

## **‘A Tourist In Your Own Youth’: Spatialised Nostalgia in *T2 Trainspotting***

Ostensibly adapted from the novel *Porno* (2002), Danny Boyle’s *T2 Trainspotting* (2017) was released 21 years after the 1996 cult classic original. Reviewers drew particular attention to the sequel aspect of the film: for Mark Kermode, the film is about ‘remembering the glory days of yore’ (Kermode 2017a). For Catherine Shoard, audience response to the film is symptomatic of a general nostalgic retreat from reality: ‘The reason for all that heady anticipation was not because we couldn’t wait to see what the characters are doing now. It’s because we can’t get enough of the past’ (Shoard 2017).

This chapter argues that *T2 Trainspotting* is a film suffused with nostalgia, for the lost youth of the protagonists, and for the original film. Actors, settings, and set-pieces from the original are recreated, restaged and replayed. The film engages with nostalgia and memory in various ways, including recreations of iconography and dramatic spaces, the embodied nostalgia of ageing actors, and the replaying or simulation of archive materials to mimic and comment on the processes of memory. The sequel’s debt to the original film also raises complex questions about adaptation and intertextuality against the increasingly global distribution of media texts. In its nostalgia for the previous film, *T2* is not simply an adaptation of the novel *Porno*, but more complexly is an adaptation of the original *Trainspotting* film.

This chapter first sketches the social and historical context for ‘the *Trainspotting* cultural moment’ (Paget 1999) and the first film’s cult status. It then outlines some aspects of adaptation theory and its application to *Trainspotting*, and discusses sequels and the compulsion to repeat with regard to *T2*. The chapter then focuses on spatialised nostalgia, the semiotics of space, and *T2*’s revisiting of key dramatic sites from the first film. It then

discusses the ‘embodied nostalgia’ of ageing actors and the experiential gap between actors and audience. This leads to a discussion of the sequel’s shift from the first film’s depiction of the crisis of (Scottish) masculinity, to the flawed and absent fathers of the second film. Failed masculinity thus becomes a focus for nostalgia around lost families, and families that never were, in the second film. The chapter then discusses reflexive nostalgia, and the way *T2* flaunts its nostalgic tendencies and mechanisms. The chapter closes with a meditation on the author’s personal response to *T2* in the context of theories of postmodern culture.



### **The *Trainspotting* Cultural Moment**

Adapted from Irvine Welsh’s 1993 cult novel, the movie *Trainspotting* was released in 1996. Duncan Petrie (2000) situates it within a stylish, confident 1990s New Scottish Cinema. In this cultural moment, the previous proletarian, masculine and urban associations epitomised by Clydesideism in film have been replaced by representation of new social and cultural identities as a result of post-industrialism (Petrie 2004). Like the book, the 1996 film follows a group of heroin addicts in Scotland’s capital city Edinburgh in the late 1980s. Mark Renton (Ewan McGregor) gets involved in a drug deal along with his friends Simon ‘Sick Boy’ Williamson (Jonny Lee Miller), Spud (Ewen Bremner), and the psychotically violent Francis Begbie (Robert Carlyle). At the end of the film, Renton double-crosses the group and steals the money. Unable to return to Edinburgh, he is last seen crossing Waterloo Bridge in London, going into self-imposed exile.

*Trainspotting* was the most successful independent release of 1996 in the US (Smith 2002: 9-10). Derek Paget describes ‘the *Trainspotting* cultural moment’ (1999: 129) and ascribes its

success to the fact that ‘The novel and its adaptations gave voice to a generation, and allowed them to speak out in a variety of media’ (1999: 129). The film and its paratexts became a global cult phenomenon (Lash and Lury 2007). Irvine Welsh wrote a sequel, *Porno* (2002), set ten years after the events of the original novel. The characters reunite to shoot a porn film in Simon’s Leith pub; Renton again betrays his friends for money and flees the country. This decade-later sequel was not to happen as a film. As *Trainspotting* and *T2 Trainspotting* scriptwriter John Hodge explains:

Conversations about making a follow-up to *Trainspotting* had occurred sporadically over the years, and I had even written a draft in the early 2000s, after the publication of *Porno*, but the script was no good and the time was not right, and after that I felt it was buried forever. (vii-viii).

As the twentieth anniversary of the first film approached however, momentum built for a sequel. According to Hodge, director Danny Boyle ‘insisted we must now go to Edinburgh and there, inspired by our surroundings, we would thrash this out once and for all’ (Hodge 2017: viii). Hodge remained uninspired until he accompanied Boyle to Edinburgh’s Cameo cinema. The wall was covered with pictures of actors and directors who had visited the cinema, and Boyle points out a photo of himself and Hodge:

*There*, he said, *there* we are. And sure enough, there was the image of the two of us, from eighteen years earlier, on the opening night of *Trainspotting*, when we had introduced the film at the Cameo. Eighteen years younger... And I think it was that moment in the Cameo, really, that sense of *coming back*, that unlocked the script for me. (Hodge 2017: viii)

This is clearly a spatially induced nostalgic response on the writer's part. Nostalgia is etymologically derived from the Greek *nostos* (return home) and *algia* (longing) (Niemeyer (2014: 7). Nostalgia can also be seen as the desire to be young again; however, 'even if the idea of yearning for youth seems logical, it does not explain why sick people were healed upon coming home' (8). The desire to return home, and the longing for lost youth, seem to be connected here. Pam Cook's definition of nostalgia in film is useful: 'These debates are themselves suffused with nostalgia, which can be defined as a state of longing for something that is known to be irretrievable, but is sought anyway' (ibid). Nostalgia, memory and history are intertwined in her definition, in which authenticity is key to the recovery of history.

While the plot of *T2 Trainspotting* concerns Renton's diegetic homecoming, the film is also about rewarding audience expectations through nostalgia. As an adaptation, it references the original film in a variety of ways. Key to this is the reconstruction of iconography and spaces. The combination of place and memory did appear to unlock Hodge's creativity, but in a dialectical process, this sense of being inspired by place and nostalgia for events that took place there suffuses the film. As a consequence, *T2 Trainspotting* is much less an adaptation of *Porno* than it is an adaptation of the original *Trainspotting* film, as this chapter explores.



### **'So what you been up to for 20 years?': adaptation and nostalgia**

*T2 Trainspotting* revisits the characters twenty years after the events of the first film. Having built a life in Amsterdam, Mark Renton returns to Edinburgh following a cardiac scare on a gym treadmill. He finds Simon involved in various blackmail schemes with Simon's

Bulgarian girlfriend Veronika. They receive a £100,000 EU grant to redevelop Simon's run-down Leith pub, but plan to turn it into a brothel. Begbie escapes from prison and vows revenge on Renton for double crossing them in the original. Begbie pursues Renton through the half-refurbished pub, but is knocked out and delivered to the police. Spud writes up the first film's events as a novel, and is enlisted by Veronika to swindle Renton and Simon out of the EU grant. In the closing sequence, Renton returns to his childhood bedroom and dances to Iggy Pop's *Lust for Life*, which opened the original film, and the trainspotting patterned walls of his bedroom seem to turn into a tunnel, racing by.

Analysing the adaptations and intertexts of *Trainspotting* in 1999, Derek Paget draws on Brian McFarlane's 'relative transferability' between texts in different media to overcome the 'fidelity debate' (Paget 1999: 131). Drawing on Roland Barthes and Seymour Chatman and their ideas of 'cardinal/catalyser' and 'kernel/satellite' respectively, McFarlane argues that 'cardinal/kernel' functions must be transferred between adaptations for 'a certain basic recognition of similarity' (131). Drawing on McFarlane, Paget rejects fidelity criticism favouring literary 'originals' by focussing on intertextuality:

the well-read audience recognizes, acknowledges and even enjoys the transference between media of cardinal/kernel functions; they then compare and contrast (and further engage with) differences in catalyser/satellite enunciation. These readerly exercises are simultaneous during viewing, and constitute part of the pleasure of seeing something already 'known' transformed into something 'similar-but-different' (Paget 1999: 132)

These processes are at work in *T2 Trainspotting* on a variety of levels, taking in the cast of characters, the double-cross plot, settings, soundtrack, and many other elements. John Hodge comments: ‘*Porno* (2002) offered certain key pillars for the narrative – Begbie in jail, Simon running a pub but dreaming of vice, Renton in exile, Spud much as ever’ (Hodge 2017: vii). *T2 Trainspotting* takes only a few cardinal/kernel elements from its supposed locus, *Porno*, and the film seems much more concerned with revisiting the first film than the sequel novel. The ‘showing through’ (Paget 1999: 132) of *Trainspotting* into *T2* is a major pleasure of the film. In this sense, it is fidelity to the first film which may be the prime source of pleasure for audiences – as will be demonstrated, *T2* is significantly ‘similar-but-different’ to *Trainspotting*.

### **Sequels and the compulsion to repeat**

As a sequel, *T2 Trainspotting* draws on various intertexts of which *Porno* is only one.

Carolyn Jess-Cook defines the sequel as

a framework within which formulations of repetition, difference, history, nostalgia, memory and audience interactivity produce a series of dialogues and relationships between a textual predecessor and its continuation, between audience and text, and between history and remembrance. (Jess-Cook 2009: vi)

Jess-Cook’s ‘profit principle’ paraphrases Freud’s 1920 essay ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’. Freud argued that the compulsion to repeat was a consequence of repressed trauma, and the loops and repetitions within the two *Trainspotting* films mirror the cyclic

repetitions of addiction. Jess-Cook argues that ‘Sequels necessarily address fans of the original, and are usually highly self-conscious of audience expectations’ (10), and the cult following for *Trainspotting* may help to explain its ‘memorialisation’ (9) in *T2*. Jess-Cook argues that ‘the sequel is essentially a response to a previous work, a rereading and rewriting of an ‘original’ that additionally calls upon an audience to reread and rewrite their memories of a previous text’ (2009: 12-13).

There is already a repetitive quality to the first film. Murray Smith notes the narrative loops and repetitions within the original *Trainspotting*, highlighting the film’s ‘playfulness around time and space’ (2002: 56). In *Trainspotting*, the opening Princes Street chase is repeated later in the movie, but is darker in the second telling, where Renton gets caught rather than escaping (60-1). Smith discusses the ‘propulsive pacing and malleable time and space of *Trainspotting*’ (52) including its use of the freeze frame. Channeling Proust, Smith calls these freeze-frames ‘Renton’s tea-dipped madeleine’ (81-82). The freeze frames engage with memory and nostalgia, providing ‘the elegiac countercurrent which runs against the tide of Renton’s jaundiced view of the past’ (82). Moreover, the end credits use stills of the characters, ‘perhaps functioning to create a kind of nostalgia *for the film*’ (82). So while the first film has youthful exuberant verve, ‘great stylistic panache’ (86), in its complex narrative structure and energetic stylistic tricks it too is at heart a nostalgic film, a nostalgia more fully developed in the loops and repetitions of the sequel.

For example, Renton’s double-cross of the gang with the collusion of Spud is not unlike that of Veronika in the second movie, except she returns home to Bulgaria instead of fleeing to exile. In another causal loop, Veronika gets the idea to swindle the EU money out of Renton and Simon from reading Spud’s manuscript (which is also Welsh’s novel) recounting the

events of the first film. As Boyle comments on the DVD commentary, when Begbie returns to prison at the end of *T2* ‘the circle begins again’. Boyle also references Proust, arguing that ‘time loops, it isn’t just a straight line... There is a kind of loop of time of Spud writing this book which takes you back to the first film’ (2017). As well as narrative repetition, many of the ‘time loops’ referencing the first film take the form of recreating its iconography and dramatic spaces.


### **Spatialised nostalgia: recreated iconography and revisited spaces**

The repetitive quality of film sequels might be understood by considering television’s seriality. Anthony Giddens discusses the need for ontological security in an increasingly unmanageable world (in Garner 2013: 204-205). Popular culture provides continuity and reassurance, particularly given the serial quality of television soaps. Much serial television functions through forms of repetition and difference which can manifest itself as self-referentiality or self-cannibalism. As Ross Garner argues: ‘recognising allusions within a text may also cue affective response in audience members, such as stimulating nostalgic feelings’ (Garner 2013: 194-195). This argument uses the ‘citationism’ of intertextuality (Garner 2013: 197). Garner builds on this to propose the term *intradiegetic allusion*: ‘explicit reference to a **series**’ past within a continuous narrative structure... should be specified as an ‘intradiegetic allusion’ since it is a direct reference to that text’s past within its present, instead of an outward reference to another text’ (198). The seriality of film sequels allows this ‘intradiegetic allusion’, as can be seen in *T2 Trainspotting*. For example, Renton running on the treadmill at the start of *T2* recalls the iconic chase scene which opened the first film. Where the original scene was backed by ‘Lust for Life’, in this sequence, youthful vigour is



replaced by the stasis of middle age. Renton is literally running on the spot, so rather than displaying the ‘propulsive pacing’ (Smith 2002) seen in the original, the treadmill surface is a physical loop keeping him expending energy merely to stay still.

Spud’s relapse into addiction in *T2* is explained as a consequence of the clocks changing and Spud missing various deadlines including work, benefits, and childcare appointments. But in another loop, this sequence recalls a scene from the original. Jonny Murray explains that

Spud’s set-piece job  interview on speed from the original... is refurbished in the new film as an older man regaling an addicts’ support group with the tragicomic tale of how failure to know about British Summer Time ruined his life. His moral? The clocks move relentlessly forward whether we know it or not (Murray 2017).

A montage of clocks rams the point home and functions as a reminder of time passing – not only intradiegetically for the characters, but extradiegetically for the audience.

Later, the characters visit a 1980s club night – another spatialized form of nostalgia – where Renton encounters Begbie in a toilet cubicle, recalling the scene in the original where he dives into the bowl of ‘the worst toilet in Scotland.’ The toilet scene is lifted from *Porno* but developed here as Begbie pursues Renton through a multi-storey car park, which leads to another recreation of the first film. Countering the stasis of the treadmill’s loop in *T2*’s opening, returning to Edinburgh in search of his past revitalises Renton. Echoing the opening chase in *Trainspotting*, which as discussed was itself repeated within the film, the scene where Renton escapes in the second, and slides off a car bonnet, is nostalgic both for the character’s youth and for the first film. Director Danny Boyle comments:

Ewan was saying that one of the things he remembers... feeling as a character, you know, this is scary and dangerous but at least it's fun and the adrenalin is back again, you know they get this, what's missing in their lives ... because a lot of the film they do spend time like, trying to relive the recklessness, the effortless bravado of the past, when it's easy. (Boyle 2017)

Shooting the scene, McGregor was inspired 'to do a Muscle memory of the first film here' (ibid) and recreated the same smile of triumph, which Boyle's camera frames in the same way as the first film.

The Corroun train platform sequence in *T2* repeats the scene from *Trainspotting* where the characters go to the country, recreating the framing of the train pulling away to reveal the characters lined up on the platform – and it is revisiting this site that Renton references Simon's dead baby from the first film, signifying more loss and regret. It is also here that the word 'nostalgia' is used for the only time in the film, evoking a specifically spatialized form of remembrance:

**Simon:** Nostalgia. That's why you're here, Mark. A tourist in your own youth. Just because you had a near-death experience and now you're feeling all fuzzy and warm. An innocent stroll down the byways of your own memory.

On the DVD commentary, screenwriter John Hodge recalls that the producers wanted to set this scene in a cemetery to save money. Boyle however insisted that the scene be shot at Corroun, commenting on the effect that returning to the apparently unchanged location had on

him. This has something of Burke's sublime about it (O'Keefe and Meadowcroft 2009), with majestic nature contrasting the transience of human life: 'to the mountain... our twenty years is a fly flitting past them'. In addition, this location offered the scene the pathetic fallacy: 'you get this gift on the day, which is that it was a misty day, so the melancholy that builds into the scene, is expressed in the landscape as well' (Boyle 2017).

When Renton visits his father, his parents' flat is recreated and shot from the same angle, but his mother has died in the interim and is represented by a shadow silhouette projected behind her empty chair. The shadowy presence-in-absence of Renton's late mother is a reminder of change and loss specifically evoked by place. Similarly, Renton's bedroom is recreated, and in the first scene set there, he goes to play *Lust for Life* on his record player, but flicks the stylus up at the first beat. *T2 Trainspotting* is thus both proffering but denying, promising but withholding the youthful verve of the original film's opening chase. Only in the closing scene, back in his bedroom, does Renton let the song play. And the final image, cut together with a clip of his younger self, shows Renton dancing on the spot, again a kind of loop, recalling both the original film, and the opening treadmill scene of this one. Referencing the 'vertiginous' (Petrie 2000: 196) detox sequence from *Trainspotting*, the room becomes an endless tunnel, looping around him into infinity, and suggesting that everyone is doomed to repeat the same mistakes.

The semiotics of the spaces used as film locations reward further examination. Given the film's themes of decay and disappointment, the fact that Simon's flat is beside a scrapyard is no coincidence. The ironically named Port Sunlight pub is in the middle of a post-industrial wasteland – a ruined site, emblematic of Scotland's industrial history and vanished secure working-class masculine identities of the past. It is an equivalent of the *disabitato*, used in

many postwar Italian films to depict ‘the overgrown edges of the city’ or *terrain vague* (Mariani and Barron 2011: 309). *Terrain vague* offers a nostalgia for a mythical past, balanced against a longing for a positive future (310). Here, the waste ground on which the pub sits signifies the decline of Leith’s prosperous industrial past, against the growth of the service economies in Scotland. Boyle remarks on the marginal nature of this building, both geographically and socially: ‘We wanted a building that felt like it was right at the end of the world, certainly of the post-industrial world, literally falling off the cliff of the post-industrial world so it looked hopeless’ (Boyle 2017).

Whilst the pub’s situation is marginal, it is also a liminal site, offering potential for change or rebirth. It is therefore fitting that the reunion and final confrontation between the four key characters happens in this liminal space. The bare rafters of the pub’s upper floor, the skeleton framework of the partially built walls, and the grid created by the brothel room’s mirrored tiles create cages around the characters, visually suggesting not only that Renton is trapped by Begbie, but that both are trapped by their past. As Begbie smashes the mirrored room around him, Renton climbs through a hole in the roof into the attic, and in another example of ‘muscle memory’, McGregor mimics his escape from the toilet bowl (Boyle 2017), again referencing the iconography of the first film. Renton in the mirrored room in *T2* mirrors the shot of Renton’s passport in the shiny metal locker in the first film. A similar shot of Spud finding the stolen money in the locker in the first film is echoed when Spud leafs through displays of mirrored tiles in *T2*. This shot foreshadows *T2*’s climax, as Begbie’s pursuit of Renton turns the pub into a mirrored cage where Renton has to confront his life choices.

The sight of McGregor's visibly aged face intercut with clips from the first film raises the nostalgic force of ageing actors, playing characters who have aged in parallel across the same length of time.

### **Embodied nostalgia and experiential response**

This chapter has already discussed how popular culture provides continuity within the audience's life cycle. In this instance, the reuse of the actors inspires senses of nostalgia and loss in both audiences' and actor's reactions to the ageing characters, forcing them to renegotiate the construction of identity. Ross Garner discusses the 'embodied nostalgia' of returning actors and the affective impact it has on audiences – particularly in television soaps, where story time runs parallel with real time, and characters' ageing is indexed to the audience's ageing. The actors' physical presence is important to this:

the return of an actor provides just as much stimulus to nostalgic sentiment as does their returning character. An actor reprising his or her role also emphasises the passing of (extra-)diegetic time, as the ageing body of the performer... affects nostalgic responses by recognisably, but differentially, embodying the character. (2013: 201)

As well as *T2*'s reconstructions of narrative sites such as Renton's bedroom, there are reconstructions of key scenes using younger doubles of the actors. For example, when they visit Corroun and remember Tommy's death from AIDS, a Tommy body double is seen walking in the distance. Simon and Renton recalling their first heroin use is illustrated with shots of young body doubles running exuberantly down Edinburgh's Leith Walk. The

characters seem to see their younger selves, highlighting the film's theme of regret for past choices and creating slippages between past and present. This was the cause of some disquiet for the actors, who find it difficult to articulate the experience:

there was a, young kids who were cast as us for some flashback moments... and they were in our original costumes which had been in storage for twenty years... it was like almost like seeing us again and it was an odd, it was odd to confront yourself in that way. (McGregor in Sloan 2017)

For reviewer Mark Kermode, the physical ageing of both actors and audiences was key to the film's effect:

it seemed to be a film that was aimed at somebody who had been there the first time round and had subsequently aged and ... it felt like it was speaking to me. It is a film about ageing, it is a film about regret... because for a start you're revisiting characters who the first time you saw them were skinny and sinewy and... living on that kind of adrenal rush and now twenty years later they're not. (Kermode 2017b)

Kermode argues that *T2* is fundamentally predicated on the film's and the viewer's relationship to the original: 'I have no idea what that film would feel like if you don't have that baggage... my feeling is it's a film that's best appreciated if you saw *Trainspotting* 20 years ago, and all those things, memory and all the rest of it, all come together in the experience of watching *T2*' (Kermode 2017b).

Kermode suggests that nostalgia is therefore intrinsic to the viewing experience. *T2 only* functions in relation to the first film and it *only* functions properly if there is a passage of two decades between viewing original and sequel, an experiential gap giving the required distance in which to experience the embodied nostalgia of the ageing actors, mapped onto the parallel ageing and ontological (in)security of the viewer: ‘the primary concern of the film is about memory and regret and ageing and masculinity in crisis and it makes particular sense that the memory of that film is twenty years ago for me’ (Kermode 2017b). The experiential gap was clearly experienced by the production team and actors as well. Danny Boyle comments ‘We did try to make the film ten years ago and... this is a much more personal film in a way, it’s much more about us all really and our ages rather than the other one which is about, just another story’ (2017). Hodge concurs: ‘this is I think, the characters’ chance to grow old and we all grow old too so that’s what it’s about’ (2017b). The original film is thus much more significant as an intertext than *Porno*, which is ‘just another story’.

### **‘World changes... even if we don’t’: Failed Fathers and Masculinity**

As suggested by the post-industrial settings discussed above, a key theme of both films is the crisis of (Scottish) masculinity, and this is developed in *T2* through the figure of the failed or absent father, a figure which gives the sequel much of its sense of regret. As Duncan Petrie (2004) explains, ‘the political impact of Thatcherism and the New Right ushered in a new era of multiple social deprivation and with it increased strains on the domestic family unit’ (163). A key discourse in representations of Scotland involves the ‘hard man’ and his quest for identity in a post-industrial world. As Sillars and MacDonald explain:

In the Scottish context, male angst, male dislocation, unstable masculine identities incapable of emerging into maturity have acted as rich metaphors for the dilemma of the stateless nation, haunted by identities and a secure 'place' in the world. (2007: 187)

The figure of the orphan thus has a significant political resonance in Scottish culture, but more pertinently 'the absence of fathers is perhaps an even more frequently recurring figure, this paternal lack a key source of the sense of dysfunction that permeates the representation of the Scottish working-class family, wreaking its ill-effects on the well-being of the child in the process' (Petrie 2004: 182). In this sense, *Trainspotting* and *T2* resemble films such as *Boyz N the Hood* (Singleton 1991) and *La Haine* (Kassovitz 1995). Like *La Haine*, *Trainspotting* presents an 'infantile macho world' (Vincendeau 2005: 63) within a geographically and socially marginalised subculture of generational unemployment and deprivation in which fathers are mostly absent or 'pitiably wrecks' (Vincendeau 2002: 316), adrift in a world in which labour is increasingly feminised. Like the *banlieue* films it resembles, *Trainspotting* tends to sideline women, 'their identity residing in their relation to the males' (2002: 315), and *T2* erases many of the female characters from *Porno* in favour of revisiting Diane (Kelly Macdonald) from the first film in order to evoke Renton's regret at paths not taken.

The title of the original film comes from a short section in the *Trainspotting* novel, 'Trainspotting at Leith Central Station', inexplicably not included in the first film. In the novel, the characters visit desolate, derelict Leith Central railway station where an 'auld drunkard' asks if they are trainspotting. Begbie is disturbed by the drunkard; it transpires that the 'auld wino' is his father (Welsh 2004: 308). The scene is realised onscreen in *T2*, as Begbie reads out Spud's recounting of the incident (which is also Welsh's novel), through a



combination of archive footage and Robert Carlyle playing Begbie's father. The failure of masculinity, specifically failed or absent fathers, suffuses *T2*. Spud's addiction leads him to attempt suicide as a penance, telling his partner: 'Fergus [Spud's son] needs things to be simpler; I know how embarrassed he is about me. I could not be the man that you both need.' Renton lies about having two children, then admits that they do not exist; he is married but getting a divorce. He declares 'I'm 46 and I'm fucked. I've got no home'. Simon lost his baby to cot death in the first film; grotesque visions of the baby haunt Renton while he is going through heroin detox. Renton tells Simon that she died 'because her father, someone who was supposed to watch over and protect her, was too busy filling his veins with heroin instead of checking to see if she was breathing properly.' In *T2*, Simon claims to have a son he never sees. After escaping from prison, Begbie tries to induct his teenage son into a life of crime, and is appalled at the boy's reluctance to join this macho world – his son attends catering college and prefers a career in the service industries. Rationalising his disappointment after his son refuses to physically fight him, Begbie declares that the boy cannot be his. In addition, Begbie is impotent and takes Viagra; an encounter with a much younger woman in a club (who calls him 'daddy-o') leads to his pursuit of Renton through the car park. Only after asserting his masculinity through violence does the Viagra take effect.

Another signifier of the 'infantile macho' world is Simon and Renton's enjoyment of outdated popular culture. Veronika is reluctant to visit Simon's flat, claiming it is too messy. Simon asks 'It's not a mess is it?'; Renton replies tactfully 'No. It's just masculine'. This is a homosocial space in which the characters consume popular culture, with piles of DVDs round the walls recalling the VHS cassettes of the first film. But it is also a deeply nostalgic space. The popular culture referenced in *Trainspotting* was already out of date in 1996: Iggy

Pop's *Lust for Life* was released in 1977; Simon's idol Sean Connery played James Bond in 1962-1967 and 1983; Archie Gemmill's goal against Holland was in 1978. The obsession with the past suggests fear of the future, as reflected in Renton and Simon's raid on an Orange Lodge, in which they steal cash cards and discover that the pin numbers are all 1690, the date of the Battle of the Boyne. Renton's voice-over asks: 'And faced with an uncertain future, is it any surprise that they find comfort in the past, searching for relevance in the twenty-first century while looking back to the seventeenth?' Following the Orange Lodge scene, Renton, Simon and Veronika return to Simon's flat to celebrate. Backed by John Barry's *007 Theme* (1963) they reference moments from the original *Trainspotting*; Simon produces his air rifle, they watch classic football goals on YouTube, they debate the events of 1974, and the sequence climaxes with the men sliding through rain in football tops in a clear visual reference to a shot from *Trainspotting*'s title sequence. They are still discussing the same outdated popular culture they were discussing twenty years earlier – Connery's Bond, 1970s pop music, forty-year-old football victories. As Veronika comments: 'You live in the past. Everyone here lives in the past. Where I come from the past is something to forget but here it's all you talk about. That and the weather. So boring.'

Robert Munro, in *The Conversation*, relates the film's backward-looking characters, nostalgic for a 'simpler' time, to contemporary discourses of Donald Trump and Brexit balanced against a globalized economy and the nimbler, forward-looking Veronika character from the EU.

T2... seems to wonder what has become of the enthusiasm of its characters, and us... As our quartet end the film either where they started, or worse off, Veronika, the Bulgarian sex worker being exploited by Sick Boy, takes off with the hundred grand.

She returns home to a notably sunnier future, and a reunion with her family. While we wallow in the past, incapable of accepting a post-national present, somewhere out there people are still choosing life after all. (Munro 2017).

Like the alienated protagonists of *La Haine* (Vincendeau 2005), though to different ends, Mark and Simon are obsessed with popular culture of the past. Middle-aged Scottish men are positioned here as backward-looking and conservative; the young European woman is forward-looking and progressive, perhaps functioning metonymically for Scotland's position relative to the EU in a time of national upheaval.

### **The Time is Out of Joint: Reflexive Nostalgia**

In the scene above, *T2* is aware of its nostalgia. Pam Cook argues for a reconciliation between history and nostalgia, arguing that 'where history suppresses the element of disavowal or fantasy in its re-presentation of the past, nostalgia foregrounds those elements, and in effect lays bare the processes at the heart of remembrance' (Cook 2005: 4). Audiences can be aware of the performative element of such activities, consciously enjoying the playful or affective qualities of nostalgic representation:

the nostalgic memory film... has the potential to reflect upon its own mechanisms, and to encourage reflection in audiences. The more self-reflexive nostalgic films can employ cinematic strategies to actively comment on issues of memory, history and identity. (Cook 2005: 5).

This reflexivity is expressed in various different ways in *T2*, with its reconstructions of the original being the most obvious, alongside reuse of clips. For example, as Begbie reads out Spud's story (simultaneously Welsh's novel), it is illustrated by clips from *Trainspotting*, and past and present blend. In another reused clip, Spud leaves a comical boxing session and seems to see his younger self run down Calton Road. The final scene features a reused clip of Renton taking drugs, intercut with the older McGregor mimicking his pose from 20 years earlier.

The reused clips, and reconstructions of younger versions of the characters, means that the present in *T2* is haunted by its possible futures/alternative presents in an embodied nostalgia of place. The first film used a form of magic realism to transform the iconography of British social realism into surreal sites thematically expressing escape from poverty through drug use or crime. *Trainspotting* explores 'the redemption of material impoverishment through aesthetic transformation' (Smith 2003: 33) as its narrative spaces are transformed subjectively through drug use. *T2 Trainspotting* however uses manipulation of space and time to materialize its theme of nostalgia for lost youth. The slippage between the two films creates a Foucauldian *espace autre* (Freeman 1999), simultaneously now and then, the same spatial site but composed out of several temporal layers, crossing the striations of past and present and constructing a sometimes bewildering liminal space. This hauntological quality gives these scenes their air of regret and nostalgia, not just for the lost youth of the protagonists, but for audiences' memories of the first film, and the passing of time between their initial viewing and now.


The combination of old and new footage uses remembrance and memorialization to transform these fragments of Edinburgh into hauntological sites. Jacques Derrida, in *Specters*

of Marx, discusses hauntology as a way of thinking about historical and ontological disjunction. He quotes from *Hamlet*, saying that hauntology is a way of thinking about ways in which ‘time is out of joint’. It prioritises not what is present, but what is absent, and ghosts of the past, or of lost futures that can haunt the present – drawing on Marx’s comment that Europe is ‘haunted’ by Communism. Mark Fisher (2012) builds on Derrida to argue that hauntology has a specific connection to modernity and the ‘global village’. Places can push back against modernity, occupying both past and present:

Haunting can be seen as intrinsically resistant to the contraction and homogenization of time and space. It happens when a place is stained by time, or when a particular place becomes the site for an encounter with broken time. (2012: 19)

Derridean hauntology also draws on the French *ontologie* to highlight that hauntology denotes a fundamentally bewildering, alienating condition. The collision of past and present is clearly incomprehensible to the hapless Spud who seems to see his younger self running away from him; ‘time is out of joint’. This image comments on the way in which returning to the same site can inspire memories of situated events, as with Hodge’s Cameo anecdote – and is, of course, a visual metaphor for the fact that Spud’s youth has literally run away, returning to the theme of memory, nostalgia and regret which permeates the film. For Fisher, hauntology is about ‘the failure of the future’, something with which the protagonists of *T2* are constantly grappling.

Another way in which the film engages with issues of memory, nostalgia and regret is through the use of what Laura Marks calls ‘analog nostalgia’ (Schrey 2014: 27) in the form

of brief simulated '8mm' clips of small boys (presumably, Simon and Mark as children). Schrey argues that 'analog nostalgia' evokes the seventeenth centuries' 'artificial ruins' (28) offering the promise of indexicality and thus authenticity. However, Sapio (2014) argues that the aesthetic of home movies result in the creation of a *meta-family*. Digitally produced vintage effects both reflect and create nostalgic fantasies of family. Significantly, Sapio argues that most home movies are created by fathers. Thus, the invisible father suggested here is a-presence-in-absence which nonetheless acts as a structuring paradigm for the image. Nostalgia for family, families that never were, for Simon's dead baby and absent son, for Renton's non-existent children, and particularly for fathers that might have been, suffuses *T2 Trainspotting*. 

### **'Choose Life... choose watching history repeat itself'**

Another example of 'reflexive nostalgia' involves the reworking of the first film's iconic 'Choose Life' monologue. Part of the 'Trainspotting cultural moment' involved its circulation through paratexts through 'transformation and dispersion from short story to novel, to film, to poster, to film soundtrack, marketing tie-in products and stage performance' (Lash and Lury 2007: 21). With *Trainspotting*, for some consumers, 'the poster eclipsed the film' (23) and circulated in culture through a range of reinterpretations.

The 'Choose Life' monologue, distributed in the form of innumerable branded paratexts such as posters (Suskind 2017), is reworked for *T2* when Veronika and Renton meet for a drink in Harvey Nichols and she asks Renton 'What's Choose Life?'. The original monologue, ironically riffing on an anti-drugs public health campaign, is a cynical commentary on

hegemonic consumer society and the constraints of ‘respectable’ life in late capitalist Western society: ‘Choose life. Choose a job. Choose a career. Choose a family. Choose a fucking big television set.’ In *T2*, the monologue is reworked as:

Choose life. Choose Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and hope that someone, somewhere cares. Choose looking up old flames, wishing you’d done it all differently. And choose watching history repeat itself.

This cynical commentary on social media-saturated contemporary life draws attention to how fast society has changed in 20 years – many of these terms would be incomprehensible to the characters in the original film. But this is not just an updated list satirising consumer society for the 21<sup>st</sup> century; it contains one of the keys to the film, not just its narrative construction, but one of its ongoing thematic concerns. The phrase ‘choose watching history repeat itself’ is central to *both* films in their obsession with loops, repetition, and flashbacks. For screenwriter John Hodge, this scene offers a meta-commentary on the *Trainspotting* phenomenon itself:

What she’s saying to him is ‘What’s *Trainspotting?*’ ... it’s the shock of... realising he’s with someone who’s so young that Choose Life means nothing to them or *Trainspotting* means nothing to them and... provoked, he responds by being himself again. (2017b).

Danny Boyle relates the reworking of the Choose Life monologue to Renton’s rediscovery of his identity, as the ‘mocking litany of modern choices’ becomes angry and leads to ‘the more confessional side’ whereby Renton offers ‘an analysis of himself’ (Boyle 2017). This scene

and its engagement with the first film provokes Renton's confrontation with his own ageing and rediscovery of self as a result of his return to Edinburgh. The film is thus suffused with what Svetlana Boym calls reflective nostalgia, which 'dwells in *algia*, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance... reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time' (2001: 41) and the 'nostalgic rendezvous with oneself' (50).

### **Individualised nostalgia and the punctum**

And finally, to consider the personal, phenomenological aspects of nostalgia. This author lived in Edinburgh for over 20 years. I watched *T2 Trainspotting* during its theatrical release in my new home town of Brighton. Watching the film was intensely nostalgic.

Fredric Jameson criticises pastiche in postmodern culture more generally, which is prone to 'cannibalising the museum and wear[ing] the masks of extinct mannerisms' (cited in Garner 2013). Cannibalisation is representative of a contemporary nostalgic pastiche culture.

Jameson is critical of this simulated nostalgia because he sees it as a waning of affect, a reification or evacuation of human autonomy from the cultural artefacts produced under capitalism. So postmodern cultural objects are 'depthless' when compared to past equivalents (Garner 2013: 199). Similarly, Fred Davis argues that nostalgia produced by film and television does not have the same individuality of association as do more private forms of memory. 'Davis suggests that the nostalgia constructed through popular cultural forms is a reified, waning version of the feeling since it is linked to industrial production, rather than subjective recollection' (Garner 2013: 199). Garner argues that the embodied presence of



actors helps to ‘restore ‘the experience of temporality... the existential or experiential feeling of time itself’ to the postmodern experience, providing ‘an alternative to the ‘reified’ form of nostalgia that has been perceived as characteristic of po-mo media texts’ (2013: 209). This experiential authenticity may offer a resistance to the impact of the postmodern (209).

There is a critical distinction then between industrial, commodified nostalgia and more subjective, authentically affective forms connected to media consumers’ life experiences. Significantly for the purposes of this chapter, some of the moments which were nostalgic for me were not those constructed as nostalgic by the film. For example, in the opening sequence, when Renton returns to Edinburgh, the new tram (a system introduced into Edinburgh in 2014, the year I left the city) passes through Edinburgh city centre in a montage of brief shots. One of those very brief shots shows West Maitland Street, opposite Haymarket Station, where I lived when I first moved to Edinburgh. That shot means nothing to someone who hasn’t been there, but it took my breath away on first viewing.

This response can be theorised by using Roland Barthes’ idea of the *punctum*. Barthes (1993) argues that there are two ways of understanding images. The *studium* is detached and objective; the *punctum* is more personal and potentially painful. Barthes likens this to a sting, or a wound. The *punctum* is a specific detail with meaning for a particular viewer. Barthes uses a photograph of his mother to demonstrate this. The picture of the mother is not reproduced in his book as it would only interest the reader’s *studium*; only for Barthes himself does it have *punctum*, the wound, personal meaning. Barthes argues that this phenomenon is intrinsic to photography, insisting that cinema ‘is not a *specter*’ (89). But images like *T2*’s shot of West Maitland Street, for me, contain the *punctum*, thereby problematising Barthes’ contention that cinema cannot be a *specter* in the way that he means.

The Edinburgh constructed in *T2 Trainspotting* is a haunted landscape, haunted by the original film and the gap between the two, and by my own parallel memories of my life in that gap.

## Conclusions

Nostalgia in *T2 Trainspotting* thus functions on multiple levels. Firstly, within the diegesis, the nostalgia of the characters for their own youth. Secondly, as a reified media product, nostalgia through Garner's 'intradiegetic allusions' and the construction of 'hauntological landscapes' through the incorporation of clips and reconstructions of scenes and sites from the first film. Third, through the 'embodied nostalgia' of the ageing actors, as an index of the parallel time passing for both characters and audiences. And fourth, on an individual level, the 'punctum' of Edinburgh on screen in 1996 and 2017, gives this audience member a very personal connection to the film, thereby challenging critics of the postmodern such as Jameson and Davis, by demonstrating the capacity of reified media texts to stimulate individualised, subjective, and therefore arguably authentic, nostalgic responses. My connection to Edinburgh means there *is* an *individual* private nostalgia as well as the generalised nostalgia other *Trainspotting* fans may feel, thus complicating the arguments of critics of the postmodern. There is both a reified nostalgia at work – though the value or otherwise of that is still open for debate – plus a 'subjective recollection' which adds another layer of nostalgic meaning for the individual viewer.

In its nostalgia for and obsessive replaying of the first film, *T2 Trainspotting* is an adaptation not of the novel *Porno* but an intertext of the meta-narrative of the original *Trainspotting*. As

such, it draws on a variety of intertexts in order to construct a film designed to appeal to an audience familiar with the original and engage in what Paget calls ‘readerly exercises’ of recognising intertextual connections as part of the pleasure of viewing. As a highly critical *Variety* review noted, ‘the characters spend way too much time lounging around recalling the old days, because that’s really a way of recalling the first movie’ (Gleiberman 2017). As comments by Kermode and others show, recognising that time has passed for the characters in tandem with that of the audience contributes another layer of significance to this readerly exercise. In playing out the theme of middle-aged disappointment, nostalgia for lost youth, and the limitations of free will, its ‘compulsion to repeat’ the images and tropes of the first film lead it to construct the city of Edinburgh as a liminal space. This space is not just nostalgic, but hauntological – haunted by vanished pasts and lost futures. As Simon says, when Renton offers him his share of money from the first film: ‘What am I supposed to do with that? Buy a fucking time machine? Live my life all over again?’ This is exactly what the characters want; and this film sequel works as a time machine to do just that.

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