the birth of a field called imagology. The significance of myths supporting collective self-images and strategies of exclusion has been studied by European philologists and scholars of comparative literature.

But it must be remembered always that stereotypes are simplifications, and sometimes dangerous ones at that. According to Hall (1997b: 257), “stereotyping reduces people to a few, simple, essential characteristics, which are represented as fixed by Nature.” When stereotype is fixed, everything that is perceived as different is excluded. This exclusion becomes permanent and natural (1997b: 258). This aspect of stereotyping is closely related to binary oppositions and their power in affecting people’s views.

In time, stereotyping sets up boundaries between what is seen as normal and what is seen as somehow different and deviant. As Hall (1997b: 258) puts it, “it [stereotyping] facilitates the ‘binding’ or bonding together of all of Us who are ‘normal’ into one ‘imagined community’; and it sends into symbolic exile all of Them – the ‘Others’ – who are in some way different”.

The imagological Other is usually not only seen as different, but it is seen as inferior to the Self. Stereotyping occurs where there are inequalities of power (Hall 1997b: 258), and the stereotypes help secure this power imbalance in favour of the dominant pole of this dichotomy. This concept is very similar to the one about binary oppositions discussed above. The idea is the same, although the terminology is slightly different.

The next section will use the concepts of image and stereotyping in the context of entire imagined communities.

3.3.2 Imagined Communities

We saw earlier in section 3.2 how cultures and communities are formed. They stem from common, shared experience and a sense of belonging together with likeminded people who have a shared history and shared interests. This section intends to question this and to show that communities are always somewhat artificial and imagined.

As mentioned above in section 3.2, the study of culture often refers to the study of communities and community as an idea. Culture can exist outside community and it can transcend communal boundaries, but often community is formed based on a unified culture. Shared cultural experience is a strong factor in creating a sense of community. According to Bauman (2001: 2), “in a community, we all understand each other well, we may trust what we hear, we are safe most of the time and hardly ever puzzled or taken aback”. It is a safe place, where a common culture and common ideas can thrive.

But Bauman (2001: 3) also argues that the sense of community and communal experience is always somehow unreal and imagined. In his words, “‘community’ stands for the kind of world which is not, regrettably, available to us – but which we would dearly wish to inhabit and which we hope to repossess”. This sense of an imagined, fabled existence outside current experience is discussed also by Beller & Leerssen (2007) and Anderson (2002). This lack of communal feeling is a noticeable

theme in *Trainspotting*, and will be dealt with in the analysis in section 4 of this study.

Anderson (2002: 5-7) defines nation as an imagined, sovereign political community. He clarifies the terminology he uses as such:

It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. [...] The nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them [...] has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. [...] It is imagined as *sovereign* because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. [...] Finally, it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. [italics in the original]

This is a useful definition of the nation, but the limited space of this study does not allow for a more political approach to the question. For the purposes of this study, the most relevant terms are ‘imagined’ and ‘community’. The communities in *Trainspotting*, if there are any, are at best imagined and artificial.

However, there are several problems relating to this definition of a nation, as Anderson (2002: 5) points out. Firstly, the nation-state is a relatively recent concept in the eyes of historians. It is not until the nineteenth century that the modern concept of the sovereign nation arises in Europe. However, most nations claim to base their roots in the distant, primordial past. The second problem is that the formal universality of nationality, that “in the modern world everyone can, should, will ‘have’ a nationality, as he or she ‘has’ a gender” (2002: 5), whereas the concrete manifestations of nationality are always unique and particular to themselves. The third problem is the political power of nationalisms versus their philosophical poverty and incoherence. Nationalisms are not carefully formed philosophies, but incoherent imaginations based on stereotypes and hearsay. Yet they have a huge political impact on the world.

The above-mentioned sovereignty of nations is sometimes problematic as well. Many nations that have been thought to be fully consolidated find sub-nationalisms inside their borders. These sub-nationalisms are most often not content with their status as merely subsidiary to their parent nation, and they wish to become more independent in both their actions and their identity. (Anderson 2002: 3.)

Anderson (2002: 4) argues that to understand the concepts of nations, nation-ness and nationality, a careful study is needed as to how they come into historical being. Their importance and meaning has changed over the years, thus changing the world views of people and political power relations. They have a profound emotional significance in the lives of many. The next section is concerned with how literature has helped in creating national identities from the nineteenth century onwards to modern times.

3.3.3 Literature as Identity Construction

The majority of modern national identities were formed during the nineteenth century. The process had begun some centuries earlier, but it reached its modern concept in the 1800s. Arguably a great factor in the forming of national identities was literature and the translation of revered works of literature into the vernacular. According to Craig (1999: 9), the historical novelists of the nineteenth century helped create a national imagination, “an imagining of the nation as both the fundamental context of individual life and as the real subject of history”. From this quote we can see that the historical works of fiction became more real to people than actual works of historical fact:

In the novel, the nation [...] was made imaginatively present to the mass public which was one of its principal constituents, and through the novel that public could grasp itself not as an anonymous accumulation

of isolated individuals but as the temporary manifestation of the eternal being of the nation. (Craig 1999: 9.)

Again, as was discussed above in sections 3.2 and 3.2.1, identities are formed by creating a sense of belonging together with people and by separating the 'us' from the 'them'. According to Zacharasiewicz (2010: 19), "the use of national stereotypes in literature and in the specific contexts of regional or national cultures is related to the perennial attempts of groups to maintain their collective identities by distinguishing themselves from other cultures". These national stereotypes have been in existence for a long time, and often the strongest and the most emotionally potent stereotypes are formed of one's closest neighbours.

According to Beller (2007: 11), increasing national awareness from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century provided the characteristic typecasts for literary image formation. The stereotypes related to certain nationalities became fixed in literary works and thus became the image associated to them in the minds of people. Although, as Beller and Leerssen (2007: xii) have stated, literary representations of nationalities were always "commonplace and hearsay rather than empirical observation or statements of fact", this did not stop them from being perceived as reality and contributing to the image of the nation to outsiders.

Beller (2007: 11) argues that the increase in national awareness also provoked the question "if our images of the various nations are of an essential or fictional nature. This would mean that the question of the veracity of national images has been posed a long time ago: "The invention of the nation and the clarification of what actually constitutes a nation are the two sides of the same historical coin" (2007: 11). Apparently this dialogue concerning the nation and what it means has been going on for hundreds of years without a clear, unambiguous answer.

Craig (1999: 31) also sees the national imagination as a dialogue, rather than a transcendental identity. The dialogue is between “the various pressures and inheritances that constitute that particularity of human experience”. It takes place within boundaries that are, to Craig’s eyes, seemingly arbitrary, but which nevertheless define the limits of the dialogue. This fits in with the idea discussed above that the image and identity being formed through discourse and dialogue rather than empirical fact. The nation consists of people who are in relation to one another. The nation forms its identity, “not by the autonomous unity of its language or its culture but by its inner debates and by the dialectic of its dialects” (1999: 116).

The dialogue mentioned by Craig, however, does not remain inside its boundaries, but spills over and out into several territories. This leads to a lack of cohesion in the “narrative of the nation”, which cannot be “accommodated within the continuities demanded by the genre of national history” (1999: 237).

Craig (1999) argues that although Scottish novelists have been successful – from Sir Walter Scott in the nineteenth century to, for example, Ian Rankin, Alasdair Gray, James Kelman and Irvine Welsh in the late twentieth century – the state of the Scottish novel is one of failure. What he means by this is arguably that the novels do not succeed in portraying Scotland in a coherent way. He makes the connection between this failure of the national novel and the failure of Scottish culture as a whole, “or, rather, the failure of Scottish culture to *be* whole” (1999: 21, italics in the original). The incoherence of the image portrayed in Scottish novels seems to reflect the incoherence of the Scottish nation itself.

Caughie (1983, cited in Petrie 2004: 6) reminds us that there is a distinction between a representation and what is representative, particularly in regard to nation and nationality: “While the former process tends to stress ideas of national unity and continuity as providing a distinct brand that can be sold within global image markets, the latter offers diversity, difference and even the possibility of dialogue *within* the

audio-visual space of the nation”. Petrie (2004: 17) himself argues that Scotland has misrepresented itself as a collection of kitschy memorabilia loosely related to Scottish stereotypes that harken back to an imagined and distant past.

Incoherence of identities and images of Scotland, Scottishness and different subcultures within Scottishness are portrayed in *Trainspotting*. As a work of modern, popular literature it helps create and modify a certain version of the incoherent Scottish identity. Arguably this incoherence is a symptom of a postmodern, fluid identity. As was discussed in sections above, identities seem to be in constant motion. They are a representation, an image based on discourse, rather than empirical fact.

The next section will briefly summarise what is discussed in sections above and define the terms used in this study. After this introduction of the theoretical tools used in this study follows their application to the interpretation of the novel and the images and identities portrayed in it.

3.4 A Summary

From the theories presented above one can draw the conclusion that they all deal with the same phenomena with slightly differing terminology. Identity and image are always constructs. The different definitions of culture presented above can be condensed into one overarching definition that is used in this study: culture is what connects a certain group of people and makes them distinct from others.

Culture, identity and image are formed in opposition to their polar opposites which are constructed as ‘the other’. The basis of forming this polar opposite may not be grounded in empirical fact. This leads to the polar opposites being merely stereotypes

based on half-truths and imagination. Cultural theorists use the term ‘binary oppositions’, while imagologists use the terms ‘autoimage’ and ‘heteroimage’, but the meaning of the terms is essentially the same: that culture, identity and image are created through comparison and contrast. The Self is always created by comparing and contrasting it to something that is imagined as the Other.

In this study, the identities and images studied in detail are those of subcultures and nationality. To describe how they are formed by contrasting them with their polar opposites, this study uses the terms of imagology: the Self and the Other, or autoimage and heteroimage. Other terms have been used in other studies, but for the sake of clarity, this study uses imagological terms. In order to make the imagological terms distinct from the nouns ‘self’ and ‘other’, capitalisation is used whenever referring to the tools of imagology introduced in section 3.3.

4 IDENTITY AND IMAGE IN *TRAINSPOTTING*

The sections above have established the theories and tools employed in this study, the terminology they use, and the extent of the study. The theories presented above all use differing terminology to talk about essentially the same subject; identity and image, and how they are constructed through dichotomy, comparison and contrast. This section and its subsections shall use the theoretical background presented above to study the different aspects of identity and image in *Trainspotting* through a close reading of chapters “The First Day of the Edinburgh Festival”, “In Overdrive”, “The Glass”, “Victory on a New Year’s Eve”, “Speedy Recruitment”, “Na Na and Other Nazis”, “Searching for the Inner Man”, “House Arrest”, and “Bang to Rites”. The key argument is that identity and image are formed through difference, contradiction, binary opposites and the discourse between the opposites. There are several binary oppositions of the Self and the Other in *Trainspotting*, which results in a meeting point of images and cultures, all in some sort of relation to one another.

The section is divided into subsections according to the different dichotomies represented in the novel. The national identity of the Scots is discussed in section 4.1. This is followed by discussion on subculture identities of addicts, religious groups and ethnic minorities compared to Scots in sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4, respectively. The theme of national identity is addressed again later in section 4.5, where the focus of the study is on the internal image that the Scots have of themselves. These discussions on differing takes on national identity shall serve as bookends to section 4, with discussion on other identities between them.

The binary oppositions presented in section 4 are based on personal observations and reading of the novel. The aim of this particular organisation of topics is to lead the reader from a macrocosm of nations and states into the microcosm of the individual Self, and to show that the same principles can be seen to be at work at every level of image and identity creation.

The first subsection, 4.1, will look at how the dichotomy of Scotland and in England has been portrayed traditionally, and how it differs from the view presented in *Trainspotting*. The emphasis will be on how this dichotomy forms the characters' identities in the novel, but some comparisons are made to the traditional portrayals of the subject to illustrate the argument.

4.1 Scotland and England

Traditionally Scotland sees itself in opposition to England. Because of close geographical proximity and historical ties, the Scots and the English easily form stereotypes of each other. England seems to be constantly present in Scottish culture, whether it is explicitly mentioned or not. Finlayson (1987: 61) argues that the Scots have suffered in the hands of the English for centuries, for example in the form of the Highland clearances during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when Scottish crofters were banished from their homes by English landowners, and this has resulted in a deeply rooted hatred and mistrust towards them. Kay (1986: 58) agrees to a certain extent, saying that while English culture per se has not been reviled in Scotland, but the English nation was “regarded with an hostility [sic] born of centuries of distrust and warfare”.

The relationship with England was based on stereotyping on both sides of the border. Kay continues to point out that the English represented Scotland as stereotypes in newspaper cartoons and music hall tradition without regard to the reality of the matter or the cultural sensitivities of the Scots, and the Scots themselves accepted these stereotypes (1986: 125). In literature, including the novel in question in this study, England and Englishness are regularly mentioned and contrasted with Scotland and Scottishness.

What clearly separates Scotland from England in *Trainspotting* is the language. As the bulk of the novel is written in a style that emulates the spoken dialects of Edinburgh, and Leith in particular, it distances the novel from English literature already in its language and typography. The chapters that are written in a non-standard variety of English use first person narration and free indirect speech to represent the characters' thoughts and actions. Some chapters use a stream-of-consciousness narration to represent the characters' thoughts. Often this technique is used to portray the troubled nature of their train of thought, such as in chapter "House Arrest", where Renton hallucinates due to withdrawal symptoms from heroin. The presumed intent of the author here mirrors that of the characters: both try to distance themselves from the dominant English culture via their use of language.

According to Kay (1986: 22), the Scots have an identity connected to their language that does not have any parallels anywhere else in the English-speaking world. In connection with this, Craig (1999) argues that the negative image of Scotland is related to the linguistic differences within the nation: "the national imagination is seen as necessarily divided between competing expressions of national traditions rather than fulfilling itself as the unfolding of a single and unified identity" (1999: 112).

The language used in the novel arguably demonstrates this unparalleled identity. Some constantly appearing Scottishisms include 'ah' instead of 'I', 'ay' instead of 'of' and 'tae' instead of 'to'. The form of these pronouns and prepositions, the commonest among the parts of the clause, show that the characters are distinctly Scottish and their language reflects it. The examples used throughout this analysis section are verbatim quotes from the text. An explanation of a certain word is provided in cases where there is a danger of misunderstanding.

Some of the characters, noticeably Renton and Sick Boy, are able to use standard English as well. Changing the language variety takes places when they need to acquire something or to make an impression: to seduce women or to convince the judge to not sentence them to prison (chapters “In Overdrive” and “Courting Disaster”, respectively). This earns them Begbie’s respect and validation for their actions and existence as Begbie’s acquaintances, since it is a talent that Begbie lacks but can benefit him by proxy: “The rid-heided cunt kin be quite stylish, ah huv tae gie um that; he’s goat style” (Welsh 2004: 117). They take on a role, a different identity, for their personal gain by using a different variety of language from what they normally use.

Perhaps for some of the characters, for example Spud and Begbie, the choice of language is not conscious, but it nevertheless affects their identity. The arguably more intelligent characters, Renton and Sick Boy are conscious of the effect that their language has on other people and how they behave towards them. Here again, identity is nothing but a construct, represented through language.

However, Craig (1999) points out that the dialect used in *Trainspotting* gestures to a lost community that has ceased to exist. He likens the dialect to the abandoned Leith Central Station in the novel, where one cannot participate in the pastime pleasure of spotting trains, to which the title of the novel refers. It can be argued that the language used in the novel is an attempt to create a sense of community that seems lost to the characters. When all other ways of feeling connected to other people have failed, the language is what remains. The fact that the identity based on the language and its opposition to standard English is imagined, makes no difference.

Farred (2004) points out that while the Scots desire to imagine themselves as geographically and culturally autonomous, they are not independent. This renders them “a peculiar institution, the stateless nation, an internal colony within the British state which clings precariously to its ‘difference’ from England” (2004: 216). The

Scottish identity is constructed through an imagined difference in this case. The idea of colonisation by the British is addressed in *Trainspotting* in one of its most often quoted passages:

It's nae good blamin' it oan the English fir colonising us. Ah don't hate the English. They're just wankers. We are colonised by wankers. We can't even pick a decent, vibrant, healthy culture to be colonised by. No. We're ruled by effete arseholes. What does that make us? The lowest of the fuckin low, the scum of the earth. The most wretched, servile, miserable, pathetic trash that was ever shat intae creation. Ah don't hate the English. They jist get oan wi the shite thuv goat. Ah hate the Scots. (Welsh 2004: 78)

It appears that there is a thread of postcolonial discourse in the formation of Scottish identity. According to Finlayson (1987), the Scots are seen to be a prideful people who are concerned mainly “to resist being assimilated into an English culture” (1987: 16). Being oppressed by England seems to be a part of the Scottish state of mind. However, Renton dismisses this notion and lays the blame on the Scots themselves for the state of their nation. This seems to agree with the idea presented by Edwin Muir (1935, cited in Finlayson 1987: 61) that the Scots are not an oppressed nation, but a depressed one searching for the reason for their depression. Discussion on the passage quoted above will continue later in section 4.5, where the same passage can be used as an argument for anti-nationalism and the Scots' self-deprecation.

Finlayson (1987) argues that the Scottish identity is based on the idea of a “distinctive, archaic culture, rich in tradition” (1987: 18), but which is not based on reality. Instead, what is left to portray their culture are “the touristic, trumpery fetishes of lochs and bens, crags and glens, kilts and claymores, haggis and Highland whisky, porridge and pipers” (1987: 18). Farred (2004) argues that the only way for the Scots to survive is an abolition of nationalistic sentiment and leaving the past behind, although it would seem that the past – half imagined, half reduced to cheap, kitschy stereotypes – is all they have (2004: 225).

The other option is to identify with English culture, which is most often out of the question. It can be seen in the novel that the characters do not wish to identify themselves with Britain or English culture. Renton cannot identify with a pub sign, “Rule Britannia”: “Ah’ve never felt British, because ah’m not. It’s ugly and artificial” (Welsh 2004: 228). The hegemony of the English in the United Kingdom seems distant to him. The concept of a unified Britain is, to him, artificial. However, he continues:

Ah’ve never felt a fuckin thing about countries, other than total disgust. They should abolish the fuckin lot ay them. Kill every fuckin parasite politician that ever stood up and mouthed lies and fascist platitudes in a suit and a smarmy smile. (2004: 228)

Renton’s Self does not seem to be based on being Scottish – the Other being English or British – but on his hatred of nations general.

Farred (2004: 226) sees the sense of a nation is like an addictive ideological drug to the Scots, which offers “the memory of a cultural and political ‘high’”. According to him, *Trainspotting* is a “rebuttal to any romantic notion of Scottish nationalism” (2004: 217). He argues that the Scots have failed as a nation and that their sense of nationalism has no foundation and no future, and that *Trainspotting* articulates this failure. According to Farred (2004: 223), the Scottish resistance is “nothing but a self-aggrandizing effort to rewrite their own history of defeat, to overcompensate for devastating losses with epics of excessive bravery”. It would appear that the Scottish resistance to English rule is an image created and exaggerated in order to serve the needs of Scottish nationalism. It can be argued that it is precisely because the imaginary quality of the difference from England is noticed by the characters that they despise Scottish nationalism.

If they do not exactly despise Scottishness, they can take advantage of it. Sick Boy seduces women by using stereotypes of Scotland, yet he despises the women he is seducing and their “posh English colonial voices” (Welsh 2004: 29). Later on in the novel we see that he has moved beyond taking personally advantage of the women

and essentially using them as prostitutes to others (Welsh 2004: 174). He does this in order to fill an emptiness inside him that not even heroin can fill. This emptiness is also what leads the other characters to use heroin.

The next section will focus on the addicts as a subculture, and how the subculture is formed against the background of the law-abiding citizens and conventional society. There are several different addictions portrayed in the novel, but their cause is the same – a sense of emptiness and meaninglessness that must be remedied by substance abuse, mindless violence or sex.

4.2 Addicts and Conventional Society

Since the protagonists of the novel are primarily consumers of hard drugs and alcohol, the position of the Self in the novel is most often that of the addict. The Scots tend to set themselves apart from the English also concerning alcohol and drug consumption. Edwin Muir (1935, cited in Finlayson 1987: 203) describes the alcohol consumption of the Scots as spasmodic and intense, “for the sake of a momentary but complete release”, whereas “the English like to bathe and paddle about bucolically in a mild puddle of beer”. Muir seems to take a certain pride in this behaviour, and belittles the English and their weak drinking habits.

Finlayson (1987: 218-219) has argued that the Scots consume excessive amounts of alcohol and drugs in order to improve their physical and spiritual health, although not succeeding in it. The reasons seem to be the “intolerable conditions of society” (1987: 218) and that “the material world is too much with the Scots” (1987: 214). Particularly among the unemployed and the disadvantaged – precisely the major protagonists of the novel – drug consumption seemed to surpass alcohol in the 1980s as the primary source of consolation. Finlayson is concerned of the usage of drugs

reaching crisis proportions in the late 1980s, which is the era where *Trainspotting* is set. He mentions risks of catching disease from sharing needles, which is a concern voiced in the novel as well (Welsh 2004: 9-10). What is not mentioned by Finlayson is the physical addiction caused by drugs and alcohol.

Addiction is one of the strongest themes in the novel, whether it is associated with drugs, alcohol or violence. The characters in the novel seem to have a deeply-rooted hatred and contempt towards regular, law-abiding citizens. Their habit of injecting heroin into their veins has contributed to their sense of the self by creating a distinct subculture which only belongs to them. Other people who are not addicts cannot understand the characters' motivations, and are despised because of it. Addiction helps them form their sense of the Self, which is pitted against the conventions of society, the Other.

The group of addicts share needles in order to inject heroin into their veins. The choice of words, 'sharing', is significant here. The sharing of the needles is a communal act that brings the users together into a community that operates outside the law and the conventions of society. Although, as briefly mentioned above, the act of sharing has its problems, i.e. catching a deadly virus such as HIV, the sharing works as a means of creating a subculture and a community and reinforces the characters' identity. In this role, heroin is a fickle friend, as can be seen when Renton tries to stop his habit of using it and suffers from withdrawal symptoms, for example in the chapter "House Arrest". In addition, we see in chapter "Bad Blood" a support group of people diagnosed as HIV positive trying to find something in common in their hard times. The sense of community created by the support group is negligible at best:

The members of the group were in a roughly similar medical condition. We were all anti-body positive, but still largely asymptomatic. Paranoia was never far from the surface at our meetings; everybody seemed to be furtively checking out everyone else's lymph glands for signs of swelling. It was disconcerting to feel people's eyes stray to the side of your face during conversation. (Welsh 2004: 239)

Particularly when Renton is suffering from withdrawal symptoms after an attempt to stop using heroin, he has no sympathy whatsoever to anyone but himself. In the chapter “The First Day of the Edinburgh Festival”, an elderly person on the bus is nothing but an obstacle to him, and he imagines him dying slowly to compensate for the inconvenience he has caused him by delaying the bus:

She sits directly in front ay us. Ma eyes burrow intae the back ay her heid. Ah’m willing her tae have a brain haemorrhage or a massive cardiac arrest... no. Ah stoap to think. If that happened, it would only haud us back even mair. (Welsh 2004: 18)

It is a nihilistic and self-centred view, placing the Self – seen as a suffering addict – above those who cannot understand the discomforts that the withdrawal symptoms cause. They are constructed as the Other. The only image Renton has of this elderly person is her position as an obstacle to him that delays him from getting what he wants.

Finlayson (1987: 69) argues that the Scots find satisfaction in the “conventional respectability of the sober-minded working and middle classes”. The characters in the novel do not fit in this description. Theirs is an undiluted contempt for these sober-minded people. Either they do not consider themselves as Scots in this sense, or they simply disagree with this appreciation of the working and middle classes. Although they themselves belong to these very classes, with the emphasis perhaps being more in the working and lower middle class, it seems that only the addicts are the associates with which the protagonists wish to spend their time. Renton is said to have enrolled into Aberdeen University, but it is revealed that he never finished his degree and that he was unwilling to form any social contacts there (Welsh 2004: 182). Thus he identifies more with the uneducated addicts.

However, when heroin is concerned, even the other addicts are of no consequence to the protagonists. As Mother Superior says in the novel, there are “nae friends in this game. Jist associates” (Welsh 2004: 6). This would suggest a breakdown of a sense

of community and communal sympathy. The characters' addiction has displaced the need for a community. The only things that matter are the Self and heroin – other people are merely either the means of acquiring heroin, obstacles in the way or irrelevant bystanders. What Sick Boy describes as “rampant individualism” (Welsh 2004: 30) has replaced community as the most important factor in the characters' identity. This would agree with Bauman's view of community, and identity as a surrogate for it. It is notable that the identity in question is based on communal consumption of heroin, thus placing the newly-formed subculture outside the rules and norms of accepted society.

There are other addictions than drugs in the novel. Begbie seems to be addicted to violence, and Sick Boy has an unquenchable sexual appetite. They both seem to develop this addiction to find some meaning in their lives. The reason is the same as with the heroin addicts:

A void grows within ye. Junk fills the void, and also helps us tae satisfy ma need tae destroy masel, the anger turned in bit again. (Welsh 2004: 186)

There is a void in the characters' lives that must be filled with drugs, sex or violence. The addiction places them outside the conventions of society and thus secures their identity as part of a distinct subculture.

The feeling of resistance, of not wanting the easy and comfortable way of living, is not unprecedented in Scottish literature. One of the key figures of early twentieth century Scottish literature, Hugh MacDiarmid (1952: 41-42), has written about Scottish pubs in the following manner:

We do not like the confiding, the intimate, the ingratiating, the hail-fellow-well-met, but prefer the unapproachable, the hard-bitten, the recalcitrant, the sinister, the malignant, the sarcastic, the saturnine, the cross-grained and the cankered, and the howling wilderness to the amenities of civilization, the irascible to the affable, the prickly to the smooth. We have no damned fellow-feeling at all.

It would seem that the characters in *Trainspotting* cherish above-mentioned behaviour and our proud to act in this manner.

In the chapter “The Glass”, Begbie throws a glass pint from a second floor balcony, and it lands on the head of a woman. There is no discernible reason for Begbie’s actions, and when the woman is hit on the head with the pint, he starts looking for the person who allegedly did this. The only motivation for Begbie seems to be to start a fight in the pub, in which he succeeds. He continues the fight to the point where he turns against the people who initially helped him in the fight. There is an excuse for him, in that his brother was once assaulted and he is looking for the persons responsible. However, the truth of this reason is put into question:

That wis bullshit. Beggar’s brother, Joe, was stabbed in a fight in a pub at Niddrie years ago. The fight wis ay his ain makin, and he wisnae badly hurt. In any case Franco and Joe hated each other. (Welsh 2004: 82).

In the chapter “In Overdrive”, Sick Boy narrates that he requires sex and the acquisition of new sexual partners:

[...] because as long as there’s an opportunity tae get off wi a woman and her purse, and that’s it, that is it, ah’ve found fuck all else, ZERO, tae fill this big, BLACK HOLE like a clenched fist in the centre ay my fucking chest... (Welsh 2004: 31)

There is an emptiness in Sick Boy that must be filled somehow. After the death of a child that is presumed to be Sick Boy’s, he stops using heroin. After the drugs are gone, all that is left for him is sex. He goes so far as to start acting as a pimp and selling the services of prostitutes to his friends (Welsh 2004: 174).

When Renton tries to stop using heroin, he needs to find other sources for pleasure and addiction to replace heroin. One such source for him is sex. In the chapter “First Shag in Ages” Renton establishes a dialogue with a young girl, Dianne, at a bar in the hope of seducing her. He finds a common topic of conversation with Dianne in

underground music. By this conversation they identify each other as belonging to the same subculture and thus deciding that they can converse together. Their shared interest eventually leads them to leave together for Dianne's apartment. However, the conversation is not entirely genuine and without ulterior motives. Because Renton has not had any sexual encounters in such a long time, he leaves much unsaid in order to not upset the potential sex partner. First he argues about the quality of Simple Minds' later albums, but eventually he decides to agree with Dianne so as to not upset her and ruin the potential relationship. This proves again the shifting nature of identity based on a subculture. Nothing is certain and everything is subject to change for the person's own benefit. Ultimately the Self is created in such a way that is the most advantageous compared to everything else that is the Other.

The conclusion of this section is that addiction compensates for the loss of community and therefore creates a sense of identity. The state of addiction is juxtaposed with the conventional society and its rules and norms. Although addiction to heroin is the most noticeable of the addictions portrayed in the novel, there are other forms of addiction as well with the same underlying causes and effects.

The next section will move into discussing another set of subcultures in the novel that act as polar opposites of one another: Catholics and Protestants. In the novel, Renton's family comes from both of these religious groups, placing him in the middle of the binary opposition, but identifying more clearly with Catholics, rendering Protestants as the Other.

4.3 Catholics and Protestants

The tradition of religious sectarianism is infamously stronger in Ireland and Northern Ireland than in Scotland. However, Scotland has a high number of Irish immigrants

and their descendants, who have brought with them the Catholic faith. According to Kay (1986: 60), the English imposed a Protestant religion upon Scotland, which also helped secure the English language as the official language of the state. In later times, particularly in Glasgow, issues of sectarianism between Catholics and Protestants have been a visible problem. Although the novel takes place predominantly in Edinburgh and its suburbs, there are constant mentions of sectarianism. This would imply that it is not a problem related exclusively to Glasgow and its inhabitants.

Renton's father is from a Protestant family and his mother is a Catholic (Welsh 2004: 37, 218). This arguably has contributed to his sense of the Self as a member of both rival religious groups. He probably identifies himself slightly more on the same side as his mother, but this is not apparently caused by religious reasons. Instead, his identity is motivated by his dislike of the violent behaviour of the militant Protestants with which his father and brother are identified. However, neither religious group seems to be a desirable source of identification for him, and he imagines both groups as the Other: "Ayesur papish bastards oan ma Ma's side, soapdodging orange cunts oan ma faither's" (Welsh 2004: 218).

Protestants and Catholics can be seen as polar opposites of one another. Each constructs the other religious group as their opposite in every way. Although the differences in ideology are not such as to warrant the oppositeness, the otherness is constructed nevertheless on imaginary qualities. It can be argued that the majority of those involved in the conflict between the two sects of Christianity are not even aware of the exact theological differences between the two.

More important is the communal effect of the religion. The sense of the Self for Protestants is constructed on the basis that they are not Catholics, and vice versa. The Other is imagined as everything that is inferior, despicable and ridiculous, and nothing to do with the Self. The two groups do not traditionally mix, in the fear of

being cast outside one's own group and branded as similarly inferior as the stereotype of the Other suggests.

In Scotland, sport, and more precisely, football, is closely related to the religious sectarianism. Some football teams are traditionally Catholic, while some are Protestant, and their supporters do not generally mix. Renton sometimes participates in friendly banter about football, but most often he distances himself from it, calling the conversation depressing (Welsh 2004: 237). Arguably football serves as a means of creating a community and a culture, but not for Renton. He can use the discourse of fellow football enthusiasts talking about their sport in order to fit in a group, but most often he chooses not to. He places himself outside the football community, choosing to create his identity by constructing the football enthusiasts as the Other. It can be argued that his reluctance in identifying with the football supporters is caused by his contempt of the religious rivalry between Catholics and Protestants. Another reason could be that he despises the imagined communities that the supporters of the football teams form and their false sense of community.

In the chapter "Victory on a New Year's Eve", the narrator, Stevie, declares that "[f]ootball divisions were a stupid and irrelevant nonsense, acting against the interests of working class unity, ensuring that the bourgeoisie's hegemony went unchallenged" (Welsh 2004: 48). This breakdown of the working class unity can be seen to agree with Bauman's view of identity replacing community as a source of comfort and a sense of belonging. In this case, the identity, or the Self, is constructed on partly on religious grounds, but more importantly on a sense of being different from the supporters of the opposing team, imagining them as the Other.

Particularly in the chapters narrated by Renton, especially in "Bang to Rites", there are several derogatory names used to describe people of a religious persuasion. Words like "Huns", "soapdodgers", "Orange cunts" are used to refer to Protestants. Words like "Fenian" (an umbrella term for 'a supporter of the Irish nationalism', but

now used as a derogatory term for Catholics) are heard by the characters when the aforementioned Protestant militants use them against the protagonists. Renton's brother is said to have enrolled in the army and is a supporter of Protestant hegemony in Northern Ireland (Welsh 2004: 221). Renton despises his brother's nationalistic fervour and finds it ridiculous, as he seems to find the idea of nationalism altogether.

After his brother dies in an IRA bombing in Northern Ireland, Renton narrates the funeral and wake, where he shows his contempt for both the army and the Protestant fanatics. He says that his brother did not even understand the reasons for the conflict, and just did what he was told (Welsh 2004: 210). His family on his father's side consists mainly of Protestants, which nearly lands Renton into a fight as he provokes and aggravates a member of the family with his disparaging comments about the army and religion. Renton sees himself as superior to the Protestant community that his father and brother represent. He constructs his identity partly by identifying with his mother's Catholic heritage, but most importantly by separating himself from the militant Protestants and constructing them, in his mind, as the Other.

Although there are several mentions of religion in *Trainspotting*, the novel is not preoccupied with it. The issue of religion as such is not discussed in the novel in detail. No theological discussion on the differences of Catholicism and Protestantism can be found. What is being discussed is the characters', particularly Renton's attitude towards it, and that only in the chapters concerning his relationship with his brother and his family. Religion is only important in chapters relating to Renton's family. Elsewhere in the novel, Renton does not mention issues of religion. Renton's anti-Protestantism is not a brand of Catholicism, but instead it is a rejection of religion and religious communities. Religion does not play a significant part in the other characters' stories, with the sole exception of one of the chapters narrated by Spud, "Na Na and Other Nazis".

In the chapter “Na Na and Other Nazis” Spud and his uncle Dode come across a group of Protestant skinheads in a pub. They suffer a barrage of insults from the skinheads. Although the initial motivation for the insults is Dode’s skin colour – he is of West Indian origin, more of which will be discussed below in section 4.4 – the insults turn into religiously motivated ones when Spud intervenes. He is identified as a “Fenyin” (‘Fenian’) for defending his dark-skinned uncle. Arguably the point of the insults is not whether the object of insults is different according to race or faith, but simply because he is seen as different, the Other. In this case, the Otherness is constructed even more clearly on imaginary qualities than usual, since the skinheads have no way of knowing Spud’s religious beliefs. He is identified as a Catholic merely on the basis of his defending his uncle and standing up to the verbal abuse. He thus becomes the recipient of all the imaginary qualities that the skinheads project unto the Other.

It can be argued that, particularly in the case of Renton, the Self is formed in opposition to the Other partly on religious terms, but more importantly on the image of difference. Renton does not take part in the theological discussion between Catholicism and Protestantism. Instead, his loathing of the Protestants is based on their communal and institutionalised violence and hatred against the Catholics. Renton identifies more with the Catholics, but only because he hates the Protestants represented in the novel.

The next section will look more closely at the aforementioned racially motivated abuse. In some chapters, the Scots are contrasted to immigrants and ethnic minorities in Scotland, rendering them as the Other to the Scottish Self.

4.4 Scots and Ethnic Minorities

As mentioned above, there are several mentions of other nationalities than the Scots in the novel. The history of immigration to the United Kingdom is so long that immigrant cultures have permeated British, and by extension, Scottish culture. The sheer volume of immigrants from South Asia has resulted in every Asian immigrant being labelled as ‘Pakis’. This has also become a derogatory term. The ‘Pakis’ in this case are a condensed stereotype of a large group of people of varying ethnicities. The qualities attributed to them are for the most part imagined and stereotypical. They are constructed as the Other to the Scottish Self, and all it takes for them to be labelled as the Other is a slightly darker skin tone. The Other is seen as exotic, different and somewhat inferior to the Self. The Scottish Self is constructed based on its originality, its sense of a long-reaching past and of always being there in its homeland. These are all the opposites of the Other.

In the chapter “Na Na and Other Nazis”, Spud’s uncle Dode - whose father is a sailor from the West Indies – is the recipient of regular racially motivated violence and verbal abuse. Racial taunts include the Protestant skinheads discussed in the section above singing “Ain’t no black in the Union Jack” (Welsh 2004: 127). To the skinheads in the chapter, it does not matter whether the person who is seen as different is different by race or by religion. The point is that there is observable difference of some kind, and the different is constructed as inferior and as the Other. By doing this, the skinheads construct their own image of the Self as pure-bred Scots, and as masculine men who are capable of defending their ground against the intruding foreigners, who, in their minds, do not belong in Scotland. Their self-image is one that excludes difference and supports a unified culture of Scottishness. Whatever that Scottishness means, is up to question.

The dark skin tone, according to Renton, does not only attract the attention of the skinheads, but also the attention of the police and magistrates (Welsh 2004: 126).

This would argue for a more institutionalised form of racism being portrayed in the novel. The image of the Other has, in the minds of the authority, accumulated properties of criminality and untrustworthiness. This helps the Scottish skinheads to construct their sense of the Self as being morally righteous and law-abiding citizens, compared to the scheming, criminal foreigners.

Spud does not participate in this form of Scottishness. He despises all sorts of violence and cruelty, and describes the situation as being “aw [all] hate” (Welsh 2004: 127). Although Welsh portrays Spud as intellectually inferior to the other protagonists by portraying him to be often at a loss for words and repeating phrases such as “likesay”, he is nevertheless seen as a sort of spokesperson for morality and humanism. Renton looks up to Spud and his naïve optimism. After he has stopped Renton and Sick Boy from torturing a squirrel, Renton is overcome by emotion and confesses to Spud, showing his admiration towards him and his reluctance at openly proclaiming his feelings:

Yir one ay the best, man. Remember that. That’s no drink n drugs talkin, that’s me talkin. It’s jist thit ye git called aw the poofs under the sun if ye tell other guys how ye feel about them if yir no wrecked... (Welsh 2004: 161.)

Renton agrees with Spud, although his morality is more questionable. He comments on Begbie’s violent behaviour thusly:

Ah hate cunts like that. Cunts like Begbie. Cunts that are intae baseball-batting every fucker that’s different; pakis, poofs and what huv ye. Fuckin failures in a country ay failures. (Welsh 2004: 78.)

The point here is that the violence is aimed at “every fucker that’s different”, never mind the origin or the reality of the difference. Ethnic and sexual minorities are grouped together under the label of difference. The difference is imagined, and the difference from the Other serves as a building block for the Self. Renton, however, sees that the violence is nothing but a desperate effort to construct meaning and not succeeding in it; they are “failures in a country ay failures”.

Spud's uncle Dode seems to accept his fate as a target for taunts and mockery: "Ah've hud a lot worse n the past, and ah'll huv a hellay lot worse in the future" (Welsh 2004: 129). He has identified himself with being an immigrant in Scotland and being different from the majority. His identity and image are formed in opposition to the skinheads who taunt him. His resignation seems passive and submissive, but it could be argued to be passive aggressive. He shows his superiority to the skinheads by not stooping down to their level.

Although apparently some would say that the Scots are not racists to the same extent as the English are, Spud does not agree with this: "Ah sortay jist laugh whin some cats say that racism's an English thing and we're aw Jock Tamson's bairns up here ... it's likesay pure shite man, gades talking through their erses." (Welsh 2004: 126). Arguably the idea of racism being something that the English are famous for is again one way for the Scots to construct their identity and image as better than their southern neighbours. Spud and Renton see the image as artificial and disagree with it. Instead, they argue that Scots are just as bad as the English concerning racism and xenophobia. With their anti-racism they distance themselves from the image of racist Scottishness.

This leads to the next section and the Scots' antagonism against themselves as a nation and as individuals. It would appear that while the Scots in the novel find their identity by contrasting themselves with other cultures, ultimately what is left as a building block for the Self is the individual set against everything else.

4.5 Scots and Other Scots

Issues of nationalism and images of nations have already been discussed above in section 4.1. This section will return to the subject, but with a slightly different point of view. While section 4.1 focused on the creation of Scottish identity in opposition to Englishness, this section aims to show how the characters' identity is created in opposition to other Scots and, ultimately, in opposition to everyone and everything that is seen as the Other. While this section is entitled "Scots and Other Scots", perhaps it is well to note that it seems that the characters' ultra-individualism causes them to set themselves against everyone else. The point is not necessarily them being Scottish and resisting other Scots, but them resisting other people and communities in general, and creating their identity based on their individual difference from everyone else.

According to Finlayson (1987: 80), the Scots "blame others more than they are able to blame themselves". Arguably this is the reason for the creation of Scottish identity in opposition to the English, as they are seen as the cause of all of Scotland's problems. However, Finlayson and Welsh agree that the Scots are to blame themselves. The passage with Renton's monologue on Scottishness that was discussed above in section 4.1 is relevant again:

It's nae good blamin' it oan the English fir colonising us. Ah don't hate the English. They're just wankers. We are colonised by wankers. We can't even pick a decent, vibrant, healthy culture to be colonised by. No. We're ruled by effete arseholes. What does that make us? The lowest of the fuckin low, the scum of the earth. The most wretched, servile, miserable, pathetic trash that was ever shat intae creation. Ah don't hate the English. They jist get oan wi the shite thuv goat. Ah hate the Scots. (Welsh 2004: 78)

Renton blames the Scots for their own problems, not the English as has been the tradition. Another occasion where this view can be seen is in the chapter mentioned above in section 4.1, where Renton comes across a pub sign, "Rule Britannia". He

compares the reference to a famous nationalistic eighteenth century song “Rule, Britannia!” to its Scottish equivalent, “Scotland the Brave”:

Ah’ve never felt Scottish either, though. Scotland the brave, ma arse; Scotland the shitein cunt. We’d throttle the life oot ay each other fir the privilege ay rimmin some English aristocrat’s piles. (Welsh 2004: 228)

If the English are indeed “wankers”, the Scots are even worse by being colonised by such a people. The problem that Renton has with nationalism is not concentrated on the English being oppressors, but rather that the Scots themselves are to blame for their own state of affairs. He rejects the notion of nationalistic sentiment altogether.

Beller and Leerssen (2007) argue that in the discourse on nations and their imagined qualities, one nation is singled out by being somehow different, and that there is a “moral, characterological, collective-psychological motivation for given social or national features” (2007: xiv). The characters in the novel, particularly Renton, disagree with this and refuse to take part in the discourse on what it is to be Scottish. In Renton’s mind, there is no collective-psychological sense of Scottishness. According to Farred (2004: 217), “*Trainspotting* is the voice of the disaffected, the postmodern, postindustrial Scottish junkie-as-critic who rejects the romance of his nation's history in favor of a scathing attack on Scotland's historic anti-Englishness”. Finlayson (1987: 61) argues that the Scots have cherished their imagined sense of the past, since it offers them a substitute for true folk sentiment. Renton’s identity seems to be based on his being not only anti-English but also anti-Scottish. He raises himself above other Scots, seeing them as the Other and thus creating a highly individualistic sense of the Self.

Renton groups the other Scots into the categories presented in sections from 4.1 to 4.4. There are the militant Protestant skinheads who hate everyone different, whether the difference is based on religion or skin colour (sections 4.3 and 4.4). There are the respectable members of conventional society who cannot understand the lives of the disenfranchised drug addicts outside society (section 4.2). Then there are those who

blame the misfortunes of the Scots on the English (section 4.1). Renton places himself outside all these groups. This is also what, according to Farred (2004: 221), differentiates him from his friends.

Ultimately Renton betrays and leaves even his closest acquaintances. This is portrayed in the final chapter of the novel, "Station to Station". His sense of the Self does not require friends. As has been said previously in the novel, there are "nae friends in this game, jist associates" (Welsh 2004: 6). When Renton discovers that he has no need for these acquaintances, he does not shy away from taking advantage of them and from imagining them as the Other to his own, personal and ultra-individualistic Self. Farred (2004) sees this betrayal as a metaphor for the abolishment of Scotland as "a viable or desirable national entity" (2004: 224). Renton leaves Scotland and Scottishness behind by betraying his acquaintances and leaves for Europe and its possibilities of self-improvement. The character of Renton transcends the idea of image and identity being created by belonging to a group. His sense of the Self is created on individualistic terms by creating binary oppositions all around him, thus placing several different groups as the Other.

It would therefore seem that although there are several different subcultures portrayed in the novel who create their sense of the Self by comparing them to other subcultures, identity and image can be entirely individualistic. However, the theory of binary opposition and imagining the Self through it is applicable also on individual terms. Renton creates his sense of the Self by comparing himself to others and imagining them as different and inferior to him.

Arguably this nihilistic view of the Self for Renton is only the image he wishes to project to outsiders. Support for this interpretation can be found, for example, in chapter "Strolling through the Meadows", where after being confronted by Spud about Renton's cruelty towards animals, he responds by saying:

Ah dinnae ken. Begbie n that... the gear. Ah dinnae ken what ah'm daein wi ma life... It's aw jist a mess, Danny. Ah dinnae ken whit the fuckin score is. Sorry man. (Welsh 2004: 160-161)

It seems that his years of heroin abuse and the things that he has witnessed his friends do to themselves and others have left him an empty shell of a human being who has no other control over himself and his environment. He has become numb to everything after having witnessed death, violence, addiction and sexual abuse. All he has left to create a sense of the Self is the exclusion from the company of others and the focus on his own individualistic needs. It would seem that Bauman's view of identity as a surrogate for community (see section 3.2.1) can be seen in the character of Renton. Since Renton distances himself from the communities around him, he is left alone and vulnerable, not knowing what to do with his life. His identity is based on his exclusion and his originality compared to others. He constructs this image by distancing himself from the people he considers to be the Other. Ultimately he is not certain of that image and proclaims that he does not know what he is doing with his life and what his identity is.

The analysis in sections 4.1 through 4.5 would appear to provide us with some answers as regards to the creation, portrayal and perpetuation of identity and image in literature. Several binary oppositions, crucial to the creation of identity and image, can be witnessed in the novel. The protagonists identify with one end of the binary opposition and compare themselves to the other. However, the qualities of the Other are largely imagined. The image of the English to the Scots is based on stereotypes, as is the images of the respectable, sober-minded citizens of the conventional society in the eyes of the addicts, the Protestants from the perspective of the Catholics and ethnic minorities to the native Scots. However, it would seem that for one character in particular, Renton, identity seems to be based on his own ultra-individualism and exclusion from the communities that the rest of the characters seem to belong to.

5 CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis has been to demonstrate that identity and image are formed through dichotomy, difference and imagining the Self as somehow different and distinct from everything else. The key word is ‘imagining’, since the difference is often not based on observable reality, but stereotypes and mental images. Characters in works of literature demonstrate this creation of identity and image. Identity is the person’s idea of himself or herself, image is portrayed to others. Both are imagined, fabricated constructs.

The different identities and images portrayed in the novel are often those of subcultures who compare themselves to other subcultures or the larger parent culture of a nation. Cultures and subcultures are formed by shared experiences and interests that are contrasted to those of other cultures and subcultures. The contrast is often based on imaginary qualities and not observable reality. Thus communal identity and image are created. The binary oppositions important to the creation of an identity represented in the novel include the Scots and the English, addicts and conventional society, Catholics and Protestants, Scots and ethnic minorities, and ultimately, Scots and other Scots. The protagonists of the novel identify themselves with one of these groups and create their identity by comparing themselves to the other group, distancing themselves from it.

The one character who is distinct from the others is Renton, whose identity is based on the fact that he places himself above and outside every community represented in *Trainspotting*, distancing himself from the cultures and subcultures portrayed in the novel. Identity is individual, and the individual is what matters when the sense of community has disappeared. The individual is always the Self, and its autoimage, at least in the case of Renton, is formed by his exclusion from everyone and everything else. Renton chooses not to take part in subcultures of football and religion.

Ultimately even those he considers his friends are merely associates who can be taken advantage of. The Self trumps the Other in every case.

Considering the aims of this thesis, the results were partly what was expected and partly not. The different communities and subcultures represented in the novel seem to follow the idea that their identity and image are constructed by comparing them to other communities and subcultures, and imagining them as different, the Other. However, the more individualistic character of Renton seems to be a slightly more problematic case. He seems to be outside categorisation as far as subcultures and communities are concerned. Perhaps later studies could focus on his character in even more detail.

Subsequent research could focus on each of the dichotomies represented here in closer detail. Since the novel has been translated into several languages, and its film adaptation has been a considerable commercial success, it might prove fruitful to study how the images and identities represented in the original novel compare to the novel's translation and its film adaptation. The comparisons to its adaptation and translation would give an interesting insight into how the images portrayed in the novel change in adaptation and translation – intentionally or unintentionally – and how they thus change the perception of a culture in a different environment. However, the novel has much to offer for literary and cultural studies merely in and of itself. This could be expanded on in later studies.

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