

University of Pardubice  
Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

British Class System and Reflection of The Underclass in Irvine Welsh's  
Trainspotting

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Bachelor Thesis

2014

Univerzita Pardubice  
Fakulta filozofická  
Akademický rok: 2012/2013

## ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

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Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk pro odbornou praxi**  
Název tématu: **Třídní rozdělení britské společnosti a zobrazení nejnižší sociální vrstvy v knize Trainspotting od Irvina Welshe**  
Zadávací katedra: **Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky**

### Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Studentka se ve své bakalářské práci zaměří na dílo současné britské literatury, Trainspotting od Irvina Welshe, které chce konfrontovat se současnou situací britského systému společenských vrstev. Zvolené dílo i autora nejprve zasadí do příslušného literárního kontextu. Poté se bude věnovat analýze vývoje britského třídního systému se zaměřením především na pracující třídu a tzv. underclass. Informace získané analýzou dostatečného množství kvalitních sekundárních zdrojů pak bude konfrontovat s literární analýzou Welshova románu.

Rozsah grafických prací:

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Seznam odborné literatury:

Welsh, Irving: *Trainspotting* (Vintage, 2009 ISBN:0099465892, dostupnost: amazon.com) Murray, Charles: *Underclass + 10, Charles Murray and the British Underclass 1990 - 2000* (London, 2001 ISBN: 1-903 386-10-1, dostupnost: amazon.com) Gens, Herbert J. : *The War Against the Poor: The Underclass and Antipoverty Policy* (Basic Books, 1996 ISBN:0465019919, dostupnost: amazon.com) Morace, Robert: *Irvine Welsh's "Trainspotting": A Reader's Guide* (Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd., 2001 ISBN:082645237X, dostupnost: amazon.com) Morris, Steward: *Is Class 'Dead' in Modern Britain* (dostupnost: <http://www.stewartmorris.com/essays/14Ingham4.pdf>) Welshman, John: *Underclass: A History of the Excluded, 1880 - 2000* (Hambleton Continuum, 2007 ISBN:1852855541, dostupnost: amazon.com)

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Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **30. dubna 2012**

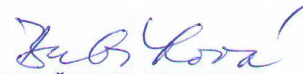
Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **31. března 2013**



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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of the thesis is to depict class system of the 20<sup>th</sup> century British society and the underclass in particular, in the novel *Trainspotting* by Irvine Welsh.

The first part of the thesis provides a theoretical background to the analysis concerning the evolution of British society aimed to the underclass and the working class, diverse approaches towards the underclass and the poor and British welfare system of the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the second part of the thesis the information gained from the novel is compared to comprehensive social studies and the thesis is ended with summary and conclusions about presence of the underclass in *Trainspotting*.

## **KEY WORDS**

Social class, the underclass, Trainspotting, Irvine Welsh, Scottish literature

## **ANOTACE**

Cílem bakalářské práce je zobrazení třídního systému Britské společnosti dvacátého století, zvláště pak nejnižší sociální třídy, tzv. underclass, v románu Irvina Welshe *Trainspotting*.

První část práce poskytuje informace nezbytné k analýze Welshova románu. Je zde popsán vývoj britské společnosti se zaměřením na nejnižší sociální vrstvu a na pracující třídu, dále jsou nastíněny různorodé přístupy k tzv. underclass v průběhu historie a chudoba a změny v Britském systému sociálního zabezpečení v druhé polovině 20. století. Druhá část bakalářské práce porovnává informace získané z předchozí části s románem *Trainspotting*. Na základě ukázek z románu je v závěru argumentována přítomnost nejnižší sociální vrstvy v analyzované knize.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

sociální vrstvy, underclass, Trainspotting, Irvine Welsh, skotská literatura

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## INTRODUCTION

The division of British society into social classes is one of the features that distinguish British Isles from the rest of Europe. British society has been divided into unequal social groups since its beginnings as there has always been the king or the queen and their counsellors standing at the top of the social hierarchy to rule over the country.

Joblessness, dependence on welfare, low living standards, poverty, crime, drugs and alcohol abuse, are all words used to describe the stereotypical view of the underclass and its members. However, despite obvious indications (unemployment, education, living standards), there are sociologists who deny the existence of classes at the very bottom of society and still, many people call themselves members of such classes. The existence of the classes was indeed proved in a survey held in 2013. According to studies further stated in the paper, the members of the underclass are mainly working-age people, single parent families, jobless, state dependent, uneducated men.

This work is divided into two main parts. The first part of the paper is devoted to providing a theoretical background which is necessary for understanding the other, analytical part of the thesis. The theoretical part begins by describing the social class system in the British class-ridden society from its beginnings and it is further aimed to two particular classes, the working class and the underclass. Those two classes are mainly described according to Great British Class Survey (hereafter referred to as GBCS) which was held in 2013 in Great Britain and gives an overview about situation of class distinction in modern British society. The purpose of the second chapter of the thesis is to capture history of the underclass and definitions used to describe this social class. Different opinions as well as roaring debates over the deserving and undeserving poor in terms of welfare benefits and state supports are discussed in the chapter. Connected to the analytical part of the thesis, development of poverty and the underclass together with description of welfare state during the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher, who tried to eliminate public spending in order to save the country in the time of its post-war decline in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain is mentioned in the third section of the theoretical part. The last chapter of the theoretical part of the thesis provides a theoretical background for the literary analysis is aimed at contemporary Scottish literature. The chapter is devoted to describing the major topics of contemporary Scottish writers, such as Alan Warner, Duncan McLean, Iain Banks, Janice Galloway and A. L. Kennedy and to point out main themes and Irvine Welsh's style of writing.



Being reviewed as “A page-turner that gives lie to any cosy notions of a classless society,”<sup>1</sup> *Trainspotting* was chosen to illustrate different social classes of British society for its honest and disclosing description. Nevertheless, as connected to the first part of the thesis, the second part of the paper provides an overall picture of the current underclass and the urban working class demonstrated in the novel *Trainspotting* by Irvine Welsh, using quotes from the book. Major aim of this part of the thesis is to describe the youth underclass and prove its presence in society. The novel, set in Leith, Edinburgh, a place which was in 1990s known as the HIV capital of Europe, gives an excellent example of the unemployed, welfare dependent youth who are heavily involved and dependent on drugs, especially heroin, and crime. *Trainspotting* touches on the subject of welfare system because the majority of the characters are dependent on state benefits. Some of the main characters are school drop-outs the others are people who simply missed their chances in lifes and now regret the fact, some of them want to change their lives and others simply live from one day to another, trying to survive.

In conclusion, the thesis gives an overview of the class division of the 20<sup>th</sup> century British society. Based on different factors occurring through the novel *Trainspotting* written by Irvine Welsh, the paper claims the presence of the underclass and the urban working class in the book. Nevertheless, the novel is not utterly based on reality thus it has to be remembered that it is Welsh’s dramatization that makes the novel so interesting and breathtaking.

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<sup>1</sup> Independent on Sunday review, *Trainspotting* (London:Vintage, 2004)

# 1 BRITISH CLASS SYSTEM

The following chapter reflects the evolution of individual social classes together with the whole social class system throughout the history of Britain. In the first part of the chapter, the social class systems of the Middle Ages, Tudor England and Victorian Britain are described. The second part of this chapter is concerned with division of 21<sup>st</sup> century British society into social classes. The main source of information used in the chapter is the Great British Class Survey (hereafter referred to as GBCS) published in 2013 which provides the latest data about the current division of society into classes in the wider public view and fully supports the idea of occurrence of social division in British society. The chapter also describes the working class and the underclass in terms of earning money, education and housing conditions. Only these two classes were chosen as they are crucial for the analytical part as it is aimed at the underclass in Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*.

Even in the very early era of Britain, in the early Middle Ages, a so called feudal class system existed which divided the poor from their masters. Further such division worked on the basis of a manorial system consisting of an exchange of labour (provided by the poor - the peasants) to the landlord on so called "home farms" for land on which the poor could live and grow their own food. Nevertheless, the manorial system as it is described above, did not work in the same way throughout the Middle Ages. There were slight differences in certain regions and time periods.<sup>2</sup> The feudal system can be used to describe the social hierarchy of the Middle Age England as the two are closely connected to each other. At the top of society there was undoubtedly the King who provided lands to the barons in exchange for the barons' knights and money. Knights then provided the poor with lands in exchange for food and service whenever demanded.<sup>3</sup>

During the late Middle Ages, in the 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, the social class system was still grounded in titles and grades. At the top of the social scale were dukes, earls and other lords. Below, stood the knights, although no longer the "heavily armed fighters on horses,"<sup>4</sup> they were more like landlords and so called *gentleman farmers* now. Beside the gentlemen there were the ordinary freemen, merchants and *landed gentry* who were in control of their towns. In London, for instance, a class of Lawyers was created, as they were considered to be equally

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<sup>2</sup> David Mc Dowall, *An Illustrated history of Britain* (Harlow: Longman, 1989), 36-38.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.historyonthenet.com/Medieval\\_Life/feudalism.htm](http://www.historyonthenet.com/Medieval_Life/feudalism.htm).

<sup>4</sup> Mc Dowall, *An Illustrated history*, 57-61.

important as big merchants. Below them, there were the poor, skilled as well as the unskilled people forming the very bottom of society.<sup>5</sup>

During Tudor England (1453 - 1603), the country was experiencing great social and economic problems connected mainly with a huge increase of almost double the population. At the bottom of the social scale were as always the poor and the working class people of society. As the situation in the country had become harder, the very poor people were given employment and food by monasteries. Unfortunately, this act was suppressed and with increasing unemployment, people started to steal in order to get food. Even though the ruling classes - the King, earls, dukes, members of parliament remained in power, conditions of the poor and the middle class grew perceptibly better. Between 1530 and 1600 the average living space per person almost doubled and after 1570 the houses of working class families expanded from one room to 3 well-furnished rooms. Middle class people also experienced similar changes within their homes with an expansion to eight or more rooms. The unmarried women made up the majority of the lower echelons of society, mainly due to religious Reformation which meant women could not go to monasteries and become nuns. Those who did not become servants in merchants' or cloth-makers' houses became beggars. The gap between the rich and the poor became more visible during the Tudor England thanks to new fabrics and technologies that were available to only the wealthiest of people.<sup>6</sup>

Certain differences can be found between the Tudor nobility, who ruled the countryside, and the Stuart gentry as they did not accept each others as equals. The Stuart period in comparison with the Tudor favoured the poor as wages, compared to the price of food were higher in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> At the top of the scale sat the nobility followed by the gentry and gentlemen.<sup>8</sup> Due to strong interests in farming and trade, yeoman farmers and traders climbed higher on the social ladder and became minor gentry or important merchants. In London, a new class arose the so called *aristocracy*, who proved that money could buy social position in Britain.<sup>9</sup>

Eighteen century Britain consisted of four main social classes; the wealthy merchants, the ordinary merchants and traders, the skilled craftsmen and unskilled workers.<sup>10</sup> During this

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<sup>5</sup> Mc Dowall, An Illustrated history, 57-61.

<sup>6</sup> Mc Dowall, An Illustrated history, 80 -85.

<sup>7</sup> Mc Dowall, An Illustrated history, 101-104.

<sup>8</sup> John Wroughton, Seventeenth Century Britain (London: Macmillan, 1980), p.26-27.

<sup>9</sup> Mc Dowall, An Illustrated history, 101-104.

<sup>10</sup> Mc Dowall, An Illustrated history, 114.

period such labourers “lived as subsistence or bare survival level.”<sup>11</sup> The rich in Britain, on the other hand, were still well prospering even though they had less power over the poor than they had had in previous times. For example, it was recorded that a lord had been hanged for killing his servant.<sup>12</sup>

Society of the Victorian and Edwardian Britain was in name of oligarchy<sup>13</sup>, which meant that only the aristocracy had the right to vote. Thanks to new opportunities created by the Industrial Revolution the middle class was growing. The middle class, living in the suburbs, commuting daily to the city,<sup>14</sup> was divided into two separate groups, namely the upper middle class consisting of lawyers, doctors, civil service workers and wealthy ship owners and the lower middle class which was formed by office workers, managers and even housekeepers and butlers in the upper class houses.<sup>15</sup> However, the biggest class in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the working class, living in squalor in overcrowded and filthy cities. The working condition of the people were often very tough and combined with unhealthy living conditions this undoubtedly led to low life expectancy for the working class people, only one in four babies survived in such conditions. Housing conditions, however, were good as the working class families often lived in four-room houses with little backyards rented from their employers.<sup>16</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup> century poor, stood at the bottom of the society as in previous times. The poor were seen dangerous and untrustworthy as they had to resort to begging and of course crime to survive. However, the working class were also seen untrustworthy, thus there were few chances of them finding employment.<sup>17</sup>

The following lines are devoted to describe social scale of 21<sup>st</sup> century British society.

Despite the misguided beliefs and many myths of a classless British society, the following information from the Great British Class Survey supports the idea, that a British social class system is still alive and deeply rooted in the British society. According to the GBCS published by the BBC in June 2013, there are 7 social classes in British society. These classes are no longer distinguished on the basis of education, wealth and occupation but economic,

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<sup>11</sup> „A Brief History of English Society“, last modified 2014, <http://www.localhistories.org/society.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Mc Dowall, An Illustrated history, 114 - 116.

<sup>13</sup> „A Brief History of English Society“, last modified 2014, <http://www.localhistories.org/society.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Mc Dowall, An Illustrated history, 138.

<sup>15</sup> Wilds Steve, “The 19th Century British Class System“, last modified 31st July 2001, [http://www.writing.com/main/view\\_item/item\\_id/1798024-The-19th-Century-British-Class-System](http://www.writing.com/main/view_item/item_id/1798024-The-19th-Century-British-Class-System).

<sup>16</sup> Mc Dowall, An Illustrated history, 140.

<sup>17</sup> Wilds Steve, “The 19<sup>th</sup> Century British Class System“.

social and cultural indicators were used to define the new classes. Nevertheless, three main classes, namely the working class (making up 48 % of the population), the middle class (31 %) and the upper class (called Elite in the GBCS, 6 %), have remained structurally the same as in the past and are still present in British society. Further the middle class was divided in the survey into the *Established middle class* and the *Technical middle class*. The working class members created three more classes and subclasses, namely *Emergent service workers*, *Traditional working class* and *New affluent workers*.<sup>18</sup>

For the purpose of the thesis, it is important to describe the classes that are at the edge and at the bottom of the social scale. These are the working class and most importantly its subclass, the so called underclass which is referred to as *precariat*<sup>19</sup> in the GBCS.

The best means for creating a picture of the most closely examined class - the working class, is through its members. According to the GBCS, the working class, consisting of *Emerging service workers* and the *Traditional working class*, also called “new urban group” (GBCS)<sup>20</sup> is a group of relatively economically secured people with rich cultural and social capital. Members of this class are usually plumbers, car workers, van drivers but also legal and medical secretaries, and so forth. The description of this, indeed, large social group could be shortened into one sentence, as the researchers have described the class as "...a socially and culturally active class. They (the working-class members) tend to come from non-middle class families, and few have been to university."<sup>21</sup>

To describe the working class, Richard Hoggart who is well known for writing on the subject of working-class life, provided a rather a comprehensive explanation in his book:

Most of them work for a wage, not a salary, as the wage is paid weekly: most have no other sources of income. Some are self-employed; they may keep a small shop for members of the group to which, culturally, they belong or supply a service to the group. One cannot firmly distinguish workers from others by the amount of money earned, since there are enormous variations in wages among working-class people; and most steel-workers, for instance are plainly working class though some earn more than many teachers who are not.<sup>22</sup>

According to Hoggart, the main difference between working-class members and people from other social classes comes down to the amount of money earned. People from the working

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<sup>18</sup> Sam Jones and agency, “Great British Class Survey finds seven social classes in UK,” *The Guardian*, April 3, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/apr/03/great-british-class-survey-seven>.

<sup>19</sup> social group consisting of people whose lives are difficult because they have little or no job security and few employment rights (Macmillan Dictionary).

<sup>20</sup> Jones and agency, “Great British Class Survey“.

<sup>21</sup> Jones and agency, “Great British Class Survey“.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working Class Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 20.

class usually work for wages which they earn weekly, compared to for instance middle-class people who usually earn monthly - in salaries. Hoggart also mentions that some of the working-class members are self-employed or shop keepers. This fact is rather interesting as in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the self-employed and small entrepreneur are regarded as of a higher social class than the working class.

Regarding education, working-class people were, especially in the 1950s, depicted as the people who had left school without any particular qualification and then found a job as manual workers.<sup>23</sup> In fact, similar description of the educational experience of the working-class can be found in the GBCS suggesting that only naturally talented people would attend university.

The standard of living, especially regarding the housing conditions of the working-class families were and still are, according to Story and Childs, sufficient and comfortable as they usually live in terraced houses which then form a close community of families of the same cast. The houses were often owned by the council or a landlord. Ownership of a property was not common for people from the working class. However, compared to the situation in the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the monetary value of the homes of the working class is similar to the houses owned by members of *New affluent workers* class; a class which is in the GBCS shown to lie somewhere between the middle class and the working class.<sup>24</sup>

Another aspect of determination of one's social status might be, according to Story & Childs, accent. A study taken during the 1970s revealed that if the 'posh' south-east England accent, which sounds something like that of a BBC news reader, was found very attractive. The respondents labelled the accent as educated, soft and mellifluous. On the other hand, various regional city accents such as Cockney English of the East End of London, Geordie from Newcastle, Scouse from Liverpool or Brummie accent from Birmingham were seen as harsh, uneducated, common and even ugly.<sup>25</sup> Further on the thesis, some examples of the Received Pronunciation will be described to demonstrate the evidence of the underclass in *Trainspotting*.

At the lowest end of the scale stands the underclass (also referred to as the precariat or precarious proletariat). According to the British survey published by ScienceDaily, only 3 in 100 members of the underclass are university educated and the rest of the group

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<sup>23</sup> Mike Storry and Peter Childs, *British Cultural Identities*, second edition (London: Routledge, 2002), 175-176.

<sup>24</sup> Jones and agency, "Great British Class Survey".

<sup>25</sup> Storry and Childs, *British Cultural identities*, 178-179.

are very unlikely to go on to higher education. The level of education which a young person can hope to achieve is irrefutably connected to the level of income of the person or their family, which is about £8,000 a year for the underclass. Another pivotal factor is the amount of savings a person might have, which is found to be a maximum of £800 and nowhere among the underclass is it higher. The precariat consists of 57 % women, which could go some way to explain the number of single-parent families in the UK. Nevertheless, there are, as among working-class families, deep family connections to be found within underclass families. The researchers explained their use of the term *precariat* as follows: “We use the term *precariat* as a reflection on the existence of a significant group characterised by high amounts of insecurity on all of our measures of capital.” The underclass members are, according to the survey, usually manual factory workers, cleaners or unemployed living in old industrial towns, most commonly outside South-East England.<sup>26</sup>

To sum up what was mentioned in the above chapter, it is obvious that British society is aware of the emergence of social classes in Britain as the division into social classes, according to the Great British Class Survey held in 2013, still remains an integral part of the British society. Comparing the social scale of British society since its beginnings until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as described on the previous pages and the class system of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century British society, only slight changes, especially in designation and internal structure of classes can be found. Yet, the society remains, more or less, comprised of four major social classes, namely the upper class, which is at the top of the scale; the upper-middle and middle class; the working class and at the bottom, the underclass.

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<sup>26</sup> SAGE Publications. "Largest class survey reveals polarized UK society and the rise of new groups." ScienceDaily.

## 2 DEFINING THE UNDERCLASS

The second chapter deals with various labels and definitions of the urban working class and the underclass through the time as it is necessary to define the classes in terms of education, jobs, involvement in crime, drugs and alcohol use. Such definition will be further used in the analytical part of the thesis.

The idea of an ‘underclass’ as the ‘social residuum’<sup>27</sup> has been reinvented over the past 120 years in Britain. The broad idea dates back to the seventeenth century when the Poor Law was published.<sup>28</sup> The law itself is concerned with vagabondage and distinguishing between ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor or claimants. No matter the age of the idea, since its first emergence there has been a raging debate between scholars concerning the meaning of the idea and no single definition has yet been derived. In order to define the underclass, the public were asked what, according to the questioned, drove people (the underclass people) to their financial and employment trap. People were in the survey also asked what, according to them, led to the separation of the underclass. There was a need to describe and define the separate category of people and explain the cause of their poverty.<sup>29</sup>

Henry Mayhew, a redactor of Morning Chronicle, in the 1850s was the first to draw the Victorians’ attention to poverty, thus the British were among the first to describe an urban underclass. According to ‘Welshman’, Mayhew described; a member of the underclass as a person distinguished from civilized man by his antipathy to regular and stable labour, by his lack of desire to provide a store for the future, ‘...by his inability to perceive consequences ever so slightly removed from immediate apprehension...’, by his obsession with stupefying herbs and roots, and when possible, by intoxicating fermented drinks. Other labels for this kind of people occurred during this time period. They were for instance “dishonest,” “undeserving,” “unrespectable,” “depraved,” “debased,” “disreputable,” or “feckless.”<sup>30</sup>

As the Oxford English Dictionary says, John MacLean, a Scottish communist was one of the first to use the term *underclass*. But he uses the term in 1918 in rather different way than it has been used since as it is stated further. He wrote that “...the society moves forward as a

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<sup>27</sup> the residue, remainder, or rest of something; in sociology: a class of society that is unemployed and without privileges or opportunities. (Oxford Dictionaries)

<sup>28</sup> John Welshman, *Underclass: A history of the Excluded, 1880-2000* (New York: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), 4.

<sup>29</sup> Welshman, *Underclass*, 8.

<sup>30</sup> Welshman, *Underclass*, 6.



consequence of an under-class overcoming the resistance of a class on top of them.”<sup>31</sup> From this definition, it is not clear whether the underclass was really at the lower end of society or not. Although there were scholars convinced that there was no such social class as the underclass in society, the GBCS proves otherwise.

As stated in ‘Welshman’, Peter Townsend in 1979 in his research of poverty noted that older people, the disabled, the chronically sick and the long-term unemployed were not part of the workforce. The fact that they had been denied access to the paid labour and the fact that they experienced low social status resulted in creating some kind of modern underclass. Due to this argument, Townsend moved the concept of the underclass away from ethnic minority groups to which the concept was attached in United States.<sup>32</sup>

According to the American journalist Ken Auletta several concepts defining the underclass can be found. He claims that members of the class can be grouped into four distinct categories which include the passive poor, usually long-term welfare recipients; the inimical street criminals terrorising most cities who are often drugs addicts and school dropouts; the prostitutes, who as the street criminals “...may not be poor and who earn their livelihood in the underground economy...”<sup>33</sup> The last category, Auletta finds is consists of traumatized alcoholics, homeless people and former mental patients who skulk in the street. His explanation implies that the cause of the peoples’ miserable conditions is their conduct. In contrast, the concept of William J. Wilson, a sociologist, stresses the importance of unequal access to the labour market and sees the underclass as unskilled individuals who lack training and either experience long-term unemployment or are not a part of the labour force. These people might be either engaged in criminal activity on the street or can be families with chronically low incomes.<sup>34</sup> These two different approaches, by Auletta and by Wilson, suggested that the cause of the emergence of poverty could be found either in social structure or the behaviour of people.

These behavioural views of the underclass have been criticized by scholars for ‘re-cycling the discredited ideas of ‘residuum’ and ‘cycles of deprivation’. According to Macnicol, the key part of the behavioural theory is that the underclass has been created by bizarre and

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<sup>31</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, (Oxford, 1985), vol. xviii, p. 958.

<sup>32</sup> Welshman, *Underclass*, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Ken Auletta, *The Underclass*. (New York: Overlook Press, 1999), xvi.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Murray, *Charles Murray and the Underclass: The Developing Debate (Choice in Welfare)*, (London: Civitas, 1996), 8.

rapid changes in the morality of people and by abnormal growth in the welfare system.<sup>35</sup> As Buckingham states, there are few key predications generating from the behavioural approach. The first idea is that the underclass will consist mainly of welfare dependent people, single parent families and fainéant males. This idea corresponds with Auletta's definition which is stated above.

Another idea mentioned in his work is cultural attributes and the characteristics of the underclass such as low work motivation will be transmitted across generations and will be a powerful cause of underclass membership. To Buckingham, the working class can be identified as moral and the distinction between this 'moral' working class and so called 'immoral' underclass will grow more clear. Stedman Jones sees the occurrence of the underclass or 'the residuum' more an inconvenience for administrators rather than a threat to civilisation itself. His idea is also based on the fact that during the First World War the full employment shows the social rather than biological background of the emergence of the underclass.<sup>36</sup>

Alongside the behavioural approach, there is a concept which sees the cause of emergence of the underclass in labour market disadvantages. According to Wilson, the underclass occurred because of moving companies from "ghetto" areas. This migration caused a lack of demand for less skilled men in large cities and these men were forced to become unemployed. From this point of view the underclass culture was caused by adaptation to poverty and the social exclusion dependant on a loss of a job. In a similar way, Giddens and Dahrendorf state that the emergence of the British underclass might have been caused by a relative decline in the British economy. The view predicates cultural distinction of the underclass as well as its spatial and economic segregation from the rest of society. They fear that the segregated underclass will reject British institutions, which would lead to less educated and qualified people which might further cause an underclass membership.<sup>37</sup> The underclass is according to Mincey defined as a long-term state and thus such an approach as Buckingham supports might become persistent. Mincey considers the unemployed who are dependent on welfare, to be members of the underclass because of their own dysfunctional behaviour. He blames neither the economy nor the state. On the other hand, he accepts people on social insurance benefits, as these benefits are dependent on

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<sup>35</sup> Alan Buckingham, *Is There Underclass in Britain?*, (London: London School of Economic, 1999), 50.

<sup>36</sup> Welshman, *Underclass*, 3.

<sup>37</sup> Buckingham, *Is There Underclass...?*, 50.

previous employment. These benefits are to cover risks connected to unemployment, retirement and disability.<sup>38</sup>

Another measure of the underclass, mentioned by Mincey, is based on location, and emphasizes neighbourhoods rather than individuals in terms of measuring and defining the underclass. According to Wilson in 'Mincey', the above mentioned approach takes into consideration both the behavioural aspects inside the neighbourhoods and the whole neighbourhoods' incomes.<sup>39</sup> He also states, that underclass families tend to live on such low-income and in such bad neighbourhoods because they are segregated in economical and social terms (e. g. minority groups). These people, spatially segregated in their 'ghettos' created their own culture which rejects mainstream values. The truth is that not all of the people living in these segregated areas need be members of the underclass.<sup>40</sup>

Thanks to the arrival of the American critic Charles Murray, disorder around a possible emergence of a 'new' class began. By the 1980s, the term *underclass* became a part of popular vocabulary when discussing poverty and social changes. Murray states in *British Underclass* that it is always a problem when discussing the term itself. By the term, he does not refer to the poor people but to subset poor people who live directly through welfare or indirectly through crime without participating in mainstream society. What is characteristic for the members of the underclass is that they take jobs only sporadically if at all and they do not share the social burdens of the neighbourhood they live in. According to Buckingham, their responsibilities of fatherhood are shrunk and mothers are often indifferent or simply incompetent.<sup>41</sup> Another name for the underclass has been brought to England across the Channel, from France. It was Balzac and Victor Hugo who, with their bourgeois opinions, helped to create the term *dangerous class*. This label has been given to urban labour people, who had been left behind by progress.<sup>42</sup>

To describe the wide range of possible reasons for becoming an under-class member, Frank Field in his work *Losing Out* identifies four main forces of expulsion of the British underclass. According to his arguments the underclass is not only a class at the bottom of society<sup>43</sup>, though the Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "the lowest social stratum

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<sup>38</sup> Ronald B. Mincey et. al, "The Underclass: Definition and Measurement," Science, New Series, 248 (1990): 450, doi: 10.1126/science.248.4954.450.

<sup>39</sup> Mincey et. al, *The Underclass*, 451.

<sup>40</sup> Mincey et. al, *The Underclass*, 452.

<sup>41</sup> Buckingham, *Is There Underclass...?*, 50.

<sup>42</sup> Welshman, *Underclass*, 6.

<sup>43</sup> Welshman, *Underclass*, 9.

in a country or community,”<sup>44</sup> but also that its members are excluded in terms of long-term unemployment and widening class differences. The exclusion of the very poorest was caused by the rapidly rising living standards in the UK and changes of public attitudes concerning income, life chances and political aspirations.<sup>45</sup>

As political issues with politically correct language have developed with time, the term *social residuum* replaced the term *underclass* for an uncertain period of time. It was used for the first time by journalist John Bright during the debate on the Second Reform Act of 1867. Bright described the usage of the terms *underclass* and *residuum* in connection as both of the terms have to do with helplessness and dependency. Bright also suggested that people found in such social situation are easily manipulated and during election periods they would be willing to sell their votes in order to get some money. Many other educated people from different fields started using the term as Bright did but in a different way. One of them, a social reformer Alsager Hay Hill, in his pamphlet from 1868 *Our Unemployment*, uses the term *residuum* in connection to the unemployed people. He suggests that the unemployed can be divided into three groups - casual labourers; representatives of the decaying and underpaid traders; and an incompetent class. Hill, at the same time, finds a group of separate *residuum* which is described as honest, thrifty, and industrious men. Individuals labelled thus, according to Hill, became unemployed because of the trade cycle.<sup>46</sup> The economist Alfred Marshall in his article in the journal *Contemporary Review* published in 1884 used the phrase ‘submerged social stratum’ to label the underclass. According to his article, he was concerned about the unemployed and poor in the same way Hill was, and that is why he did not use the phrase *social residuum* as Bright had. In order to solve the ‘problem’ concerning physical deterioration, Marshall suggested the setting up of labour colonies.<sup>47</sup> There is an obvious ambiguity of the term ‘*residuum*’ that can be easily found with the two views stated earlier in this paragraph. On one hand, there is Bright who sees members of the *residuum* as people who cannot be trusted not to misuse their suffrage. On the other hand, for Alsager Hay Hill and Marshall, members of the *residuum* were people who had not taken responsibility for their social status.

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<sup>44</sup> Oxford English Dictionaries, “Underclass”, URL: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/underclass><http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/underclass>

<sup>45</sup> Buckingham, *Is There Underclass...?*, 51.

<sup>46</sup> Gordon Marshal, *Repositioning class: social inequality in industrial societies*, (London: SAGE Publications, 1997), 82.

<sup>47</sup> Welshman, *Underclass*, 10.

Concepts and views that do not accept the existence of the underclass at all have also emerged within socialists. These ideas generally accept the emergence of temporary or long-term unemployed people but do not classify this as the emergence of the underclass. Gallie in 'Buckingham' states that a social class needs to display some internal coherence. He claims that people regarded to be underclass members do not show the internal coherence, since they diverge from lone mothers or young school dropouts to long-term unemployed and early retirees. What Buckingham further claims in *Is There Underclass in Britain?* is that the membership of the underclass is not in many cases long-term thus it could not be concerned and treated as a social class for its lack of intra- and intergenerational stability<sup>48</sup> and that it rather consist of the victims caused by the division of society in terms of occupation, education and social background.

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<sup>48</sup> Buckingham, *Is There Underclass...?*, 52.

### 3 POVERTY AND ANTI-POVERTY POLICIES IN 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BRITAIN

Although the origins of the underclass date further back, during the 1930's, at the time of the Great depression, the unemployment and the number of families dependent on state benefits rapidly rose as the government was, instead, concerned about the ever deepening state dept. After the war (during the 1950's and 1960's) when conditions in Britain got much better than during the war and the country became more equal and secure, it became widely thought that poverty had been largely eliminated. Nevertheless, during the economic crisis in the 1960's when the British government gave priority to the economical over the social and welfare issues of the country that were necessary, so the percentage of families dependent on the state benefits grew up to 14%. Further, trends in the distribution of incomes were sought in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>49</sup>

Although Margaret Thatcher was regarded as living evidence of social mobility in British society, providing that anyone can climb to the top of British society as she was born to a shopkeeper<sup>50</sup>, during her time in office (1979 - 1990), the gap between rich and poor widened again and discussions about the deserving and undeserving poor were raised. According to Golding & Middleton's study from 1982, especially in the second half of the 1970's "a shrill and mounting antagonism to the welfare system and its clients" was produced by *scrounger phobia* which reflects the fear of social security and its claimants and raised many debates and political disagreements.<sup>51</sup> The poor started to be blamed for their current economic situation, due to their "laziness and lack of willpower."<sup>52</sup>

Mrs Thatcher, during her first administration, set the state benefits (especially employment benefits) to a minimum as to interfere minimally in market processes. For instance, abolishing the earnings-related supplement for the unemployed was viewed as the best means to encourage individuals to make an additional income if they so wanted. Nevertheless, such interventions in labour market play an important role in anti-poverty policy and limiting them had degenerating consequences to the position of the low-paid. In addition, Professor Patrick

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<sup>49</sup> Joanna Mack and Steward Lansley, *Poor Britain*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1985), 206.

<sup>50</sup> Storry and Childs, *British Cultural identities*, 177.

<sup>51</sup> Mack and Lansley, *Poor Britain*, 211.

<sup>52</sup> Mack and Lansley, *Poor Britain*, 206.

Minford has argued that the key cause of unemployment is high wages. According to his point of view, Britain had to create new job opportunities for people with higher wages. When the wages are low, people will not take a job because it is easier to live on benefits which are considerably higher than the minimal wages. Further, Minford advocated the wholesale abolition of a welfare state, so that the public spending could reduce to about one third of its value. His idea included “the replacement of the National Health Service with private health insurance, the abolition of state schools and the privatisation of education, the privatisation of many local government services, cuts in unemployment benefit and the introduction of a negative income tax to replace existing social security.”<sup>53</sup> Even though, it might have seemed the best solution to the situation, such dramatic changes would have damaging implication to society as a whole.

Long-term benefits, such as benefits for pensioners and the disabled, were not raised according to overall earnings but more in line with inflation. However, unemployment and child benefits had to be restored in the April 1983 budget.<sup>54</sup> Cuts in housing benefits, however, were felt disproportionately more by the moderately poor (people on low incomes) and pensioner with small occupational pensions. Those in extreme poverty were largely protected from experiencing these cuts. As a consequence to certain cuts in the state budget, there has been a shift in public opinion towards the poor who were no longer blamed for their social situation since the mid 1970's.<sup>55</sup>

Even though Margaret Thatcher's first policy towards cutting the public spending failed, it was the necessary first step “to liberalize the operation of Labour market and reduce the role of the welfare state to that of a minimal safety net.”<sup>56</sup>

It has been argued, especially in the late 1970s, that elimination of poverty or at least lowering the inequality of incomes cannot be achieved without redistribution of financial means from the non-poor to the poor. According to *Breadline Britain* survey there was a majority of people from all over the social scale who wanted to narrow the gap of inequality between the rich and the poor. Narrowing the gap could be achieved by introducing higher taxation for the rich, who were evenly divided in their opinions about such matter, which cannot be said

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<sup>53</sup> Minford P., *Unemployment: Causes and Cure*, (Oxford: Martin Robertson), 86.

<sup>54</sup> Mack and Lansley, *Poor Britain*, 260.

<sup>55</sup> Mack and Lansley, *Poor Britain*, 253.

<sup>56</sup> Paul Johnson, *Twentieth-Century Britain: Economic, Social and Cultural Change*, (Harlow: Longman, 1994), 348.

about the working class and middle class households who were against increasing taxes for the rich.<sup>57</sup>

The public post-war sense of community and a widespread support for community gave rise to the welfare state and supported its development in order to gain a more secure and a fairer society. It might have been the air raids and evacuations that exposed the rich and the middle class to poverty alike and assisted in paving the way for new attitudes and views of society. The government's progressive spending on a welfare state and its impact on taxation has had, however, significant consequences for the society.<sup>58</sup> Such activity by the government gave new opportunities to the poor and improved the living standards in the UK through the life cycle, redistributing from the rich to the poor. However, the new welfare state has only negated the basic social inequalities and there are steps which need to be taken to dismantle such inequalities. Even today, combined with the demand for full employment, the post-war welfare reforms are the key weapons of government against the social inequalities in Britain.

In conclusion, the question of redistribution and narrowing the gap of inequality has been highly controversial not to mention the question of poverty itself. Nevertheless, Sir Keith Joseph has argued that the poor cannot be richer by making the rich poorer. He continued his argument by saying that "...only by making everybody richer, including the rich..." an equal society can be achieved.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Mack and Lansley, *Poor Britain*, 229.

<sup>58</sup> Mack and Lansley, *Poor Britain*, 236.

<sup>59</sup> Keith Joseph and Johnatan Sumption, *Equality*, (London: John Murray, 1979), 22.



## 4 CONTEMPORARY SCOTTISH LITERATURE

Irvine Welsh is a contemporary Scottish novelist writer and short story writer and for this reason the following chapter gives an overall view of contemporary Scottish writing through the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. Further in the chapter characteristic aspects in works of Welsh will be mentioned.

The idea of Scottish literature as a part of authenticated culture of the Scots was raised for the first time by G. Gregory Smith's work *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence*. Although Scotland was deprived of being an autonomous state, by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, the work of Gregory Smith helped to assure that Scotland would at least keep its cultural heritage and nationality. Smith's ideas have been thought to be abstract and, as many national ideas of his contemporaries such as Rudyard Kipling or W. B. Yeats, regarded as attempts at establishing a single unit of English literature and identity without any Roman or Celtic elements. What Denis Saurat, a French critic witnessed in 1920s Scotland, identified as "The Scottish Renaissance," did, in fact, wrack the persistent notion of Renaissance decentness and appropriateness and strengthened the idea of Scottish literature as a self-contained unit of Scottish national heritage.<sup>60</sup> However, an opposing view on single Scottish identity was laid by Robert Knox together with Colin Kidd who saw Scottish identity more as a hybrid, both in cultural and racial terms. They likened Scottish writing and identity to Dr Jekyll who in fear of degeneration as a consequence of mixing cultures turns into Mr Hyde.<sup>61</sup>

Works of contemporary Scottish novelists and writers are mainly concerned with complex Scottish identity, landscape, youth culture and gender issues, trying to offer a different view of Scotland than the most classic, romantic scenes picturing men wearing kilts and playing bagpipes with the beautiful green Highlands rolling away behind them. To Smith, it was the bipolarity of Scottish writing that characterized it. He saw the literature to fluctuate between real word and the world of fantasy.<sup>62</sup> Yet, Douglas Gifford, in March's *Rewriting Scotland*, commented on Scotland and Scottish writing more as on a rural phoney picture of feigned traditions, fake mythologies of land and community than as on an urban country with dump unrelated cities which Scotland in fact is. Nevertheless, none of the two ideas stated

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<sup>60</sup> Gerald Carruthers, David Goldie and Alastair Renfrew, *Beyond Scotland: New Contexts for Twentieth-century Scottish Literature* (Amsterdam: Rodopis, 2004), i - iv.

<sup>61</sup> Carruthers, Goldie and Renfrew, *Beyond Scotland*, i.

<sup>62</sup> Carruthers, Goldie and Renfrew, *Beyond Scotland*, i.

above are either black or white and thus none of the facets can be ignored while thinking about Scotland and Scottish writing.<sup>63</sup>

A. L. Kennedy, in March, explains the current switch from romantic stories to describing the complex Scottish identity in terms of the alternation of cities during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She criticises romantic writings for not following the current image of the country and writing about something “... as if that almost existed.”<sup>64</sup>

According to March, the contemporary Scottish writers support ideas developed by Alasdair Gray and James Kelman who as the very first representatives of the contemporary Scottish literature focused their works on Glaswegian working class people in the 1970s and 1980s Scotland. The language of the urban working-class characters in contemporary Scottish literature often plays one of the most important roles in contemporary Scottish novels as it is the most visible feature that differentiates the Scots from other British people. Kelman’s works are regarded as giving working-class Scots confidence in their identity by supporting the under-valuated Scots language<sup>65</sup>, which is, according to Cairn Craig, regarded as the cause of the most radical change towards devolution in Scottish novel.<sup>66</sup> Malzhan further explains that the characteristics of working-class life undoubtedly belong to Scottish literature as it asserts Scottish identity.<sup>67</sup>

The most striking contemporary Scottish novelists whose fiction is comparable to that of Irvine Welsh are Alan Warner, Duncan McLean, Iain Banks, Janice Galloway and A. L. Kennedy. The writing of both Mc Lean and Warner is concerned by differentiation between the urban and the rural Scottish. Their works also deal with gender issues and the struggles of Scottish youth. Moreover, McLean suggests in his works the fragmentation of society. Even though Iain Banks also hit the urban and the rural landscape of Scotland in his mainstream writings, he is, under the name Iain M. Banks, known for his science fiction ‘cult’ novels. The shift in contemporary Scottish writers was made by Janice Galloway whose novels show women who try to elevate their position within a traditional male-dominated Scottish society. A. L. Kennedy also presents women trying to identify themselves within the urban working-

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<sup>63</sup> Christie L. March, *Rewriting Scotland: Welsh, McLean, Warner, Banks, Galloway and Kennedy*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), i.

<sup>64</sup> March, *Rewriting Scotland*, i.

<sup>65</sup> March, *Rewriting Scotland*, vi.

<sup>66</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to Scottish Literature*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 270.

<sup>67</sup> March, *Rewriting Scotland*, iv.

class society, in her writings.<sup>68</sup> Compared to the writing of Irvine Welsh, the themes and topics covered in works of the writers stated above are mainly concerned with cultural and gender identities.

Yet, Welsh's writing was first presented to the wide audience thanks to Kevin Williamson who published the story *First Day of the Edinburgh Festival*. Duncan McLean was later interested by Welsh's stories and published four more in his *Clocktower* booklet in 1992. In 1993 these stories were published again as a part of *Trainspotting*. Although having only a limited audience at first, the novel met unexpectedly high critical acclaim, especially after its film version, directed by Danny Boyle, hit the big screen in 1996. However, it was not only the movie version of the novel which made Welsh's writing famous. His writing success is based mainly on his use of language which, not only in *Trainspotting*, represents different social environments and backgrounds. Different phonetic varieties of spoken English are combined with Standard English to give the readers with more realistic view of society. The narrative structures used in his writing are well chosen, exposing the lives of his characters proving explanation of the particular behaviour of the characters.<sup>69</sup>

A common theme in Welsh's writing is the culture of the Scottish working class and the Scottish youth and rave culture. Drug use also plays a strong part in lives of the vast majority of his characters. Yet, it is not only the dark side of drug use - heroin or cocaine addictions followed by crucial withdrawals, thefts, AIDS and broken relationships as depicted in his first novel *Trainspotting*. It is also the rave culture, Ecstasy and dance clubs which are described in his books in order to show the culture of the young Scottish working class. On the other hand, Welsh's writing is seen to neglect any ideas about community and identity as it is mostly set in run-down estates of Edinburgh. Even though class progress is considered to be a myth within the British society, in some of his writings, Welsh touches on the progression from the working class to the middle class can be found.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> March, *Rewriting Scotland*, i - ix.

<sup>69</sup> March, *Rewriting Scotland*, 12 - 15.

<sup>70</sup> March, *Rewriting Scotland*, 20 - 25.

## 5 UNDERCLASS IN TRAINSPOTTING

The following chapter discusses the reflection of today's working class and underclass in the novel *Trainspotting* written by "...one of the most important British newcomers of the 1990s,"<sup>71</sup> Irvine Welsh. The chapter consists of a short characteristic of the novel and its main characters and then the youth underclass and the urban working class is described in different aspects, including language, housing and living conditions, education and joblessness connected to welfare dependency. It is also important to mention drug usage, alcohol and criminality, which is closely connected to youth underclass in Edinburgh and London during the 1980s.

Welsh's novel *Trainspotting* was published for the first time in 1993. The whole book consists of 7 chapters which are further divided into several more subchapters. However, there is not so much in the way of story in the book and it might rather be described as a collection of short stories very loosely connected to each other. In fact, some of the stories are not connected at all. Nevertheless, there are a few themes connecting the stories and it is mainly the setting of the book, the poverty-stricken council estate of Leith - Edinburgh that connects individual chapters. The setting of the novel is the very first factor suggesting the presence of the lower classes in the book as, according to Wilson mentioned above, the neighbourhood is the major feature in defining and measuring the underclass. Leith described as "A place ay dispossessed white trash in a trash country fill of dispossessed white trash,"<sup>72</sup> provides the reader with a very specific idea about the urban setting of the area. What is depicted in the book is the real face of Leith, not the mask that every visitor of the estates can see as "the castle n Princes Street, n the High Street" and thinking about "how fucking beautiful Edinburgh is, and how lovely the fucking caste is oan the hill ower the gardins n aw that shit...thoat the whole fucking place wis like that."<sup>73</sup>

Even though Welsh did not mention any particular date or year in his book, there are a few factual events which aid us in framing the book in a certain time period. One of these events is Iggy Pop's Barrowlands concert in Glasgow which took place on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 1988.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Disability in the Writing of Irvine Welsh: A Discussion Paper, i.

<sup>72</sup> Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting* (London: Vintage, 2004), 190.

<sup>73</sup> *Trainspotting*, 115.

<sup>74</sup> [http://www.glasgow-barrowland.com/history/ballroom\\_historybands\\_pq.html](http://www.glasgow-barrowland.com/history/ballroom_historybands_pq.html)

The story follows the lives of 7 major characters during the 80s when Edinburg was known as the heroin and HIV capital of Europe.<sup>75</sup> Mark 'Rent-Boy' Renton (further referred to as Renton) , Simon 'Sick-boy' Williams, Daniel 'Spud' Murphy (further referred to as Spud), Francis 'Franco' Begbie, Davie Mitchell, Tommy Laurence and Rab "Second Prize" McLaughlin are the main characters of the novel, most of whom are heroin addicts, junkies living from one day to the next.

The individual chapters are mainly narrated by Renton and Spud which also creates pretext among chapters and subchapters. Renton, as most of his friends, is a junkie, a heroin addict. As a common ordinary member of the working class, he is supposed to follow mainstream behaviour, the invented false ideology of society and:

Choose life. Choose mortgage payments; choose washing machines; choose cars; choose sitting oan a couch watching mind-numbing and spirit-crushing game shows ... Choose rotting away, pishing and shiteing yersel in a home ... Choose life.<sup>76</sup>

Yet, Renton chooses drugs and life in which one does not have to "...worry about bills, food, bailiffs...",<sup>77</sup> as the only thing to worry about when being into skag is the skag itself. He is convinced that there is no chance of making society "significantly better,"<sup>78</sup> neither way he recognizes a point of changing an individual in order to accommodate to society. Although, being demotivated by his stance to society, Renton sees a reward of being its part. Such reward he sees mainly in terms of receiving welfare benefits.

Despite being downtrodden by the unfairness of society, Renton would like to live an ordinary, decent urban-working class life so he tries to get a job, rent a flat and find a woman to live with. However, every time he tries to do so, he fails and his explanation of why has he chosen heroin over the ordinary working-class life is following:

Ma problem is, whenever ah sense the possibility, or realise the actuality ay attaining something that ah thought ah wanted, be it girlfriend, flat, job, education, money and so on, it jist seems so dull n sterile, that ah cannae value it any mair.<sup>79</sup>

As it can be seen from his attitude in this quote, Renton has dispelled most of his chances of a better life or at least on improving his living standard and any job opportunity because such

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<sup>75</sup> Writing Scotland: Irvine Welsh, last modified September 2004, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00mr8yj/profiles/irvine-welsh>

<sup>76</sup> Trainspotting, 187.

<sup>77</sup> Trainspotting, 133.

<sup>78</sup> Trainspotting, 186.

<sup>79</sup> Trainspotting, 90.

possibilities and chances seem to be boring and meaningless as the drugs offer him much more.

As expressed in the chapter 'In Overdrive', the underclass members of the book are not interested in the politics in their country. Sick Boy commented on the parliament as follows: "Socialists go on about your comrades, your class, your union and society. Fuck all that shite. The Tories go on about your employer, your country, your family. Fuck that even mair."<sup>80</sup> Sick Boy's attitude towards Political parties flows, more or less, from an attitude which some of the Political parties have towards the urban working class and the underclass. Even though, there have been attempts to improve on the conditions of those classes, the members themselves do not trust individual parties and the promises they make before elections.

Due to the fact that *Trainspotting* has been reviewed as a book which negates the idea of classless society, the following lines are aimed to prove occurrence of different social classes and discuss attitude of the *Trainspotting* underclass towards other social classes. While talking about his time spent at Aberdeen University, Renton comments on other university students who are referred to as "four-eyed middle-class wankers,"<sup>81</sup> Renton's labelling of the university student corresponds to the fact that most of both the established middle class and the technical middle class members, according to the GBCS, studied and graduated from university.<sup>82</sup> Sick Boy, on the other hand, plays the role of a working class man in order to look more attractive to women in a bar in the chapter 'The First Shag In Ages'. His attitude towards his friends, members of the underclass, and his current appearance is described thus: "Sick Boy shakes his head disdainfully, than scans the bar with a haughty, superior expression on his face," making a mocking note towards Renton and Spud trying to infer that as a working class man, he has better chances with women than they do. "Working classes at play he derisively snorts. Spud and Renton wince."<sup>83</sup> To be an underclass member clearly means, according to the quote, to be regarded as something at the very bottom of society, something unwanted. Spud and Renton are aware of that fact. However, they are at the same time disgusted by such class differences.

Yet, the upper class is also mentioned in the book, namely in the chapter 'Bang to Rites', in which, a commissioned officer gives eulogy at the funeral of Billy, Renton's brother. Renton

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<sup>80</sup> *Trainspotting*, 30.

<sup>81</sup> *Trainspotting*, 84.

<sup>82</sup> Jones and agency, "Great British Class Survey".

<sup>83</sup> *Trainspotting*, 131.

describes the officer as “Some ruling class cunt, a junior minister of something,” who speaks in “Oxbridge voice.”<sup>84</sup> The class membership of the officer is mainly determined by his voice, which, to Renton, sounds well-educated and reminds him of one of the highest social class in British society. Further, it is added that “He (the officer) was exactly the kind ay cunt they’d huv branded as a cowardly thug if he wis in civvy street rather than on Her Majesty’s Service.”<sup>85</sup> The conditions in the underclass streets of Leith are thought to be even tougher than conditions under which British army have to operate.

Another job which is mainly occupied by the working class members is mentioned in the chapter ‘London Crawling’. The office workers, referred to as “suits who ain’t even genuine yuppies,”<sup>86</sup> are described as:

Mostly fucking shiny-arsed clerks of commission based insurance salesmen that get a handful orf fucking roice each week in wages...These cahnts are all up to their fucking eyes in debt. Strutting around the fucking city in expensive suits pretending that the’re on fifty K a year. Most of them aint even got a five-figure salary, ave they.<sup>87</sup>

Renton sees the members of the working class as people who work in the offices, earning weekly in wages. He also mentions the workers to have debts. However, obtaining a bank credit is not easy for an underclass member or working class members with low income. The definition Renton gives by his quote corresponds with the one given by Hoggard which is described in the first part of the thesis. Renton further refers to annual incomes of the working class clerks which, according to website PayScale, hover around £19,383.<sup>88</sup> Such a figure is inconsistent with Renton’s perception of annual incomes of members of other classes. The final example of a working-class occupation is mentioned at the very beginning of the book and it is a taxi driving. Renton describes the taxi driver as “The stamp-peying self-employed” who is “...truly the lowest form ay vermin oan god’s earth.”<sup>89</sup> Self-employment is according to Hoggard another feature that distinguishes the working class from other classes. The driver is in the quote compared to insect and the occupation is not recognized to be a proper job.

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<sup>84</sup> Trainspotting, 211.

<sup>85</sup> Trainspotting, 211.

<sup>86</sup> Trainspotting, 229.

<sup>87</sup> Trainspotting, 229.

<sup>88</sup> “Accounts Receivable Clerk Job Listings,” last modified May 2014,  
[http://www.payscale.com/research/UK/Job=Accounts\\_Receivable\\_Clerk/Job-Listings](http://www.payscale.com/research/UK/Job=Accounts_Receivable_Clerk/Job-Listings)

<sup>89</sup> Trainspotting, 5.

As mentioned in the first chapter a person's social status can be, without any previous knowledge or acquaintance, determined by one's language. In the novel, it is mainly one's accent that creates a more realistic view of the Edinburgh's urban working class and underclass.

"Eh, no much gaun doon ma end, catboy. Ye see the whole kit n caboodle, likesay."<sup>90</sup> *Trainspotting* is mostly written in Scottish English reflecting its pronunciation, as it is shown in the above quote. However, the Scottish accent is not the only variety of spoken English reflected in the book. In the chapter 'London Crawling', it is also a Brummie accent spoken by a drug using man, saying: "That's joost wot oi was troing to tell the bastid[...]"<sup>91</sup> Both accents are common features reflecting the urban working class youth either in Scotland, London or in other parts of the UK. In the chapter 'Eating Out', however, London Cockney accent is a determining feature of middle to upper-middle men. "Ah can tell by their accents, dress and bearing that they are middle to upper-middle-class English,"<sup>92</sup> says the bartender. Later one of the men talks to her "in a put-on Cockney accent:" "Orlroit dahlin?"<sup>93</sup> In the past, the Cockney accent and Cockney rhyming slang were a symbol of working-class Londoners and Londoners at the bottom of society, especially those involved in crime. At present the accent is connected to the habitants of London in overall, mostly to East End and also to Essex.<sup>94</sup> Nonetheless, as mentioned in the quote above, the accent is not the only class determining characteristic as the manners and one's behaviour and look are also important factors. Furthermore in the book Standard English is labelled as "the Queen's fucking English," and is described to be "mair posh,"<sup>95</sup> than its other varieties as it is related to the higher classes, as the middle and the upper class.

As mentioned in the GBCS survey, most of the working class and the underclass members do not have full time jobs and are not looking for any. They are mostly dependent on receiving welfare benefits, including Child benefits, Heating and housing benefits, Jobseeker's allowance and Low income benefits. And this is no different in the case of Renton and his friends. In the following quote, Renton's way of gaining money from receiving benefits on different addresses is described.

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<sup>90</sup> *Trainspotting*, 121.

<sup>91</sup> *Trainspotting*, 28.

<sup>92</sup> *Trainspotting*, 302.

<sup>93</sup> *Trainspotting*, 303.

<sup>94</sup> Bill Lavender's *Cockney.co.uk*, last modified 2013, <http://www.cockney.co.uk/>

<sup>95</sup> *Trainspotting*, 115.



What he (Renton) did, at least work-wise, was nothing. He was in a syndicate which operated a giro fraud system, and he claimed benefit at five different addresses, one each in Edinburgh, Livingston and Glasgow, and two in London at Shepherd's Bush and Hackney. Defrauding the Government in such a way always made Renton feel virtuous,...

As stated in the quote, Mark Renton gains those unemployment benefits at different addresses in order to get his drug purchases fund. This is a real example that corresponds to the behavioural approaches of reasons of being an underclass member mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis. Nevertheless, Renton's plan of claiming benefits on different addresses is nothing short of elaborate and in order to escape suspicion from the authorities he is constantly moving between Leith, London and other cities he claims benefits in.

He (Renton) had to sign on in different parts of the country, liaise with others in the syndicate at the giro-drop addresses, hitch down at short notice to interviews in London on a phone tip-off...

The elaborate nature of his plan means Renton must involve cooperation of tenants living at the address to which benefit postal orders are delivered as they may have to confirm that Renton actually lives at the specific address so that he is eligible to receive giro<sup>98</sup> from the Department of Work and Pensions.

In reference to being dependent on state benefits, there are certain requirements for the claimants. One of the requirements, mentioned in the novel is that the claimants have to undergo a job interview, appointed by "the Department of Employment's Jobcentre,"<sup>99</sup> once in a time so they are eligible to receive benefits for another period of time. In chapter 'Speedy Recruitment', the time of applying for a job has come for Renton and Spud. To be able to continue receiving welfare benefits, they have to try to get the job, however, not to get the job. Renton, as he has already undergone a few interviews, explains to Spud how it works.

Trouble is though Spud, if you didnae try, if ye blow the interview oan purpose; the cunts tell the dole n these bastards stoap yir giro. Happened tae us in London. Ah'm oan ma last warnin doon thair.<sup>100</sup>

Applying for the job offered by the Job Centre is only important for Spud and Renton so they can remain welfare claimants for another time period. They have to undergo the interview so

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<sup>96</sup> Trainspotting, 146.

<sup>97</sup> Trainspotting, 146.

<sup>98</sup> an unemployment or income support payment by giro cheque, posted fortnightly; it can be cashed either at a bank or at the post office (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/giro>)

<sup>99</sup> Trainspotting, 66.

<sup>100</sup> Trainspotting, 63.

“They (the Department of Employment’s Job Centre) cannae say ah (Spud) didnae try...”<sup>101</sup> According to what Welsh mentions in the novel, people who want to stay on welfare benefit must declare that they have at least participated in a job interview in order to continue receiving benefits. The possibility of being refused benefits is described in following quote in which Renton declined a job in a fast food restaurant. “His (Renton’s) Shepherd’s Bush giro was in doubt now, because he had declined the exciting career opportunity to work in the Burger King in Notting Hill Gate.”<sup>102</sup> Other jobs mentioned in the book are for instance a scaffolder or a co-op insurance man. Those occupations were mentioned in connection with former husbands of Renton's grandmother who were also urban working class members.<sup>103</sup>

A further point on the job interview mentioned in the previous paragraphs is that Spud and Renton choose to lie about their education while filling out application forms in order to look more educated and more likely to get the job. When Spud notices what Renton writes on the application form, he reacts by saying: “Hey...what’s this man, likesay? George Heriots... you went to Leithy man....”<sup>104</sup> In reply, Renton explains to Spud that:

It’s a well-known fact thit ye nivir stand a fuckin chance ay gittin anything decent in this city if ye didnae go tae a posh school. Nae wey though, will they offer a George Heriots FB a porterin joab in a hotel. That’s only fir us plebs; so pit doon something like that. If they see Augies or Craigy oan your form, the cunts’ll offer ye the joab...<sup>105</sup>

Renton in his explanation mentions George Heriot’s School which has an exceptional reputation in Scotland for its academic achievements. Most of Heriot’s pupils continue their studies at universities<sup>106</sup> so it is highly unlikely that an ordinary, low paid job of a hotel porter would be offered to, much less accepted by someone who went to George Heriot’s. In contrast, Renton mentions St. Augustine’s R. C. High School (referred to as Augies) and Craigroyston Community High School, neither of which has the same reputation as George Heriot’s School.

Education is in fact mentioned in the novel only few times. The way Welsh describes working-class people’s attitude to higher education fully corresponds with GBCS, mentioned in the first chapter of the thesis, which states that only 3% of working-class people continue their studies after finishing high school. In the chapter ‘Growing up in Public’, Nina is asked by her cousin Geoff about her school achievements. In answer, Nina mentions she will be

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<sup>101</sup> Trainspotting, 65.

<sup>102</sup> Trainspotting, 146.

<sup>103</sup> Trainspotting, 125.

<sup>104</sup> Trainspotting, 63.

<sup>105</sup> Trainspotting, 63.

<sup>106</sup> George Heriot’s School, <http://www.george-heriots.com/school>.

taking her O Grades<sup>107</sup> in English, Maths, Arithmetic, Art, Accounts Physics and Modern Studies next year. She is confident about passing the exams though she is convinced that any higher education is not necessary for her life. When asked what she would do after passing her O Grades Examination, the conversation continues:

- Git a job. Or git oan a scheme.
- No gaunnae stey oan n take Highers?
- Naw.
- Ye should. You could go tae University.
- What fir?<sup>108</sup>

Nina claims that she is not going to take any higher education as she cannot see any particular reason in doing so. Instead she is planning to get a job or become financially dependent on welfare. Even though Geoff tries to convince Nina to go to university and get some qualification, he himself is now on the dole even though he has recently graduated with a degree in English Literature, as are most of his fellow graduates. Such information convinces Nina further that there is no need to study higher education in order to be certain of getting a proper job.

In the chapter 'Inter Shitty', Begbie and Renton are travelling to London by British Rail. They find seats in a coupé with two Canadian students who start a conversation about a book which one of them has started to read. Begbie then, concerned with the fact that Renton has forgotten to take cards for their trip, expresses his opinion on lettered and educated people clearly as it follows:

Wir supposed tae be doon here fir a fuckin laugh, no tae talk about fuckin books n aw that fuckin shite. See if it wis up tae me, ah'd git ivray fuckin book n pit thum on a great fuckin pile n burn the fuckin loat. Aw books ur fir is fir smart cunts tae show oaf about how much shite thuv fuckin read. Ye git aw ye fuckin need tae ken ootay the paper n fae the telly.<sup>109</sup>

According to Begbie, there is no need for an ordinary working-class man to read books and to be educated in literature or any other subject. He also claims that all necessary everyday knowledge can be obtained by watching television and reading newspapers. Such attitude clearly supports the idea of the undeserving poor people, mentioned in the theoretical part of the thesis, as there is no visible endeavour in getting any job through higher education.

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<sup>107</sup> *Ordinary grade* - the basic level of the Scottish Certificate of Education, now replaced by *Standard Grade*, (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/O+grades>).

<sup>108</sup> *Trainspotting*, 38.

<sup>109</sup> *Trainspotting*, 116.

Renton, on the other hand, had the chance to study at Aberdeen University and also had the chance to improve his society status by getting a job. However, he has blown his chances for better life as pictured in this quote. “He’d (Renton) got into Aberdeen University, and found the course easy, but was forced to leave mid-way through the first year after blowing his grant money on drugs and prostitutes.”<sup>110</sup> Renton was given free college grant but unfortunately, he did not finish the studies as he spent the money he was given on prostitutes and drugs and so was forced to leave the university. However, Renton as the only member his family to go to University, even if it were only for a few months, is by his brother Billy called as a “Mr University smart cunt,”<sup>111</sup> during an argument over Mark's drug history. It might be Billy's jealousy speaking out as he never had the chance to go to University. Nevertheless, an obvious shift in attitudes to higher education from the ones of Begbie and Renton, both mentioned above, can be found in a quote from the chapter ‘Eating Out’ in which a young urban working-class bartender expresses her desire to gain a university degree, however, she struggles to obtain money to pay for her studies. “Ah cannae afford tae lose this job. Ah need the money. No cash; no Uni, no degree. Ah want that degree. Ah really fuckin want it more than anything.”<sup>112</sup> The bartender would give anything for the opportunity to receive a grant as Renton.

According to the survey mentioned in the first part of the thesis housing and living conditions are described as something much better than the substandard living and housing conditions mentioned in the book. Although Welsh's naturalistic and realistic description is astonishing in *Trainspotting*, there are not many descriptions of the housing conditions of the urban working class to be found in the novel and it is mainly the Leith area in which the whole story takes place and therefore provides an overall picture of housing conditions of the urban working class. Renton, in the chapter ‘The First Day of the Edinburgh Festival’ describes his rented room overlooking to a charming, eminent wealthy hotel *Links* as it follows: “Ma room is bare and uncarpeted. There’s a mattress in the middle ay the flair with a sleeping-bag oan it, an electric-bar fire, and a black and white telly oan a small wooden chair.”<sup>113</sup> Obviously a drug user’s bare flat with almost no furniture, Renton’s housing conditions do at least help the reader to conjure up a fairly accurate picture of housing conditions of the Leith youth underclass. In mentioning the two vastly different buildings we are forced to draw a

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<sup>110</sup> *Trainspotting*, 147.

<sup>111</sup> *Trainspotting*, 217.

<sup>112</sup> *Trainspotting*, 303.

<sup>113</sup> *Trainspotting*, 15.

comparison between the middle to upper class and urban working class living conditions in one paragraph. The option of having a flat assigned by a local council is mentioned in the chapter 'Winter In West Granton', in which Tommy's flat is described.

This is one ay the varicose-vein flats, called so because of the plastered cracks all over its facing. Tommy got it through the council's hotline. Fifteen thousand people on the waiting list and naebody wanted this one. It's a prison.<sup>114</sup>

The quote refers to flats offered by the Council or Housing Association to poor people as a part of Housing support policy in Edinburgh. According to the book, there are thousands of people who are in need of a place to live. Nevertheless, it is bewildering that in spite of an obvious need of people for a place to live, there are still a number of unwanted flats to be found lying empty due to their poor condition.

There is, however, a major difference between housing conditions described in the book and those mentioned in the first chapter of the thesis. The only feature of the standard of living that corresponds with what was mentioned above is the fact that working-class and underclass people live in rented flats or houses. According to the housing conditions mentioned in the first part of the thesis, working-class families live in terraced houses with a small garden behind the house. *Trainspotting* characters, however, live mainly in rented flats with no garden. The only houses mentioned in the book are those which belong to the parents of the characters. No young urban working class people or the underclass youth live in houses in the book. As living standard and housing conditions in the book are described to be lower than working class conditions from the GBSC survey mentioned in the first chapter, the occurrence of the underclass in *Trainspotting* can be proved in terms of housing and living conditions.

Concerning cultural and social capital, both the working class and the underclass were characterized as classes with deep family connections and rich cultural capital, which is in the book to a large extent represented by family-like friendships among junkie friends of Renton's. However, a close family relationship is also mentioned in the chapter 'Na Na and Other Nazis' in which Renton decides to visit his grandmother in "the sheltered housing gaffs at the bottom ay Easter Road,"<sup>115</sup> home for the elderly in Edinburgh. In contrast, there is no mention of regular family meetings or reunions in the book. In the chapter 'Growing Up In Public', in which Nina's uncle Andy dies, the whole family, most of whom Nina has never

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<sup>114</sup> *Trainspotting*, 315.

<sup>115</sup> *Trainspotting*, 123.

met, come to mourn uncle Andy at “this strange festival of grief.”<sup>116</sup> A different kind of close family relationship is described in chapter ‘House Arrest’ in which Renton's mother does not give up on her son's drug withdrawal and supports him in his hard times. Renton's mother decides to help her child herself, in home care, rather than depend on hospitals. She supports her son: “Ah'll help ye son. Ah'll help ye fight this disease. Ye'll stay here wi me n yir faither until yir better. Wir gaunnae beat this son, wir gaunnae beat it!”<sup>117</sup> She might feel an urge to help him as he is her only remaining son. Her other sons died, one serving his country and the other one on spasticity, a disorder of the central nervous system causing unusual tightness of muscles.<sup>118</sup>

As it has been already mentioned in the previous chapters of the thesis, there is a great deal of single parent families to be found among the underclass members, thus it is not only families holding tightly together which are occurring in the novel. In the book, such incomplete families occur a few times. For instance, there is Lesley, who has a baby girl Dawn. Lesley is, like most of the characters, a heroin addict and she lives with her baby in a flat with other junkies. Despite knowing who Dawn's father is, she lives with her daughter on their own. Another example of a single mother running a broken home and with difficult relationships is Renton's grandmother who had “...eight bairns by five different men, ken. An that's jist the ones we ken about.”<sup>119</sup> Over the years Renton's grandmother was married to 3 men with whom she had 5 children. However, Renton adds that there is a possibility that his grandmother had other children about whom his family knows nothing. The fact that Renton's grandmother has five children, her daughter has three and Lesley has one child, suggests a gradual decline in the average number of children of working class and underclass families in the UK. As mentioned in the chapter ‘Inter Shitty’, single parent families are nothing unusual in the book. Begbie, who has just had a baby with his girlfriend June, decides to leave them for a couple of weeks as he “pulled a bit ay business oaf,” meaning that he did something illegal which he has to escape from. June is devastated by Begbie leaving; however Begbie is not concerned at all thinking that:

It's probably no even ma fuckin bairn anyway. Besides, ah've hud bairns before, wi other lassies. Ah ken whit it's aw about. She thinks it's aw gaunnae be fuckin great whin

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<sup>116</sup> Trainspotting, 32.

<sup>117</sup> Trainspotting, 189.

<sup>118</sup> Spasticity: Medline Plus, last modified May 16th 2014, <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003297.htm>.

<sup>119</sup> Trainspotting, 124.

the bairn comes, but she's in fir a fuckin shock. Ah kin tell ye aw aboot fuckin bairns. Pain in the fuckin erse.<sup>120</sup>

To Begbie, it is impossible to set up a family with which he would stay. He regards children as something unwanted, something which you have to worry about. Therefore, as he does not want any responsibility, he has abandoned every woman he has got pregnant.

Cultural capital of the underclass described in *Trainspotting*, might be judged according to interests of its characters. The majority of the characters share one significant interest, which is drugs; however next to drugs there is one past time activity which plays an important role in the lives of the male characters of *Trainspotting*, a shared love of football. This is evident when we look at Renton's relationship with his father, in the book, there is no mention of any other discussion between the two men than a discussion over football. Consequently, in the chapter 'Victory On New Year's Day', the English football league system, which is constructed in such a way that even the smallest team gets a chance to reach the highest rungs of the ladder, is compared to the hierarchy of British society. "Football divisions were a stupid and irrelevant nonsense, acting against the interests of working-class unity, ensuring that the bourgeoisie's hegemony went unchallenged."<sup>121</sup> Such division of society, according to Stevie - another book character, is in favour of the higher, owning classes not giving a chance to the working-class and underclas even though the possibility of climbing the social class ladder still remains a current issue. His idea supports the idea of the way higher classes are regarded by the underclass, as mentioned at the beginning of the analysis.

Involvement in crime is also one of the determining features of the underclass. As the *Trainspotting* characters are jobless, crime is another way of obtaining money to pay for drugs and other expenses which are not covered by welfare benefits. One of the means of earning money is stealing goods with the intention of selling later. In the chapter 'Courting Disaster', Renton and Spud are being prosecuted for stealing books from a bookshop in order to profit from their sale. At the court, the magistrate asks both prosecuted: "You stole the books from Waterstone's bookshop, with the intention of selling them...?"<sup>122</sup> In answering the magistrate's question, Renton commits another crime by lying to the court in order to protect himself against being sent to jail. Renton defends himself by telling the magistrate that

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<sup>120</sup> *Trainspotting*, 110.

<sup>121</sup> *Trainspotting*, 48.

<sup>122</sup> *Trainspotting*, 165.

he stole the books in order to read them and plays the role of a well-educated sophisticated man interested in:

[...] his (Kierkegaard's) concepts of subjectivity and truth, and particularly his (Kierkegaard's) ideas concerning choice; the notion that genuine choice is made out of doubt and uncertainty, and without recourse to the experience or advice.<sup>123</sup>

Spud who is honest and pleads his guilt is sentenced to ten month of custody for being a habitual thief. The magistrate, in order to elucidate and conclude the processed situation, asks Spud: "And you, Mr. Murphy, you intended to sell the books, like you sell everything else that you steal, in order to finance you heroin habit."<sup>124</sup> As it is suggested in the quote, both Spud and Renton obtain money to finance their interests, heroin mainly, by trading goods they have stolen. Another example is chronic aggressor Begbie who picks a fight or at least a quarrel at every opportunity. Begbie obviously has a criminal history as he mentions that he knows "a couple ay boys doon thair (in London) far the jail."<sup>125</sup>

Not as much an act of breaking the law as misconduct against society and anti-social behaviour is Johnny Swan's attempt at earning some money by begging for sympathetic members of the public. As a consequence of drug usage Johnny has lost his leg and by setting himself up in an underground station exit he uses his disability to pass himself off as a Scottish veteran who fought for his country in the Falklands War. With a big cardboard sign which reads "FALKLANDS VETERAN - I LOST MY LEG FOR MY COUNTRY, PLEASE HELP,"<sup>126</sup> Johnny exploits the trust and pity of commuters whilst telling his junkie friend that he "...goat a fuckin livin tae earn here."<sup>127</sup>

The last determining features which, according to Ken Auletta, create one of the underclass categories, mentioned above, are alcohol and drug usage. As previously discussed, drug usage plays a dominant role in *Trainspotting* due to the fact that vast majority of characters are drug users, junkies and heroin addicts. However, drinking problems and alcohol abuse cannot be neglected in terms of determining the underclass in the book. There are an incalculable number of references to alcohol in *Trainspotting*. Some of the examples are further mentioned: "Ah'm gittin a boatel ay J.D. n eight cans of Export,"<sup>128</sup> her (Renton's mothers's)

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<sup>123</sup> *Trainspotting*, 167.

<sup>124</sup> *Trainspotting*, 166.

<sup>125</sup> *Trainspotting*, 112.

<sup>126</sup> *Trainspotting*, 319.

<sup>127</sup> *Trainspotting*, 319.

<sup>128</sup> *Trainspotting*, 113.



liberal consumption ay Carlsberg Specials.”<sup>129</sup> Begbie, who is not a heroin addict, though none the less faces his own issues with addiction as a heavy drinker. Begbie’s behaviour while drinking alcohol is described in chapter ‘The Glass’.

The problem wi Begbie... thit concerned us maist wis the fact thit ye couldnae really relax in his company especially if he’d hud a bevy. Ah always felt thit a slight shift in the cunt’s percentration ay ye wid be sufficient tae change yir status fae great mate intae persecuted victim.<sup>130</sup>

Under the influence of alcohol, Begbie changes into an incredibly aggressive person and is unable to differentiate between friend and foe. At the later stages of the chapter, Begbie suddenly and for no apparent reason, throws a heavy beer glass over his head and causes a terrible head injury to a man in the pub in which he is drinking. This is followed by an immense violent pub affray involving most of the people in the bar.

Another controversial issue, raised in the book, connected to anti-social behaviour and crime is racism. For instance, racism towards Asian immigrants is dealt with in the chapter ‘Victory On New Year’s Day’ in which drunk football fans shout at an Asian woman and her children: “Fucking Paki slag! Fuck off back tae yir ain country.” and then “... made a chorus of ape noises and gestures as they (football fans) left the station.”<sup>131</sup> Nevertheless, most racist comments, mentioned in the book, are made towards the Irish as they are referred to as: “orange cats” or “orange bastards.”<sup>132</sup> Renton cannot even express his animosity towards the Irish as he says: “These cats, it has tae be said, have never –really bothered us, but ah cannae take tae them. It’s aw hate, likesay, ken.”<sup>133</sup>

In conclusion, all the points made above were made with the express intention of highlighting the existence of the social classes in British society especially with regard to the underclass as described in the novel *Trainspotting* by the much acclaimed Scottish writer Irvine Welsh. The housing and living conditions described in Welsh’s novel also correspond with research obtained from the Great British Class Survey completed in 2013. According to the aims stated, the analysis achieved its purpose and therefore proved the existence of the underclass in the novel. With this in mind it is worth remembering that the novel *Trainspotting* is not based on factual information and is therefore a work of fiction. Although based in Edinburgh, the European HIV capital in the 1980s, it is only Welsh’s dramatisation of the characters, his

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<sup>129</sup> *Trainspotting*, 190.

<sup>130</sup> *Trainspotting*, 75.

<sup>131</sup> *Trainspotting*, 50.

<sup>132</sup> *Trainspotting*, 126-127.

<sup>133</sup> *Trainspotting*, 127.

detailed description of their living conditions and the plot that makes the novel so vivid and realistic as the lives of genuine Edinburgh drug addicts are not interesting enough for a book as influential as *Trainspotting*.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The thesis deals with the reflection of the 1980s and 1990s underclass in the novel *Trainspotting* written by Irvine Welsh. The main aim of the paper was to prove the presence of the classes at the very bottom of society, the underclass and the urban working class.

The first chapter of the paper is aimed to describe development of the class division of British society from the middle ages to present days. Comparing society during, for instance, the Tudor England with class division of latter-day British society, only marginal differences can be found in structure of individual classes. The crucial idea, needed for further analysis of the book, resulting from the information stated in the chapter is mainly based on survey held in 2013 which revealed 7 social classes in the UK. Nevertheless, only the two classes further needed for the analysis are covered in the chapter.

The other chapters which cover theoretical background for the analysis are concerned with the history of the underclass and welfare policies in the UK after the war and during the office of Margaret Thatcher as a prime minister. The chapter which describes the underclass is based on different labels, explanations and definitions on the underclass which have been proposed by scholars and scientists since the term was used for the first time in the 1850s. The other chapter, concerning anti-poverty policies is aimed to describe the attitude of the state towards the underclass and the urban working class in 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain. Nevertheless, the attitude is changing with time and nowadays, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is slowly turning back to cutting on welfare spending as Mrs Thatcher tried to do when she was in office.

The last chapter of the first part of the paper gives a short theoretical background on the contemporary Scottish literature and other writing of Welsh. As Scotland was not established to be an independent country in 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles, the Scottish wanted to keep their own culture heritage by creating a single unit of English literature. Yet, the cotemporary Scottish literature is mainly concerned with Scottish identity, the unsurpassed landscape of Scotland, the Scottish youth and gender issues rather than the classic romantic picture of men wearing kilts and playing the bagpipes. Further the writing of Irvine Welsh is described. The language use might be considered to be the strongest feature of his writing. The language together with his detailed description of the youth underclass and working class which occurs in most of his books, creates the most realistic picture of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Scottish youth.

Finally, the second, analytical part of the thesis is devoted to the analysis of the novel *Trainspotting* written by Irvine Welsh. The analysis is aimed to describe the youth underclass

and the urban working class in Edinburgh in the 1980s. Using quotes from the book which were compared to different approaches towards and definitions of the underclass stated in the second chapter of the thesis, such as education, joblessness, welfare dependency, the presence of the underclass in *Trainspotting* has been proved. Nevertheless, not only occurrence of the underclass and the urban working class has been shown in the book. Relations among the classes which are visible in the novel - for instance the way Renton calls his classmates at the College - give the reader an overall view on the Scottish society and clearly shows the inequality ruling within society. Another aspect highly visible in the book is heroin addiction of most of the characters which also corresponds with presence of the underclass in the novel. Closely connected to each other, all the features found in *Trainspotting*, more or less prove occurrence of the underclass and social inequalities in Scottish society, and in the novel. Nevertheless, as stated at the conclusive part of the analysis, Welsh dramatization has to be considered while thinking about the underclass depicted in the book.

## 7 RESUMÉ

Centrem zájmu této bakalářské práce je třídní rozdělení britské společnosti, zejména pak zobrazení současné nejnižší vrstvy, tzv. *underclass*, v knize Irvina Welshe *Trainspotting*.

Práce je rozdělena na dvě části a to na část teoretickou a na část analytickou. Teoretická část práce slouží jako podklad k části analytické a dále se člení na další čtyři kapitoly. První kapitola popisuje vývoj britského třídního systému. Jako první je zmíněno období raného středověku a s ním spojený feudální systém, který pomocí vlastnictví pozemků a polí dělil společnost na pány - majitele pozemků a polí a na ty, kteří pánům sloužili. Členění společnosti se v období pozdního středověku příliš nezměnilo. Na vrcholu pomyslného žebříčku pobývali hrabata a lordi, věrní pobočníci krále. Těsně pod nimi se nacházeli rytíři, ovšem již ne ti muži bojující za krále v blyštivých zbrojích, nýbrž vznešeně oděni muži stávající nad kupci a obchodníky, kteří neoficiálně stáli v čele měst a jednotlivých čtvrtí. Na pomyslném dně celé společnosti se v obou obdobích nacházeli lidé v nouzi, nemocní či jinak postižení. Ačkoli se situace v zemi za vlády Tudorovců značně zhoršila, lidem žijícím na okraji společnosti byla podána pomocná ruka v podobě obživy a jídla, které nabídli mniši z klášterů. Tento způsob pomoci byl ovšem brzy potlačen vládou. Za vlády Stuartovců se ekonomická situace země výrazně zlepšila a spolu s ní i platy a postavení chudých ve společnosti. Zatímco společnost byla v 17. století rozdělena do několika sociálních tříd lišících se v majetku a postavení často jen nepatrně, ve století osmnáctém bychom našli sociální třídy jen čtyři a to zámožné obchodníky a kupce, méně majetné obchodníky a kupce, kvalifikované pracovníky a manuálně pracující nekvalifikované pracovníky. Značně významné postavení si také získali právníci, lékaři a soudci, kteří byli považováni za členy aristokracie.

Druhá polovina první kapitoly popisuje třídní rozdělení dnešní britské společnosti plynoucí převážně z výzkumu *Great British Class Survey (GBCS)*, který byl proveden v roce 2013. Navzdory názorům, které popírají existenci jednotlivých sociálních tříd a vrstev, tento výzkum jasně prokázal, že naprostá většina obyvatel Velké Británie vidí sama sebe jako příslušníky jedné ze 7 sociálních tříd, které vyplynuli z výzkumu. Nejpočetnější třídu tvoří pracující třída, k jejíž příslušnosti se hlásí 48 % lidí, kteří se zúčastnili výzkumu. Dále je kapitola zaměřena jen na pracující třídu a tzv. *underclass*, jež jsou porovnávány s třídami zobrazenými v knize *Trainspotting*. Ačkoli se podle GBCS výzkumu pracující třída člení na další čtyři podskupiny, existuje několik společných znaků, kterými lze tuto třídu charakterizovat. Těmito znaky je převážně vzdělání, životní podmínky a podmínky,

ve kterých členové této třídy bydlí a nakonec také zaměstnání. Vyššího vzdělání je u členů pracující třídy dosaženo jen zřídka, především u přirozeně talentovaných jedinců. Většina členů dosáhne jen základního vzdělání mnohdy, bez jakékoli další kvalifikace. Nejčastějšími profesemi uvedenými členy pracující třídy jsou profese manuální jako například instalatér, tesař, truhlář, dále jsou to řidiči kamionů a jiných vozidel, ale také právní či zdravotní asistenti. Richard Hoggart, britský literární teoretik a sociolog, charakterizoval pracující třídu na základě týdenních výdělků a jejich práce. Hoggart dále uvádí, že někteří členové pracující třídy jsou osoby samostatně výdělečně činné, drobní živnostníci či majitelé rodinných obchodů. Podmínky k bydlení pracující třídy jsou dle výzkumu dobré, vzhledem k tomu, že drtivá většina jejich členů bydlí v pronajatých domech či bytech. Dalším aspektem, pomocí kterého lze určit příslušnost k určité sociální vrstvě je přízvuk jednotlivce. Lokální jazykové variace byly ve výzkumu popsány jako hrubé, ostré a jejich mluvčí pak byli vnímáni jako nevzdělaní.

Nejnižší třída, underclass, je v kapitole nastíněna z hlediska vzdělání a s ním spojeným zaměstnáním a finančním zabezpečením členů. Z této kapitoly je zřejmé, že rozdělení britské společnosti do sociálních tříd není nic nového pod sluncem, a že i sami obyvatelé Velké Británie si jsou tohoto faktu vědomi. Při porovnání společnosti středověké se společností současnou zjistíme, že změny v rozdělení do jednotlivých tříd jsou pouze minimální a týkají se především vzdělání a zaměstnání.

Druhá kapitola je zaměřena na různé názory a pokusy o definování tzv. underclass. Poprvé byla myšlenka sociálního residua, jakožto nejnižší třídy, vznesena již před 120 lety s nastavením tzv. Poor law, které rozlišovalo chudé na ty, kteří si pomoc zaslouží a ty, kteří si za svou situaci mohou sami. Toto rozdělení chudých v jistém ohledu přetrvává do dnes. V roce 1918 byl pak použit k definování chudých termín underclass. Ačkoli se názory na tuto třídu často liší, lze pomocí několika určujících faktorů třídu sumarizovat. K těmto faktorům patří zejména nezaměstnanost a s ní spojené nízké příjmy, závislost na sociálních příspěvcích a nízký životní standard, dále také nedostatečné vzdělání a závislost na alkoholu či drogách. Mezi další faktory dále patří okolí, ve kterém jednotliví členové žijí a angažovanost členů v nelegálních aktivitách.

Ve třetí kapitole práce je nastíněno postavení státu k nejnižším sociálním třídám z hlediska vyplácení různých sociálních dávek. Po druhé světové válce se rozdíl mezi jednotlivými sociálními vrstvami značně zmenšily, avšak za vlády Margaret Thatcherové v letech 1979-

1990 začaly být tyto rozdíly opět viditelnější. Ve snaze pomoci ekonomice státu Železná lady, jak se Thatcherové přezdívalo, zredukovala státní příspěvky na bydlení, přídavky na děti, nemocenské dávky a především státní příspěvky v nezaměstnanosti téměř na minimum. V kapitole jsou také nastíněny další možnosti snižování státních výdajů v oblasti sociální a zmenšování rozdílů mezi jednotlivými třídami, především redistribucí finančních prostředků pomocí progresivního zdanění příjmů.

Irvine Welsh je společně s dalšími autory, například Alanem Warnerem, Duncanem McLeanem, Iain Banksem či Janice Gallowayovou a A. L. Kennedyovou zástupcem současné skotské literatury, o které je poslední kapitola teoretické části práce. Skotská literatura, jakožto téměř samostatně stojící část anglické literatury, je součástí národního bohatství Skotska. Práce skotských spisovatelů se často zabývají komplexní skotskou identitou a kulturou skotské mládeže, stejně tak jako popisem skotské krajiny. Spisovatelé se však snaží svá díla odtrhnout od romantických stereotypů ukazujících muže ve skotských kiltech hrající na dudy, se stále zelenou Skotskou vysočinou v pozadí.

Tvorba Irvina Welshe je zaměřena především na kulturu pracující třídy a na kulturu undergroundu spojenou s užíváním drog, zvláště pak heroinu, a jejich pozdějších následků jako jsou kruté odvykací kúry ze závislosti, krádeže a další zločiny spojené se získáváním finančních prostředků na drogy a živobytí či infekce HIV následovaná nezvratnou nemocí AIDS, způsobenou především společným užíváním injekčních stříkaček při podávání drog. Významnou roli ve Welshových románech ovšem hraje jazyk a do detailu propracované popisy. Užití jazyka, jakožto nástroje k zobrazení sociálních tříd pomocí reflektování výslovnosti, čtenáře nejvíce vtáhne do děje knihy a přiblíží tak atmosféru Edinbourghských ulic. Welshova tvorba se tak dá považovat za typickou pro období druhé poloviny dvacátého století.

Druhá část bakalářské práce, část analytická, zobrazuje pracující třídu a tzv. underclass v knize *Trainspotting* od Irvina Welshe. Aspekty a definice uvedené v teoretické části práce jsou konfrontovány s úryvky z románu. Po krátkém úvodu analyzované knihy se práce dostává k prvnímu aspektu charakterizujícímu underclass a to je místo - Leith, chudobou postižená část Edinburghu, ve které se děj románu odehrává. Dalším významným znakem, který vypovídá o přítomnosti nejnižší třídy je fakt, že většina postav z románu jsou drogově závislí mladí lidé či lidé závislí na konzumaci alkoholu. Také je to nezaměstnanost a závislost na sociální podpoře státu, díky které lze dokázat přítomnost nejnižší třídy. Možnosti

a podmínky získání sociální podpory v nezaměstnanosti jsou popsány na konkrétním případě Marka Rentona, který tyto dávky čerpá na několika různých adresách v zemi a stále odmítá zaměstnání, které mu je nabízeno z úřadu práce. Stejně tak je nastíněna možnost získání sociálního bytu v případě Tommyho Laurence, jednoho z hlavních hrdinů románu.

Vyobrazení nejnižší třídy, stejně tak jako sociálních vrstev obecně, je vysvětleno na úryvcích popisujících postoj hlavních hrdinů (členů underclass) k členům ostatních sociálních tříd, jako jsou například Rentonovi spolužáci z vysoké školy či řidič taxi služby, člen pracující třídy. Dalším znakem nejnižší třídy, který je ve Welshově díle zřejmý na první pohled je jazyk, jehož psaná forma v románu reflektuje mluvený projev, a lokální jazykové variace, které jsou podle výzkumu popsanému výše vnímány jako znaky nižších sociálních vrstev.

Nejvyšší vzdělání, kterého hrdinové románu dosáhli je převážně základní, s výjimkou Marka Rentona, který strávil několik měsíců na vysoké škole. Svoji možnost pro lepší budoucí život ovšem propásl a stipendium utratil za požitky v podobě drog a prostitutek. Dalším příkladem je Nina, která studium na vysoké škole ani nezvažuje. V knize lze ovšem najít i opačný názor na vyšší vzdělání než je ten, ve kterém je vzdělání shledáváno jako nepotřebné až zbytečné a to v případě mladé dívky, barmanky, která se ze všech sil snaží dosáhnout svého cíle - získat vysokoškolský titul. Až na výše zmíněnou výjimku lze konstatovat, že postoj postav z Welshova románu nepopíratelně poukazuje na přítomnost nejnižší třídy v *Trainspottingu*.

Pevné rodinné vztahy a prezence neúplných rodin v románu, stejně jako hlavní společný zájem hlavních hrdinů - heroin a fotbal, jsou dalšími faktory, které podporují myšlenku přítomnosti nejnižší třídy v knize. Posledním zmíněným rysem, který je charakteristický pro nejnižší sociální třídu je kriminální činnost jejích členů. V knize lze najít několik činů, které jsou v rozporu se zákonem a to jak již zmíněné pobírání sociálních dávek na několika různých adresách, tak i krádeže zboží za účelem jeho dalšího prodeje či křivá výpověď v soudním řízení.

Závěrem, bakalářská práce dosáhla stanoveného cíle popsat vývoj britského třídního systému a pomocí úryvků z knihy podložit přítomnost nejnižší sociální třídy, tzv. underclass, v románu Irvina Welshe *Trainspotting*. Na základě analýzy jednotlivých znaků charakterizujících underclass, jako jsou například nezaměstnanost, užívání drog a alkoholu, angažovanost v trestné činnosti, získaných ze sekundárních zdrojů, lze jasně konstatovat přítomnost nejnižší sociální třídy v knize. Avšak stále je třeba brát v úvahu fakt, že Welshův román není založen



na faktických událostech a že je to jen autorova schopnost dramatisace pomocí popisu, jež dělá knihu tak čtivou a zajímavou.

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