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1 Introduction

In fictional writing, it can undoubtedly be argued that next to the plot, the characters are the most essential ingredient of a good story. Readers relate to stories through the characters and feel the need to be able to identify with them, especially with the main protagonist of a story. Some scholars such as Janicke and Raney (2015) claim that an increased identification with a character also raises a reader's enjoyment, which certainly can be considered the ultimate goal of each reading experience. Therefore, it only seems logical to create characters that resemble the target audience as closely as possible. While protagonists used to be heroes portrayed as completely flawless, successful, highly moral and, hence, rather unrealistic persons, many authors have turned away from those traditional characters and instead towards a new and unconventional type of character, the so-called anti-hero. The anti-hero's appeal lies in his imperfection and flaws, as they foster identification with this character. One of those authors frequently employing anti-heroes in his stories is the Scottish writer Irvine Welsh.

In his works *Trainspotting, Ecstasy* and *Filth*, Welsh created a pool of extremely different characters, who, despite their numerous differences, still have something in common: almost every character has a certain predilection for addictions of any kind, be it drugs, violence or sex. Mark Renton, Sick Boy, Spud, Lorraine, Heather or Bruce Robertson – they all share their love for drugs. Other characters, such as Francis Begbie or Samantha, are menacing characters with an addiction to violence. But this is not the only significant thing they have in common. Most characters in Irvine Welsh's works are not the type of persons who one is instantly drawn to or feels sympathy for. Their character traits are manifold, reaching from naïve, stupid, vain, egoistic, self-conscious to racist, misogynistic, narcissistic, violent and evil. They are everything but nice, friendly, charming. None could be described as heroic but would rather be classified as the opposite – as being anti-heroic.

When looking at Welsh's most famous novel *Trainspotting,* for example, the reader is confronted with a group of young drug addicts constantly struggling to cope with their lives. The group of friends, episodes of whose lives are pictured in the novel, is made up of drug-users, sex-addicts, sociopaths and criminals. The

novel *Ecstasy* tells three different stories about the same kind of characters, drug-users, criminals and perverts and finally, the main character of *Filth* is an alcoholic, drug-consuming Scottish detective who is not only easily bribed but also takes pleasure in deceiving strangers as well as friends.

Even though these characters do not sound likeable at all, Irvine Welsh has become a best-selling author and at some level the characters' appeal likely plays a role in this success. This is why I have chosen to write a thesis dedicated to taking a close look at those characters in order to answer the following research questions:

- Who are the characters in Irvine Welsh's novels?
- How does the author construct and characterise them?
- Can they be classified as literary anti-heroes?

The first part of the thesis will serve as an introduction into the overall topic, namely anti-heroes in literature. The primary step is to demarcate the two terms hero and anti-hero and by doing so, the characteristics ascribed to typical anti-heroes in literature will be established. After having defined the term, the next step is to find arguments for the use of such unconventional protagonists in literature, considering that their defining character traits are rather negative and undesirable. In order to avoid confusion, one part of the first chapter is, furthermore, used to clearly explain the terms and differences between protagonists, antagonists, anti-heroes and villains.

The second part of the thesis is dedicated to introducing the author Irvine Welsh and his three works, which will serve as a basis for the analysis following thereafter. Knowing Welsh's background, his upbringing and history helps to understand his fiction and the characters created by him, therefore, a short biography of the author is included. This is followed by a presentation of three of his works – his most famous novel *Trainspotting*, one of his collections of short stories *Ecstasy* and lastly his novel *Filth*.

In the third part, the methodology underlying the thesis will be described which is based on Manfred Pfister's theory of figure conception and figure characterisation

laid out in *Das Drama: Theorie und Analyse* written in 1977. The reason for choosing especially this work, considering that it is basically directed at analysing drama, is that it is pre-eminent in the field of character analysation and can alsobe used for narrative texts as well. Pfister's criteria are defined very clearly and due to its simplicity and accurateness, this model is perfectly suited for the purposes of this thesis.

The next and largest part is the analysis of ten very different characters, taken from the three books introduced earlier. They will be described and interpreted by explaining their roles in the novels, their actions and their life history, of course taking into consideration the previously defined characterisation criteria. The characters will not only be analysed separately but, especially in the case of the *Trainspotting* characters, will be contrasted with each other in order to deepen character analysation and interpretation.

The last chapter aims to answer the final research question; namely, whether the characters presented here can truly be categorised and described as anti-heroes. By taking a look at the major traits ascribed to anti-heroes and laid out in the first chapter, each and every character will be looked at again from that point of view. The findings of the thesis and the answers to the research questions will, finally, be summed up in the conclusion.

2 The anti-hero in literature

People have always told stories about heroes or heroines and their heroic deeds. Every country and every culture has its own tales about its own heroes and, as such, they have found their way into literature. The first known use of the term 'hero' dates back to the 14th century (Merriam Webster) and its appearance revolutionised literature in the sense that, while until then its focus was on immortal gods, it was now turned to mortal men instead. The word 'hero' as such has two different meanings. According to the Encyclopaedia Merriam-Webster ('hero'), a hero, on the one hand, is "the principal male character in a literary or dramatic work" or "the central figure in an event, period, or movement". On the other hand, the term is used to refer to "a mythological or legendary figure often of divine descent endowed with great strength or ability […], an illustrious warrior […], a man admired for his achievements and noble qualities […], one who shows great courage". Furthermore, it can be used as a synonym for idol, meaning "an object of extreme admiration and devotion". In epic poems, for example, a hero is "usually protected by or even descended from gods, performs superhuman exploits in battle or in marvellous voyage, often saving or founding a nation" (Baldick 119).

Brombert (3) describes heroes as follows:

> Heroes were exceptional beings recorded in legends, sung in epic poetry, enacted in the tragic theater. Their characteristics, behind the multiplicity of individual types, are fairly constant: they live by a fierce personal code, they are unyielding in the face of adversity, moderation is not their forte, but rather boldness and even overboldness. Heroes are defiantly committed to honor and pride.

Even though being skilful, strong, honourable and wise, the hero can also have other character traits which are not always considered desirable and worth striving for.

> He is childlike in his boasting and rivalry, in his love of presents and rewards, and in his concern for his reputation. He is sometimes foolhardy and wrong-headed, risking his life—and the lives of others—for trifles. (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

Nevertheless, a hero is generally seen as some kind of role-model and heroic plays and poems are, accordingly, educational in a sense that even if the hero fails to succeed, the reader still learns something, for example about "the modesty of being or the power of the gods"[1]. As mentioned above, examples can be found in every culture and at every time, for example, "Herkules as a figure of myths and tales, heroes of wars and revolutions, and finally the working class hero as a figure of socialist construction"[2].

However, in the course of time this traditional kind of protagonist was more and more often replaced by a new figure, one who "lacks the qualities of nobility and magnanimity expected of traditional heroes and heroines" (Baldick 17). Being the opposite of the hero, the so-called anti-hero emerged. The traits attributed to such figures are manifold. According to Abrams (11), anti-heroes are "petty, ignominious, passive, ineffectual, or dishonest" and Cuddon (46) characterises them as "incompetent, unlucky, tactless, clumsy, cack-handed, stupid, buffoonish". Brombert (2), furthermore, sees them as "weak, ineffectual, pale, humiliated, self-doubting, inept, occasionally abject characters [who are] often afflicted with self-conscious and paralyzing irony". Brombert (1), however, also emphasises that there is not simply one single type of anti-hero and, consequently, not one single description or definition that fits for every anti-hero found in literature. but that the concept of the anti-hero is "a widespread and complex trend in modern literature".

Another attempt of classification and characterisation of anti-heroes worth mentioning can be found in Jonason et al.'s 2002 article dealing with the antihero in popular culture who claim that the occurrence of three traits, which they call 'the Dark Triad' (Jonason et al. 192), leads to a person being declared an anti-hero in literature. The Dark Triad is composed of narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. Narcissists are characterised by their "grandiosity, need for admiration, lack of empathy, a sense of entitlement, and self-admiration"

[1] „Heldendichtung ist tendenziell lehrreiche und oft auch lehrhafte Dichtung. Selbst dann, wenn der Held fällt, demonstriert der Stoff resp. die Geschichte Bescheidenheit, die Endlichkeit des Seins oder die Macht der Götter." (Wulff 1)
[2] „Herkules als Gestalt der Sagen und Erzählungen. Helden des Krieges als Vollender soldatischer Ehre. Helden der Revolution. Und der Held der Arbeit als Figur des sozialistischen Aufbaus." (Wulff 1f.)

(Jonason et al. 194). Furthermore, they share the feeling to stand above and be better than everybody surrounding them. Psychopathy, on the other hand, has two different forms, primary or instrumental and secondary or hostile/reactive psychopathy (Jonason et al. 194). While psychopaths of the former kind are “shallow[, showing] low empathy, and interpersonal coldness”, those of the latter kind are “socially manipulative and deviant[,] aggressive, impulsive, and neurotic” (Jonason et al. 194). Machiavellists, finally, are cynical, manipulative and of the opinion that “the ends justify the means” (Jonason et al. 195).

In a story, anti-heroes are used for certain purposes. Brombert (2), for example, claims that the anti-hero often serves as “a perturber and a disturber” and that he can challenge the way we see the world and ourselves in it. His existence might also make apparent certain problems within society or in relationships between people. Furthermore, he does not see anti-heroes as a failure per se but thinks that they “may embody different kinds of courage, perhaps better in tune with our age and our needs. Such characters can captivate our imagination, and even come to seem admirable, through the way in which they help deflate, subvert, and challenge an "ideal" image” (Brombert 5).

What sets the hero and the anti-hero apart is the way they develop throughout the story. While heroes and heroines might also be depicted as weak and vulnerable at the outset of a story, they are generally able to overcome their weaknesses and reach their ultimate goal by becoming a new and different person in the course of time. The anti-hero, on the other hand, does not undergo such a metamorphosis but remains the same. And while the hero usually grows with each challenge he is able to overcome, the anti-hero mostly struggles and fails.

When trying to determine the anti-hero’s first appearance in literary works, scholars’ opinions differ significantly. While some scholars claim that the idea and concept of the anti-hero was coined in Russian literature, for example in Gogol’s *Marriage* (Zhenitba, 1842*)* or Dostoevsky’s *Notes from the Underground* (1864) (Wilpert 1969), others see the beginnings of this literary device in earlier works and genres such as in the picaresque novel, which had its onset in the 16th century in Spain and flourished throughout Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605) would be an example thereof, which is one of the first novels that "subjected idealistic heroism to parody" (Baldick 17). Further examples of such anti-heroes are the protagonist of Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722), who is a thief and a prostitute (Abrams 11). The Merriam Webster dictionary notes that the word anti-hero was first used in 1714. Examples of books using this term or derivatives thereof, such as *antiheroic*, are Sir Richard Steele's *The Lover (*1715) and J. E. Hopkins' *Rose Turquand* (1876). It is also interesting that the first known use of the female variant of the term, *anti-heroine*, dates back to 1823 according to Merriam Webster, and even later according to the Oxford English Dictionary, namely to 1907.

Some scholars such as Furst or Fiedler consider the age of Romanticism as a "significant staging post in the development of the anti-heroic" (Simmons 5). Others, however, claim that while there was a tendency towards popularizing the anti-heroic in this period, the Romantic hero differed significantly from the anti-hero "by virtue of his appearance and elevated position" (Simmons 5).

> Both his handsomeness and his freedom from mundane concerns raise him to the level of an idealised glamorous figure sharply distinguished from the characteristic modern anti-hero with his petty subsistence-level anxieties, his frequent physical imperfections, his embroilment in the grotesque messiness of day-to-day living. All this is alien to the Romantic hero who exists … on a lofty mountain-top high above everyday reality. (Furst 55)

However, what clearly had a significant impact on and shaped the idea and the picture of the anti-hero were the events of the First and Second World War which "damaged belief in the concept of the great individual [and] served to universalize an anti-heroic sentiment" (Simmons 11). According to Cuddon (47), Kingsley Amis introduced the post-war anti-hero type when he created Jim Dixon in *Lucky Jim* (1954). Since then, the idea of the unconventional anti-hero has been seized by many authors and has been applied to various different kinds of writings. Abrams (11) lists the following characters as examples of anti-heroes: "Yosarian in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961), Humbert Humbert in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955), and Tyrone Slothrop in Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973)".

The literary device of the anti-hero is also very prominent in writings attributed to the theatre of the absurd or the black comedy. Examples thereof are the protagonists in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952), the tramps Vladimir and Estragon, or the main character in one of his other plays, *Endgame* (1958), a blind old man named Hamm who is no longer able to walk (Abrams 11).

After having established the fact that anti-heroes have become quite common and even prominent in modern literature, it is relevant to consider the reasons why people would like or even prefer a story dealing with a despicable, violent, petty figure rather than one focused on a shiny, glamorous, heroic figure. The most obvious answer to that question is that the reader can more easily identify with the former character than with the latter one.

> The greatness that a conventional antagonist [sic! protagonist] shows is something we do not witness in society, which is why we find it far from reality. Suffering and sorrow are a part of human life. So, we relate better to a character that has suffered through life and has both good and bad sides than a character that is only seen doing good. (LiteraryDevices Editors)

Michael's (2013) claim is very similar:

> Characters who shine as morally pure and upright don't ring true to us anymore, because it's not who we see around us in the world. Neither is it what we see when we look in the mirror. Brokenness is a part of humanity, and we can more easily relate to the choices that a character makes […] if they are broken too. After all, a believable and relatable character is one of the single-most important elements of an enjoyable story.

The imperfection and humanity of the anti-hero is what makes him or her so appealing to the audience. "Nobody is perfect" and "To err is human" are well-known and often recited proverbs in our lives and therefore it is only plausible that people do not want to read about heroes or heroines who are absolutely perfect, who reach everything they have ever dreamt of and who are morally flawless. Characters who behave incorrectly, who have mixed morals and who are not always successful in their lives make the readers feel better about their own lives. According to Martin (2013) "[w]e love them because it's cathartic to love them. They make us feel better about those lies we told and those acts of

betrayal. We don't feel so bad about our own mistakes and flaws when we see others doing the same".

There is, however, still a more scientific explanation for why people are able to identify with and even like anti-heroes, considering that their behaviour is "at best morally ambiguous, questionable, and at times unjustifiable" (Janicke and Raney 485). In order to explain this, it first needs to be mentioned that the most important goal for an audience when reading a book or watching a movie, i.e. engaging in a story of any kind, is enjoyment, which, again, is very closely linked to their attitude towards a story's characters. When looking at conventional hero stories, there are certain standards and conventions when it comes to the audience's response towards those characters. The heroes, i.e. the protagonists, are generally the more liked the better morally they behave. The opponents, i.e. the villains, on the other hand, are hated due to their immoral behaviour, consequently meaning that the more immoral they behave the more disliked they are (Janicke and Raney 486). Considering this information, it would only seem plausible that anti-heroes, who are "repeatedly willing to take a moral short cut to solve a problem or [are] overly vicious in rendering punishment" (Janicke and Raney 486), are not liked or even despised by the audience which, in turn, could lead to the readers not enjoying themselves. However, the fact that the number of stories featuring anti-heroic protagonists has steadily increased implies that anti-heroes are gaining popularity, and therefore adding to reader enjoyment.

A possible explanation for being able to like such "unlikeable" characters is moral disengagement which, according to Bandura (1991 qtd. in Janicke and Raney 486f.) is

> the process by which we alleviate cognitive and affective discomfort experienced when we or someone we like violates our moral standards. By reconstructing conduct, obscuring causal agency, disregarding or misinterpreting injurious consequences, and blaming and devaluating the victims the usual moral control we exert over our own thoughts and behaviors can be deactivated without guilt allowing us to behave in morally questionable ways or give amnesty to others who do.

In order to reach the goal of enjoyment and entertainment, even when being confronted with a morally ambiguous character, the following strategy can be

pursued. Immoral behaviour is interpreted as morally proper by the audience. “Instead of morally scrutinizing the actual behaviors […] viewers likely extend their latitudes of moral sanction to justify a character’s behaviour, thus maintaining the positive disposition necessary for enjoyment” (Janicke and Raney 487). By doing so, immoral behaviour is interpreted as morally proper which leads to the audience being able to identify with and establish sympathy for morally ambiguous characters which, evidently, leads to an increased enjoyment.

A final aspect which I would like to focus on is the following question that might arise when thinking about anti-heroes: Is there a difference between an anti-hero and a villain or can the two terms be used synonymously? According to Shaw (396), a villain is “[a] character in a play, novel, short story, or other work who constitutes an evil or unwholesome agency in the plot [and who] acts in opposition to the hero […]”. Shipley (357) defines a villain as follows:

> The figure whose evil nature, designs, and actions form the chief opposition to the hero, in stories and plays in which such figures appear. […] But from fairy tale to melodrama the villain has always been a favourite figure for shudders and hisses. Often he is more vigorous, more human, than the hero, who may be a puppet or may […] be destined to triumph.

In both definitions, a villain is defined by the fact that he or she opposes the hero which means that the hero is a story’s protagonist whereas the villain is the antagonist. An anti-hero, although possibly sharing the same or similar qualities as the villain, is not necessarily the antagonist and may also be the protagonist of a story without having heroic and noble qualities. This further implies that a story might have an anti-hero as its protagonist and a villain as its antagonist, for example. It is even possible for the hero to function as a story’s antagonist, found in so-called anti-stories. So the mere fact that an anti-hero has bad qualities does not automatically make him the villain of a story.

Having defined and distinguished from each other this thesis’ most important keywords hero and anti-hero, the following chapters will now introduce the novels and their author, which will be both subject for the analysis of this piece of work.

3 The author and his works

I will now introduce the Scottish author Irvine Welsh with information mainly found in Childs' *Contemporary Novelists: British Fiction since 1970 (*2005), Morace's *Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting* (2001), Morace's *Irvine Welsh* (2007) as well as Kelly's *Irvine Welsh* (2005).

Irvine Welsh was born as the son of a waitress and a carpet salesman in 1958 in Leith, the working-class area in the city of Edinburgh. At the age of 4, Welsh and his family moved to the then new housing scheme of Muirhouse, which was part of a "post-Second World War urban redevelopment programme" (Kelly 1). Although those building schemes were built with great optimism, social problems arose very quickly mainly due to those homes being located on the peripheries of British cities (Kelly 1). Furthermore, according to Morace (*Trainspotting:* 8), they were "characterless, depressingly modern housing estates […] that would have disastrous consequences in cities throughout UK […], undermining community while breeding the boredom, hopelessness, and individual social pathologies […]". Welsh himself claimed in a 1995 BBC2 documentary about his work that those housing estates became "much more a kind of a ghetto" (Welsh qtd. in Kelly 1).

At the age of 16, Welsh left school and worked in electrical engineering as a television repairman and in 1978, he moved to London, "where he joined punk bands, lived in a squat, used heroin, ran afoul of the law" (Morace *Welsh:* pos. 656/3776). In the early 1980s, Welsh made a trip through the USA and the diaries he kept during that time later on became part of *Trainspotting* and *The Acid House.* During the real estate boom of the 1980s, he bought, renovated and sold London properties before moving back to Edinburgh to work with the City Council's Housing Department, where he developed HIV/AIDS awareness groups and male assertiveness workshops (Kelly 3). Funded by his new employers, Welsh also took a Masters in Business Administration at the Heriot-Watt University from 1988 to 1990 and wrote his dissertation on equal opportunities for women in the workplace. During that period, he began to write creatively, *Trainspotting* appeared in 1993 and "Welsh, Scottish fiction, and Scotland have never been the same since" (Morace *Welsh:* pos. 656/3776).

Trainspotting was nominated for the Booker and the Whitbread prize but failed to win any of those awards. Nevertheless, the novel became a bestseller due to its "blend of stark realism with a strain of black humour that varies from the uncomfortably unusual to the sharply familiar" (Childs 250).

> The novel's lack of conventional structure was for most critics offset by its pace, with incidents and anecdotes creating a distinctive rhythm to the narrative. The style of the novel seemed to imitate its subject matter in that the voices and stories come thick and fast like the characters and conversations in one of the book's pub, creating the sense of an interconnected group of friends, family, and acquaintances that the reader comes to know through a long series of adventures and micronarratives. (Childs 250f.)

Since then, Welsh has written ten novels, four short story collections, several scripts and two theatre plays. Amongst his most famous works are the novels *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (1995), *Filth* (1998) and *Skagboys* (2012), the short story collections *The Acid House* (1994) and *Ecstasy: Three Tales of Chemical Romance* (1996). Four of his works have been made into film adaptations, namely *Trainspotting* (1996), *The Acid House* (1998), *Irvine Welsh's Ecstasy* (2011) and *Filth* (2013).

Welsh has become a bestselling author with his works reaching a very wide and diverse readership from readers of literary fiction, academics and middle-class professionals to the kind of people found in his novels and from the milieu he describes such as drug-addicts or people who generally do not read books or never have even bought books before (Kelly 4, Morace *Welsh:* pos. 692/3776). According to John Walsh (qtd. in Morace *Welsh:* pos. 656/3776), Welsh is "a pure writer, […] raised in darkness, schooled in depravity, unread, unlettered and unlearned but capable, given pen and paper, of producing staggering feats of storytelling". However, not only the quality of his writings is a reason for his rapid success but also the "social message" in his novels (Herbrechter 109) which stems from the fact that Welsh writes from a doubly marginalised position: "from a regional, Scottish position against the hegemonic centre of "English" Britishness, in a time of political devolution; and from a variety of oppositional subcultures against hegemonic middle-class values" (Herbrechter 110).

Out of Welsh's great collection of stories and novels, only three, namely *Trainspotting* (2013), *Ecstasy* (1996) and *Filth* (2013), will be taken and analysed in great detail in the course of this thesis. The next chapters will provide the most important information concerning plot, narrative style, language and specific peculiarities of the various works.

3.1 Trainspotting

> *[T]he hobby of trainspotting is always connected with leading a boring, unfulfilling life, not paying attention to the 'really important things' (or what society considers really important) in life, and this is exactly what the characters do. (Weißenberger 453)*

Trainspotting was the first novel written by Irvine Welsh and is probably his best-known work. It was written between 1988 and 1990, published in 1993 and is set in the late 1980s, a post-Thatcherite era, mostly in the working-class areas of Edinburgh, partly in London. It tells the story of a group of young residents of Leith, most of whom are either drug-addicts, alcoholics or sociopaths. While most former Scottish writings focused on "the depiction of lonely artists, bus conductors and disaffected school teachers as exemplars of working-class Scotland", *Trainspotting* depicts the lives of characters "that have never worked and in all likelihood never will [thus] implicitly question[ing] the viability of such terms as 'working-class'" (McGuire 21).

The book consists of 43 chapters which are organized into 7 sections. Being named "Kicking", "Relapsing", "Kicking Again", "Blowing It", "Exile", "Home" and "Exit", "[t]he section titles appear to mark an oscillation: between going on and off drugs, between going away and coming back, between moving on and returning" (Childs 259). When looking at the chapter headings, it seems as if each chapter tells a new story since almost every chapter features a new character. As a consequence, it is indeed difficult for the reader to find the connections between various characters and how they relate to one another. The chapters are, consequently, loosely connected short-stories and because of that *Trainspotting* can be seen as "a series of monologues strung together" (Weißenberger 362). Coherence between the various chapters is achieved by employing "parallel

scenes and narrative lines" (Weißenberger 368). Some minor characters, for example, reappear frequently in several chapters and thereby create a sense of a coherent connection between the sections and a relation between the various characters.

The language in *Trainspotting* is very important not only for the novel's success by increasing its authenticity but also for understanding the different short stories and characters. Only four of the forty-six chapters are written in Standard English whereas the greatest part of the novel is written in Scots. This Scots is, however, not a "'prestigious' kind of Scots" but "Welsh's use of Scots" which is a specific kind of register that is frequently spoken in Leith and by people of lower social status, especially young ones, who are often workless or criminals (Weißenberger 376). Another feature of Welsh's language is that the characters "speak as they think […], dialogues are written down just as they might have been uttered" (Weißenberger 377) with sentences being unfinished, for example. This way, Welsh is able to grant the readers access into the minds of the figures and the story becomes more believable due to the authenticity of the language.

The perspective from which the stories are told also changes from chapter to chapter, a phenomenon that is called "multiperspectival narration" (Rudlof 44). According to Rudlof (44), multiperspectival narration is "hailed as a narrative form shedding a specific light on the relations between the individual and society, aptly illustrating the relativity of any given point in view". The change in perspective in *Trainspotting* is displayed in the use of the different languages. While the Standard English sections are told by a third-person narrator, the chapters written in Scots are first-person narrations in which the reader never gets explicit information on the identity of the current narrator but needs to deduce that information from the text and especially the language since the different uses of language point to the different characters. By doing so, the reader's attention is automatically drawn to the importance of the narrative voice and as a consequence the reading experience becomes much more subjective (Weißenberger 366).

> Welsh takes care to identify each narrator with particular patterns of speech and expression in their use of dialect. Thus, though it is not always clear to the reader from the content or context at the outset as to who is

> narrating each chapter, the language is an immediate clue. Also, though one of the most important aspects of Trainspotting is its use of multiple narrators, thus creating a sense of community in the novel […], Welsh does not attempt to homogenize the characters but to accentuate their differences by his use of distinct voices […]. (Childs 260).

By choosing not to employ an authorial, omniscient third-person narrator who informs the reader on the characters by providing or withholding significant information, one central feature of the traditional realist novel is missing. Instead, the characters in *Trainspotting* themselves are the novel's guides, leading the reader through the story (McGuire 21).

The language of the different characters varies, on the one hand, in their differing degrees of Scots and English content, and, on the other hand, some of the characters show verbal tics, such as Spud's "ken", "likesay" or "cat" and Sick Boy's referring to himself in the third person. According to Williams (228f.) those language characteristics "both reveal character and serve as helpful signposts in a potentially confusing narrative collage".

The first-person sections are mainly narrated in the form of interior monologues and therefore grant the reader access to the character's mind. However, also the third-person chapters describe what a certain character thinks and illustrate his or her viewpoint and according to Weißenberger (168f.) "[t]his contributes to the feeling that the novel is fragmented; yet coherent and of a piece". Other chapters, such as "Grieving and Mourning in Port Sunshine" which are narrated by an omniscient narrator serve "to show outsiders' views on the familiar narrators […] and to portray how other characters outside the group judge Renton and the other junkies" (Weißenberger 365)

The world portrayed in *Trainspotting* is described by Riach (38) as "funny, violent, real, full of risk and hopeless precautions, generally disastrous but profoundly assertive" and by Childs (261) as one of "unemployment and social deprivation in which social and personal relations have deteriorated alongside economic decline". For Morace (Welsh: pos. 936/3776), the world in Trainspotting is one of reversed opposites: "In Trainspotting, positive is negative (as in HIV-positive); so is sharing (as in sharing needles). The needier one is, the more vulnerable and

alone he or she becomes". Most of the characters are very pessimistic and live on the fringes of society. Very few of them have jobs or are in stable relationships. The main themes in the story are drug addiction and the effort to overcome it, violence, the fear of catching a disease such as HIV and sexual promiscuity.

Weißenberger (358) sees the huge success of the novel in the fact that "[t]he characters in "Trainspotting" do not come across as victims, but ordinary people functioning within social reality. Welsh wanted to escape all clichés by refusing to portray them as victims". Welsh's characters are, furthermore, constructed in a way that they "speak for themselves, in their own conflict" (Weißenberger 366) and they do not represent the writer's opinions and ideas. Therefore, it is possible for Welsh to create figures that are not only racist, sexist, psychopathic, violent but recognizable.

When trying to define the genre of the novel, one needs to bear in mind two different possibilities as explained in Heiler (172f.). There are several characteristics leading to the conclusion that *Trainspotting* is a picaresque novel. These include the outsider status of Renton and his friends, their frequent engagement in various pranks, and also the loose structure of the novel. However, another genre needs to be considered when looking at the development of Mark Renton: the Bildungs- and Entwicklungsroman. The adolescent protagonist finds himself on the threshold to adulthood but, according to Heiler seems to be stuck in his development, one reason being his drug addiction which enhances his unwillingness and inability to become an adult. Heiler further argues that at the end of the novel Renton is finally able to overcome the repetitive mechanisms of denial and flight and move on, such progress being a typical feature of the Bildungs- and Entwicklungsroman.

According to McGuire (22), a certain "predilection for the popular over the literary pervades *Trainspotting*" which manifests itself in the many references to popular culture. Examples thereof are references to Jean-Calude Van Damme movies, to pop music such as Iggy Pop and to football. As characters like Begbie explicitly illustrate the clash between high and low culture in comments such as "See if it wis up tae me, ah'd git ivray fuckin book n pit thum on a great big fuckin pile n burn the fuckin loat" (Welsh: *Trainspotting* 116), McGuire (22) argues that Welsh

seems to downplay the literary qualities of his own work and define *Trainspotting* as some kind of anti-novel.

In 1996, the novel was adapted into a movie directed by Danny Boyle and became a great success. It was voted the best Scottish film of all time and also ranked 10th in a list of Top 100 British films by the British Film Institute. Unlike the novel, the movie is narrated by only one character, Renton, who is used as a voice-over narrator and thereby connects scenes and informs the viewer about other characters. The end of the movie also differs from the novel in that Renton explicitly declares that he chooses the viewer's lifestyle. Furthermore, he leaves some money behind for his mate Spud in order to relieve him from his guilt of betraying his alleged friends. According to Childs (263), the movie thereby "assumes a moral position for its audience and aims to situate Renton within it, asserting that his theft is to facilitate his transformation into a 'good' person rather than to fuel his new life in Amsterdam".

As mentioned above, *Trainspotting* is rather a collection of short-stories strung together by the recurring cast than a novel telling one coherent story. Therefore, it is futile to try and write a brief plot summary since every chapter simply tells another event in the lives of the characters. Seeing that Mark Renton can be considered the main protagonist of the story simply due to the fact that he occurs much more often than any other character (Weißenberger 362), it makes sense to briefly summarise some of the chapters told from his perspective as well as as some disparate events from the book that provide the reader with an insight into Mark's character and the world he inhabits.

Mark Renton is a Leith heroin addict who constantly tries to get off the drugs but usually fails and relapses. His circle of friends is made up of Spud, a fellow addict, Simon "Sick Boy" Williamson, who has an illegitimate daughter that dies very soon in the novel, the sex-obsessed Tommy, and the alcoholic sociopath Begbie. The central topic of most of the chapters are drugs – the acquisition and consummation of them but also the futile attempts to get off them. While Sick Boy is able to withdraw from taking drugs whenever he wants to, Renton struggles with his heroin addiction throughout the whole novel.

In the course of the book, he has several brief romantic relationships, none of which, however, seems to be very serious. One of those relationships, for example, is with Dianne, whom he picks up at a nightclub and spends the night with. As he is on drugs all of the time during their first encounter, he does not realise that Dianne is a schoolgirl of only 14 years and, hence, finds himself in a very awkward situation when he has breakfast with her parents the next morning. Even though he feels uncomfortable, he sleeps with her again but then ends the relationship fairly quickly. Another memorable incident in Renton's life which also teaches the reader something about his character is his summons to court for stealing books together with Spud. In a very eloquent speech, in which he shows off in front of the judge by quoting and interpreting Kierkegaard, he is able to convince the judge that he just stole them for his own reading pleasure and therefore is not sentenced to imprisonment but only to doing social work. It is, furthermore, important to point out that he is the one who Tommy goes to after his girlfriend has broken up with him and left him emotionally destroyed. In the course of this visit, Mark gives his friend his first shot of heroin, which leads to Tommy getting addicted and eventually catching HIV and developing AIDS. However, Tommy is not the only affiliated person he loses. His brother Billy dies, after joining the British Army to fight in Northern Ireland, and also some of his other friends, such as Matty and Julie, pass away in the course of the story. Funerals and consequently death are omnipresent, serious topics in a novel that is mainly filled with a huge number of rather picaresque incidents. In the last chapter, Renton, Spud, Sick Boy and Begbie make a significant sum of money in a dubious drug deal. The story ends with Renton stealing the money from his friends, although guiltily leaving some for Spud, and escaping to Amsterdam in the hope of starting a new, better life.

3.2 Ecstasy

In 1996, Welsh published the novel *Ecstasy – Three Tales of Chemical Romance* which is a collection of three novellas, "Lorraine Goes to Livingston: A Rave and Regency Romance", "Fortune's Always Hiding: A Corporate Drug Romance" and "The Undefeated: An Acid House Romance", "outlining three different but similar faces of average Ecstasy users" (Weißenberger 494). The only connection

between those novellas are the recurring themes, which are drugs, love (or as Childs (252) calls it: “courtship on a chemical high”) and revenge. According to Childs (252), this interest in love in the mid-1990s is what differentiates this book from Welsh’s earlier works. He also claims that, at the end of the book, it becomes clear that while ecstasy “provides temporary, indiscriminate affection and joy […] love is the only reliable long-term drug” (Childs 252).

When looking at the characters in Welsh’s short stories, Borthwick (39) argues that they tend to “remain inconclusive [thereby] maintaining […] the inherent individualism and intransigence” of the genre. Considering the type of narration and focalisation, Borthwick (39) further claims that Welsh presents the readers with “alternating segments of narration [which enables them] to be privy to a range of different points of view”. By doing so, the reader is able to perceive the narrated world through the eyes of the individual characters which, as a result, leads to a better understanding of the character’s psyche and behaviour. This narration technique, however, might create to a “cynical worldview” since every statement and every action can somehow be justified by “subjective contextualisation” (Borthwick 39). One final statement by Borthwick is worth quoting before moving on to taking a closer look at each of the three novellas in *Ecstasy*. He argues that short stories are very suitable to depict the lives of Welsh’s characters because they lack the need for a final resolution. “Welsh’s characters must suffer to live life beyond closure, from moment to moment, always on the move, without satisfactory progress” (Borthwick 41).

Lorraine Goes to Livingston

The first of the three novellas, *Lorraine Goes to Livingston: A Rave and Regency Romance,* is composed of 25 chapters told by a third-person narrator who gives insight into certain characters changing from chapter to chapter. The story is generally written in Standard English but some of the characters, for example Freddy Royle, speak a distinct dialect or idiolect.

Rebecca Navarro is a best-selling author and the creator of the “Miss May Regency romance novels”. She is married to a man named Perky, who pretends to be the perfect husband while secretly is disgusted with his obese wife and just

stays with her in order to increase his own wealth. After suffering a stroke, Rebecca is admitted to the St. Hubbs hospital where she meets and befriends the nurse Lorraine. Lorraine herself is admired by Glen, who works as a path lab technician at the same hospital. However, Lorraine is sexually confused and seems to develop feelings for her friend Yvonne who, however, does not reciprocate those feelings.

With Lorraine's help, Rebecca discovers the truth about her husband and finds out that he is not only a corrupt liar but also a porn-addict. Together with other men, amongst them the necrophilic TV star Freddy Royle, he owns a small studio flat filled with pornographic magazines and tapes. After Lorraine has an emotional outburst about her hatred for men and the fact that she is sexually confused, the friendship between her and the writer becomes even stronger. So she helps Rebecca put together a plan to take revenge on Perky, knowing that he only stays with her because he needs her success as a writer in order to fund his own expensive hobbies such as prostitutes and hardcore pornography. In order to do that, Rebecca changes her writing style drastically by writing pornographic stories including all kinds of sexual abnormities instead of her usual romances. As expected, Perky does not respond well to his wife's new writings. The story ends by depicting a completely changed Rebecca – who has not only physically changed by losing a lot of weight but also mentally by having become self-confident and independent – out at a club with Lorraine who has become a very important and good friend to the author. Perky on the other hand suffers the opposite fate. He is out one night getting drunk when he is hit by a car and is brought to the hospital where he passes away.

A sub-plot of the story focuses on Freddy Royle, who is a well-known TV host, a very important sponsor of the St. Hubbin's Hospital in London but also a necrophilic. Due to the fact that the hospital depends on his financial donations, the trustees, although aware of Royle's abnormal sexual preferences, remain silent when he visits the hospital's morgue in order to pursue his sick passion. "The customary justice of the romance ending nonetheless ensures that when a forlorn and rejected Perky gets drunk and is run over by a car, as he dies he hears Freddy's eager voice talking with the ambulance crew that have arrived" (Kelly 141).

Fortune's Always Hiding: A Corporate Drug Romance

The second novella, *Fortune's Always Hiding: A Corporate Drug Romance,* tells the story of a woman named Samantha who is on a quest for revenge against a pharmaceutical company that manufactured the drug Tenazadrine which caused her to be born without arms. The novella is composed of a prologue and 20 chapters. The author switches constantly from third- to first-person narration. Almost every second chapter is told in first person by Dave Thorny and the plot of those chapters is situated in the present whereas the other chapters told by a third-person narrator are retrospective passages from different places, for example London 1961, Wolverhampton 1963, Toronto 1967, etc. By constantly changing between present and retrospective sections, the author is able to intimate "[t]he horrible consequences of the drug and the deprivations of Samantha's childhood" (Kelly 142). The retrospective passages are written in Standard English, whereas the passages situated in the present and told by Dave Thorny are interspersed with dialect and profanity.

The first flashbacks introduce the reader to Samantha's past and her first acts of revenge. Born in Wolverhampton in 1963, her parents are shocked when confronted with her birth defects. From the chapter Toronto 1967, in which her father looks at his newborn, healthy son, the reader can deduce that he has left Samantha and her mother behind. Those chapters are "interspersed with a history of the development of the drug and the mercenary role the now knighted Bruce Sturgess played in getting tenazedrine on to the market in spite of the call for more precautionary tests from the scientist Gunther Emerlich (sic.)" (Kelly 142). Samantha meets a fellow tenazedrine victim, the German Andreas, with whom she falls in love due to his self-confidence and optimism. Their first act of revenge is to burn the director of United Pharmacology, Barry Drysdale, to death in his holiday cottage. In an extreme act of cruelty, they kidnap Emmerich's baby, cut off his arms and send them to the parents upon which Gunther shoots himself and his wife, failing to commit suicide, is taken to a mental hospital.

The chapters narrated in first person introduce the character Dave Thorny, a West Ham football casual and hooligan who, together with other gang members,

is constantly involved in organised crime. He has a young son but lives separated from his mother whom he just calls “the slag”. One day, after taking ecstasy, he meets Samantha at a club and instantly falls in love with her. After spending some time together and having been filled in on the story of Samantha’s quest for revenge, he agrees to help her find Sir Bruce Sturgess and hack off his limbs. Some days later, Dave meets Sturgess in a gay bar. After a short conversation, they leave together under the pretence of having sex and Dave drives him to a motor yard at the East End, where Samantha is already waiting. They bind Sturgess to a table and Samantha chainsaws his limbs off while the police are at the door trying to gain access. Dave blocks the door by using his own arm as a bolt which results in his arm being smashed. “The unified state of the romance closure is secured when they mouth ‘I love you’ to one another” (Kelly 144).

The Undefeated: An Acid House Romance

The third novella, *The Undefeated: An Acid House Romance,* is comprised of a prologue followed by two sections named “The overwhelming love of Ecstasy” and “The overwhelming ecstasy of love” and an epilogue. The first section is further divided into 12 chapters, the second section into 17, whereas the chapters are told alternatingly by the two narrators and protagonists Heather and Lloyd. The chapters told by Heather are mostly written in Standard English, whereas the others are written in Scottish dialect. All chapters, however, are written from a first-person point-of-view.

Heather is 26 years old, working at an office and married to a man named Hugh, who is a successful manager. However, it very soon turns out that Heather does not love her husband anymore and resents having sex with him. Most of the chapters told from her perspective revolve around her marriage and her resentment for her once-loved partner. Lloyd, on the other hand, is a good-natured but rather unsuccessful and unambitious drug-user. His whole life and, consequently, most of the sections told by him are concerned with meeting other people in order to consume drugs of various kinds.

Heather’s life changes drastically when she goes clubbing with her friend Marie and takes Ecstasy for the first time. She realises that it is over with Hugh and that

she wants to start a new life and reinvent herself as a different person. One night at the club, she meets Lloyd and they instantly fall in love. Most of the time they spend together, though, they are on drugs whereupon Heather soon questions their relationship and, consequently, ends it. In the end, however, they meet again after some time apart and Heather finds out that Lloyd has stopped taking drugs but still has deep feelings for her.

3.3 Filth

The third novel analysed for this thesis is *Filth,* published in 1998, which tells the story of the Scottish detective sergeant Bruce Robertson. He is characterized as "a hard-drinking, drug-taking, homophobic, misogynist, rapist and sociopathic Edinburgh police officer" (Kelly 151). The book consists of 40 chapters, the first one being a brief prologue which is followed by 39 chapters told "from the perspective of a first-person narrator existing at the intersection of three voices" (Karnicky 145). One of the voices belongs to Bruce Robertson, the other two are aspects of his sub-conscious, Bruce's estranged wife Carole, on the one hand, and a tapeworm living in his gut, on the other hand.

Six chapters are supposedly told by "Carole" and are marked by boldfaced print. All of those chapters have "Carole" appearing in their headings, such as "Carole Again", "Still Carole", "More Carole" and "Carole Remembers Australia". The narrative of the second sub-conscious voice, the tapeworm's, "interrupts Robertson's on the page, as text framed by the shape of the worm is written over, obliterating Robertson's narrative" (Karnicky 145). In the course of the story, the worm grows and gets more conscious. It calls itself "Self" and, as the voice of his unconscious, provides the reader with information about Robertson's dark secrets and past.

The story begins with a short prologue in which a first-person narrator in a stream-of-consciousness reports about a murder he or she has committed. The reader does not get any information about who has been murdered or who the first-person narrator is, but gets some insight into the emotions of the narrator. The prologue ends with the words "There's no fear or regret but no elation or sense of triumph either. It's just a job that had to be done" (Welsh *Filth*: 2).

The following chapters introduce the main character Bruce Robertson, an Edinburgh police officer, who has been assigned the racially motivated murder case of Efan Wurie, the Ghanian ambassador's son. Robertson, however, does not really plan on solving the case but rather pursues another, personal goal, which is to be promoted detective inspector. In order to achieve this, he tries to discredit all other promotion candidates and does not refrain from constantly manipulating his colleagues in schemes he calls "The Games" (Welsh *Filth*: 3). He takes great pleasure in abusing his power as a police officer which becomes clear when he forces a teenage girl to sexually satisfy him in the course of an investigation. He even deceives the one person who can be seen as his closest friend, Cliff Blades, by framing him for making obscene phone calls to his wife although being the perpetrator himself.

In general, Robertson leads a very unhealthy lifestyle. He frequently consumes drugs and alcohol and indulges in fast-food. He has sexual relationships with many different women, amongst which are also the wives of colleagues and friends. This lifestyle, however, takes his toll and not only Bruce's physical but also his mental health start to deteriorate. The reader soon finds out that the chapters which are allegedly told by his ex-wife Carole are manifestations of schizophrenia and are actually told by himself. In the end, it turns out that he committed the racially-motivated murder while most of his colleagues and also his boss Robert Toal, whom he especially despises, had been aware of this but had been protecting him all along. The story ends with Bruce committing suicide by hanging himself in his flat just before his ex-wife and daughter, whom he had invited earlier, enter the room.

In the course of the story, Robertson's first-person narrative "is increasingly interrupted in the text by the voice of a tapeworm which inhabits his bowels and slowly and painfully offers self-analysis and conscience" (Kelly 151). These sections provide the reader with insights into Robertson's conscience and information on his troubled childhood which could serve as some kind of justification for his present actions. The reader learns that, as a child, Robertson feels neglected by his father, Ian Robertson. When his brother Stevie is born, Bruce becomes extremely jealous because he continually loses his place in the family. When both brothers are sent out to steal coal, Bruce eventually murders

Stevie by pushing him to the bottom of a coal mountain and burying him under coal. Although the incident is declared as an accident, Ian sends Bruce away to live with his grandmother and the boy loses touch with his parents. Later Bruce finds out that Ian is not his biological father but that his mother was raped and got pregnant.

> His biological father is tried and convicted for this and many other offences as a serial rapist of both men and women. His biological father suffered from acute schizophrenia, depression and anxiety attacks and is known in the prison system as the Beast. (Kelly 169)

By inventing the tapeworm as some kind of narrator in the text, Welsh is able to provide the reader with extremely important information on Robertson which is crucial for understanding this complex and complicated character. This information is given straight-forwardly, whereas the parts narrated by “Carole” need to be interpreted by the reader since it is not clear from the beginning, that Robertson himself, disguised as his ex-wife, is narrating those parts. Therefore, the reader often needs to revise and re-evaluate the information he receives on the character throughout the story which, however, adds to the novel’s reading enjoyment and appeal.

The first two parts of this thesis have served to frame the anti-hero as a literary item, including how it is defined, characterised and used in literature. Furthermore, the author Irvine Welsh and his works, which form the basis for the thesis, have been introduced. In order to reach the ultimate goal of this work, which is to analyse Welsh’s characters and find out, whether and why they can be classified as anti-heroes, the next step is to establish and define a methodology upon which the following character analysis can be based.

4 Methodology

While reading a story, each reader automatically forms a mental construct of the characters in which the information about them is, on the one hand, provided through various techniques of characterisation and, on the other hand, is added by the reader's own imagination and life experience (Lethbridge et al. 49). Pre-eminent in the field of character analysis is the work by Manfred Pfister: *Das Drama: Theorie und Analyse* written in 1977, one chapter of which is dedicated to figure conception and characterisation. While, as the title implies, his work is primarily directed at analysing drama, it can easily be used to analyse narrative texts as well. When doing so, one simply needs to bear in mind that some information inherent to drama, such as an actor's body language during a performance, can be reproduced in narratives as well but simply in another manner, for example through a comment by the narrator or by another character, and thus also serve as information for the analysis.

Pfister generated a model to analyse how information on a certain character is conveyed in the text. This model will be used as the basis for this thesis' methodology in order to, firstly, find out how Welsh constructed his characters and, secondly, interpret this information to come up with an extensive character interpretation and analysation. But before Pfister's model is introduced in more detail, several other terms and aspects should be explained. First of all, the different types of characters that can occur in a story will be described very briefly to be able to differentiate between them in the following analysis. After that, the meaning and different aspects of figure conception and figure characterisation will be established which will then serve as the main criteria in Pfister's model.

When describing the different characters of stories, the most important is clearly the protagonist, who is the leading character of a work. According to Shaw (305) a protagonist "is not always the hero of a work, but he is always the principal and central character". The character who is opposing the protagonist is called antagonist, the principal opponent of the main character. The antagonist is an obstacle the protagonist needs to overcome. It needs to be emphasised that antagonist and villain are not automatically the same person.

> If the dominant plot centers in the career or exploits of a hero who overcomes an opponent trying to thwart him, the latter is the antagonist, the hero a protagonist. If main interest centers upon the career of a villain whose plans are overcome by a hero, the latter is the antagonist, the former a protagonist. (Shaw 23)

Another type of character that is worth mentioning is the foil character, “[a] person or thing that, by contrast, makes another seem better or more prominent” (Shaw 162). By contrasting a character with another one, qualities of both are revealed. A further type of character are stock characters which are recurrent types of characters, “familiar figure[s] belonging by custom and tradition to certain types of writing” (Shaw 357), examples thereof being the court fool, the wicked witch, the confidant but also the hero and villain of melodrama.

After having described the various types of characters, it is now possible to introduce the concepts of figure conception and figure characterisation. Figure conception is a historical category which “refers to the anthropological model that informs the construct of the dramatic figure” (Dimitrova 66). In this chapter, the following types of figure conception will be explained: static vs. dynamic, flat vs. round, open vs. closed and transpsychological vs. psychological figure conception.

Static characters do not change throughout the whole story but remain constant. The reader’s perception of them may, however, “gradually develop, expand or even change under the influence of the inevitable linear process of information transmission and accumulation” (Pfister 177*).* Dynamic characters, on the other hand, change and develop throughout the text, “their sets of distinguishing features change, either in a continuous process or a disjointed series of jumps” (Pfister 177).

A further possible distinction is between flat and round or respectively mono- and multidimensional figures. Here, the difference lies in the set of distinguishing features the characters have. While a flat character has a small and homogeneous set thereof, a round character is defined by a very complex set of distinguishing features observable at different levels. These may concern “his or her biographical background, psychological disposition, interpersonal behaviour

towards different people, the ways he or she reacts to widely differing situations and his or her ideological orientation" (Pfister 178f.). In the course of a story, different facets of a character are revealed to the reader and thus a multidimensional figure is developed.

Closed figures are those that are fully explained by the text, either by information conveyed explicitly or partly implicitly. "In the first case, the figure is defined explicitly and unambiguously for the receiver, in the second it is also unambiguous, but in a way that is only implied, thus encouraging the receiver to interpret for himself" (Pfister 181). Open figures, on the other hand, can also be called enigmatic figures because important information that might define a character is either deliberately omitted by the author or is incomplete. The information provided might furthermore lead to "unsolvable contradiction" (Pfister 181).

The last distinction that can be made when looking at a character is whether it is psychologically or transpsychologically conceived. If a figure behaves naturally, influenced by its emotions and sub-consciousness, and has a reduced level of awareness, Pfister talks of psychological figure conception. Such figures are unable to observe their actions and discuss them at the same time. A transpsychologically conceived character, on the other hand, is

> one whose level of self-awareness transcends the level of what is psychologically plausible, whose utterly rational and conscious forms of self-commentary can no longer be accounted for in terms of the characteristic expression of an utterly rational and conscious being. (Pfister 182)

Psychologically conceived figures can be typically found in naturalistic and realistic drama and are displayed as being restricted to their social milieu or articulateness. This sense of restrictedness is also very important in Welsh's works and needs to be considered in order to understand his characters.

As opposed to figure conception, figure characterisation is not a historical but a suprahistorical category which refers to "the formal techniques of information transmission that are employed to present a dramatic figure" (Dimitrova 72).

First of all, Pfister (184) differentiates between figural and authorial characterisation. In figural characterisation, one character is characterised by another one whereas in authorial characterisation, one character is characterised by the author or implied author.

The following examples are a figural characterisation taken from the novella *Lorraine goes to Livingston* in which Rebecca Navarro characterises her husband Perky (a) and an authorial characterisation found in *Trainspotting* (b).

a.) “But he’s such a darling, and so romantic, I don’t know what I’d do without him.” (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 19)

b.) “She was pretty with nice big eyes and a fine, pointed jawline.” (Welsh *Trainspotting* 183)

Furthermore, Pfister (184) distinguishes between explicit and implicit characterisation techniques. The former occurs in many traditional novels and involves someone, for example the narrator or another character, telling the reader explicitly what the character is like and thus attributing the personality traits in words (Jahn, *Narrative* N7.1). Explicit characterisations are therefore usually verbal and consist of “descriptive statements […] which identify, categorize, individualize, and evaluate a person” (Jahn, *Narrative* N7.4). For the reader, it is important to consider and take into account the source of such direct statements and how reliable that source is. Even though they are very straightforward means of characterisation, they can very easily be “(ab)used to send the reader in the wrong direction” (Herman and Vervaeck 68). The example of an authorial characterisation in the previous sub-chapter can also serve as an example of explicit characterisation.

More frequently used, however, is the latter technique in which character traits are not stated explicitly but need to be deduced from the characters’ actions or also from other characters’ attitudes towards them by the reader (Lethbridge et al. 49). In other words, the character traits are implied by the character’s actions, discourse, physical appearance and behaviour. Such an implied characterisation can be either verbal or non-verbal.

> Nonverbal behavior (what a character does) may characterize somebody as, for instance, a fine football player, a good conversationalist, a coward,

> or a homosexual, while verbal behavior (the way a character speaks, or what a character says in a certain situation) may characterize somebody as, for instance, having a certain educational background (jargon, slang, dialect), as belonging to a certain class of people (sociolect), or as being truthful, evasive, ill-mannered, etc. (Jahn, *Narrative* N7.5)

In the works analysed in this thesis, the implicit characterisation is of great importance as the author uses the characters' language and discourse very intensively as a characterisation technique. An example how verbal behaviour may indicate a person's social and educational background can be found when again looking at Lorraine in *Ecstasy.* Her dialect is filled with swear-words which might lead to the conclusion that she is not very well educated or polite.

> c.) It's no what you're gaunny dae. It's what that fuckin creep, that fuckin parasite's gaunny dae. You're the one wi the money. Ye cannae rely on everybody else, Rebecca, especially some fuckin creepy man. He's got away with it cause you've had your heid stuck up your fanny for too long in that never-never land of yours. (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 41)

4.1 Pfister's model of characterisation techniques

By combining those two aspects, Pfister (184) devised a model for character analysis consisting of the following four techniques: explicit-figural, implicit-figural, explicit-authorial and implicit-authorial.

Firstly, Explicit-figural characterisation techniques are, according to Pfister (184), always verbal and can be categorized into self-commentary and outside commentary, depending on whether or not the subject and object of information transmission are identical. In other words, the difference is whether a character verbally comments on him- or herself or is being characterised by someone else. If outside commentary is made, one furthermore needs to consider whether the person who is characterised is present or absent while the commentary is made. Very important is also the fact that characters, by explicitly characterising themselves or others, implicitly characterise themselves in the process. Such an implicit self-characterisation, however, does not always coincide with the explicit auto- or altero-characterisation (Pfister 186).

Secondly, implicit-figural characterisation techniques are only partially verbal since characters, usually unintentionally, often characterise themselves through their physical appearance and behaviour or are characterised by the context(s) in which they appear. Another key factor of implicit-figural characterisation is a character's language which may indicate a certain educational or social background, e.g. a certain jargon or sociolect which is characteristic for a certain region or class. As already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, some aspects of implicit-figural characterisation that need to be considered when analysing drama, such as body language or non-verbal communication of the characters, are conveyed differently in narrative texts. Such nonverbal implicit-figural characterisation is usually substituted by explicit-authorial or explicit-figural techniques, meaning that a character's body language is described by the narrator or commented on by another character.

Thirdly, an explicit-authorial characterisation technique in drama is an explicit description of a character in the secondary text provided by the author. In narratives, however, this type of technique includes all the descriptions of the character given by the narrator and is typically used in novels. The reader is thereby usually informed about the outer appearance and to a certain degree also the body language of a character.

According to Pfister (194), a further technique is the usage of telling names. Examples given by Pfister (194) are the following: "Mr Pinchwife, Lady Wishfort, Mrs Loveit and Sir Wilfull Witwoud" and he claims that such telling names "serve to define a figure even before his or her first appearance on stage and apply a label that is as permanent as it is critically intended" (Pfister 194).

Finally, implicit-authorial characterisation techniques include, for example, interpretative names (as opposed to the previously mentioned explicit technique, i.e. telling names).

> The difference lies in the fact that an interpretative name is plausible in realist terms – that is, it accords with the conventions of real names – and also in the fact that the characterising reference to the figure remains implicit. (Pfister 194)

The reader can also imply character traits by looking at contrasts and similarities between characters for example by analysing how different characters react to the same situation or also by examining the different ways they address a certain theme or topic. According to Pfister (195), “the figures are contrasted with each other and are thus characterised implicitly, in such a way as to establish a clear pattern of situational or thematic correspondences.”

After having discussed these various techniques for conveying information about a character, I want to turn attention to one final aspect which needs to be mentioned in this context: reliability. As mentioned in a previous sub-chapter, it is important for a reader to take into account the source of a characterisation. First of all, self-characterisations always need to be treated with caution because “autocharacterisation is often marked by face- or image-saving strategies, wishful thinking, and other “subjective distortions” (Pfister 184). Furthermore, Lethbridge (51) claims that such an autocharacterisation might not only be distorted but “given for purposes other than honest self-characterisation”. If a character is characterised by someone else, this characterisation can be strongly influenced, for example by pressure from society or also by strategic aims (Pfister 184). Furthermore, a story might establish a certain character as being unreliable in his or her opinions and therefore the characterisations coming from that figure will also be treated with care and seen as unreliable. However, character descriptions given by the narrator are usually considered as being reliable unless there are indications to the contrary (Lethbridge 51).

Considering the information on figure conception and characterisation, the following section is dedicated to taking a closer look at some of the characters invented in the three novels introduced earlier in order to be able to answer the research questions of this thesis.

5 Analysis of Welsh's characters

The characters of the previously introduced works by Irvine Welsh could not be more different and yet all of them share at least some similarities. Considering their actions, behaviour and character traits, it can be argued that none of them is likely to be considered a conventional hero - they are neither strong and successful nor filled with great bravery but instead are miserable, even pathetic, unlikeable and sometimes also vicious figures. In the following chapters, some of the most important and central characters of the above works are picked out and analysed. First of all, the *Trainspotting* characters Mark Renton, Sick Boy, Spud, Tommy and Begbie will be subject for analysis. Not only will each individual character be looked at, but, seeing that Mark Renton can be considered the main protagonist of the work, all other characters will also be analysed in relation and comparison to him.

Interestingly, all of the characters chosen from the novel *Trainspotting* are male since Welsh did not employ any female protagonists in his first novel. Women in the novel seem rather to be "reduced to genital organs, are beaten up by the men and seem to accept this violence" (Weißenberger 463). What underlines and proves this is that only three of the 43 chapters are narrated by women. Moreover, while the names of the female characters remain fixed throughout the narrations, e.g. Diane, Allison, Kelly, etc., the ones of the male characters continually change. Mark Renton, for example, is referred to as Mark, Renton, Rents or the Rent Boy, the dealer Johnny Swan is also called Swanney, the White Swan or Mother Superior. According to Kelly (51), this is a sign that while female characters only appear occasionally, whereas male characters are "dealt with in much more depth and sustained interest".

> Women in Welsh's fiction are more strictly delimited by the directives of plot and their relationships with men than by their own character and motivation. The strongest of them - Dianne in Trainspotting […] for example - is attractive because of her cool self-determination, but the writing presents her […] predominantly from Renton's point of view. [...] Mothers, girlfriends, lovers, victims, revengers, their roles are defined by the male protagonists. (Acheson 40)

As opposed to *Trainspotting* and *Filth, Ecstasy*, on the other hand, employs a number of rounded female protagonists who all share at least some qualities of anti-heroines, such as Rebecca Navarro, Lorraine, Samantha and Heather. What makes the comparison of those four women especially worthwhile is the fact that they come from extremely different social backgrounds and have different life histories but, in the end, are all driven by the same forces – the craving for love, on the one hand, and, in most cases, for revenge, on the other hand.

The last and probably most thought-provoking figure that will be analysed is the main protagonist of the novel *Filth*, Bruce Robertson. While most of the characters in *Trainspotting*, despite being a mix of drug-addicts, sociopaths and social outcasts, are still able to keep the reader's sympathy due to their warmth and sarcastic humour, Robertson offers the reader very little to sympathise with. Riach (35) describes him as "a careerist Edinburgh policeman whose worsening itchy skin disease around his chokingly malodorous genitalia speedily spreads in tandem with his vertiginous downward spiral of abuse of self and others". The analysis will try to shed a light on the character by trying to find out whether his violent, abusive, harsh behaviour is just a cover-up for much deeper-rooted, suppressed issues, thereby probably revealing a different facet of the policeman.

While the following sub-chapters are used to describe and analyse the characters, the question whether they can, indeed, be defined and classified as anti-heroes will only be answered in a separate chapter, chapter 6.

5.1 *Trainspotting*: Mark Renton

> *Choose us. Choose life. Choose mortgage payments; choose washing machines; choose cars; choose sitting oan a couch watching mind-numbing and spirit-crushing game shows, stuffing fuckin junk food intae yir mooth. Choose rotting away, pishing and shiteing yersel in a home, a total fuckin embarrassment tae the selfish, fucked-up brats ye've produced. Choose life. Well, ah choose no tae choose life. (Welsh Trainspotting: 237)*

Mark Renton can be considered the main protagonist and dominant figure of the novel *Trainspotting* for two primary reasons. Firstly, most of the chapters are told

from his point of view and therefore the reader receives more insight into his conscience and personality. Secondly, and even more importantly, nearly all the characters in the novel appear in some kind of relation to him and know him, which cannot be said of all the others (Weißenberger 412). According to Morace (*Welsh:* pos. 1059/3776), "the novel is shaped by [Mark's] drug use" insofar as the reader experiences drug use and also withdrawal through him. Furthermore, the character of Mark Renton "gives Welsh's text a coherence and sense of "purpose" it would otherwise lack" (Morace *Trainspotting:* 56).

In the course of the novel, the reader gets a lot of explicit information on Renton, mostly provided in self-commentaries interspersed in the text, such as on his family, his looks and his education. Morace (*Trainspotting 57)* sums up this information in the following paragraph:

> He is "twenty-five going on forty," his ginger hair dyed black and spiked, a Hibs fan and IV drug-user; Catholic mother, Protestant Glaswegian father, one older brother, Billy, one younger, the mentally and physically handicapped David, formerly institutionalized and now dead a year; a good student when doing well academically results in getting away from Begbie; otherwise unmotivated, he settles for much less: a certificate in joining followed by a half year at Aberdeen University, where he spends his education grant on drugs and prostitutes.

Most of the other information on Renton is conveyed through implicit characterisation techniques, mainly through his behaviour, which is considered an implicit-figural characterisation. How he is behaving in various situations, his attitudes towards certain topics and his most important character traits will be laid out in the following paragraphs.

Throughout the story, Mark is continually struggling to free himself from various kinds of dependency, addictions, bonds and threats, such as his drug habit or the threat of being infected with HIV or being caught by the police (Childs 261). His struggle to overcome the addiction can be considered the main theme in the novel and it runs like a golden thread through the story. Aside from other possible reasons why he uses drugs, according to Heiler (153), the most prominent is his

inability to overcome the maternal bond and oedipal fixation[3]. Mark is dependent on his mother, whom he loves very much, which he also explicitly expresses in the novel. But he also depends on another "mother", namely his drug dealer Johnny Swan, also called Swanney, the White Swan or *Mother Superior*. Both of them are fixed points in his addictive system of coordinates[4] (Heiler 153) and Mark's attempts to cut the cord and free himself from them are futile since Heroin has always played such an important role in his life. Mark's addiction and his unsuccessful attempts to free himself from various dependencies serve as an implicit-figural characterisation technique, drawing the picture of a person with a rather low level of self-control and discipline.

Various self-comments in the text characterise Mark as more observant, self-critical and self-aware than his friends and less prone to self-deception (Morace *Trainspotting:* 56, Weißenberger 413). He is aware "of his self-loathing and of the seeming inescapability of his world" (Morace Welsh: pos. 1077/3776), but also able to rationally think about his life, his personality and his drug-addiction. He is also aware of the fact that he is addicted to drugs and unable (or unwilling) to get off them and is, furthermore, even able to rationalise his drug addiction.

> 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 and sterile, that ah cannae value it any mair. Junk's different though. Ye cannae turn yir back oan it sae easy. It willnae let ye. Trying tae manage a junk problem is the ultimate challenge. (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 116)

[3] "Bei der Frage nach den Ursachen für Marks Heroinabhängigkeit stößt man neben verschiedenen anderen Erklärungsversuchen immer wieder auf das Problem einer nicht überwundenen Mutterbindung, einer ödipalen Fixierung. "Ah love Ma, lover her too much." (S. 73) lautet sein lapidarer Kommentar zur innigen Beziehung zu seiner Mutter, die er selbst als beengend und erdrückend empfindet, gegen die er sich jedoch nicht ernsthaft und konsequent wehrt." (Heiler 153)

[4] "Mark ist von beiden Müttern abhängig [eigene und Mother Superior], beide stellen Fixpunkte in seinem süchtigen Koordinatensystem dar; all seine Versuche, sich von den Eltern und besonders der Mutter abzunabeln, sind zum Scheitern verurteilt, weil in seinen Lebensplänen das Heroin stets eine entscheidende Rolle spielt, der regressive Sog der Mutterbindung damit aber nur auf einer anderen Eben ausagiert wird." (Heiler 153)

Another character trait that distinguishes him from some of his friends, is the ability to feel guilty which, again, can be considered an implicit-figural characterisation.

> In contrast to Begbie, who acts without thinking about the consequences and Sick Boy, who does think about the consequences but acts with malice aforethought, Mark does think about his deeds and also has the ability to feel guilty, even though this does not necessarily keep him from doing things again, especially when on drugs and nothing else matters. (Weißenberger 418)

Especially at the end of the book, this ability to feel guilty becomes evident. When he steals the money to leave Edinburgh and escape to Amsterdam, he does not feel remorse for betraying Sick-Boy or Begbie because he is able to convince himself that both of them would have done the same. However, he feels guilty for double-crossing his friend Spud, and therefore even sends him his share of the money. Another scene in which Renton is confronted with his guilt is when he meets Tommy who, by now, is HIV-positive after having started to use drugs and getting his first hit from Renton. “Wis it me thit encouraged Tommy tae take that first shot, jist by having the gear thair? Possibly. Probably. How guilty did that make us? Guilty enough” (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 397). Such instances in the story can, again, be considered as implicit-figural characterisation, leading the reader to empathise with the character by making him seem more likeable and implying that he has a conscience.

On the other hand, he does not have any problems defrauding the state and the society when it comes to how he is making money. Instead he even claims that this revenge on society makes him feel “virtuous”:

> What he 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 […]. Defrauding the Government in such a way always made Renton feel virtuous, and it was difficult to remain discreet about his achievements. […] Renton felt that he deserved this money, as the management skills employed to maintain such a state of affairs were fairly extensive, especially for someone struggling to control a heroin habit. (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 185f.)

Despite his ability to feel guilt and remorse, he oftentimes displays bad and amoral behaviour in the novel, serving as further implicit-figural information. At the wake for his brother Billy, for example, he seduces his brother's pregnant girlfriend Sharon on the toilet after "rabbitin a load ay shite" and "bullshittin" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 275) about how he feels responsible towards his unborn niece or nephew and how he always admired her as a woman. During the act, he has the audacity to think "[if] only Billy could see us now" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 275), only to feel repulsed by Sharon afterwards. Also his comment to Sick Boy that he would "shag the crack ay dawn if it hud hairs oan it" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 202) is quite uncalled-for and irreverent, considering the possibility of Sick Boy being the father of the deceased baby Dawn.

Regardless of his rather weak character traits, he is by far the "most linguistically resourceful" (Morace *Trainspotting*: 56, Weißenberger 414) which evidences itself in his ability to code-switch. The character's discourse serves as a very important key factor of implicit-figural characterisation in the novel. Mark proves his articulateness in numerous scenes in the novel, for example, at his court appearance, at the job interview or at conversations with his doctors or counsellors (Morace *Welsh*: pos. 1095/3776). He is able to switch to Standard English without any constraints or limitations in order to make a good impression or achieve a certain aim, for example when meeting Diana's parents, at the job interview or at the court. At the latter instance, however, it is not only his code-switching that saves him from incarceration but also his wit and intelligence. Being accused of stealing books in order to sell them, Renton denies and claims that he solely wanted to read the books. The judge does not believe him seeing as he does not consider him a literate person upon which Renton offers an articulate reading of Kierkegaard's philosophy. Also other instances in the book present Renton as intelligent and linguistically skilled, such as the following:

> The vile bluebottle, which caused me a great deal o distress, has been transformed intae a work of art which gives me much pleasure tae look at. Ah am speculatively thinking about this as a positive metaphor for other things in my life. (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 32)

Renton's behaviour changes drastically when he is on drugs. According to Weißenberger (421), he is not interested in anything other than drugs when high. Consequently, he minimizes or even cancels all social activities and becomes extremely self-centred. The following sentence expresses his strong feelings towards drugs: "Ah love nothing (except junk), ah hate nothing (except forces that prevent me getting any) and ah fear nothing (except not scoring)" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 26). He, furthermore, explicitly defines himself as not being an expert when it comes to understanding women - "Alison wis right. Ah didnae really know much aboot women. Ah didnae really know much aboot anything" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 15). Consequently, he is unable to build a stable relationship and seems to substitute relationships with drugs (Weißenberger 419). Heiler (151) claims that if having to choose between drugs and sex, Mark Renton would definitely choose the former one which gives him not only physical pleasure but also a feeling of warmth and tenderness[5].

When taking a closer look at his sexual relationships depicted in the novel, namely with Hazel, Dianne and Kelly, it becomes evident that all of those are dysfunctional. With Hazel, it is a "co-dependent relationship" (Senekal 28) that is not based on love or sex but rather on the need of having someone "to project [a] veneer of normality" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 98). According to Renton, they "used each other in a social sense" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 98) because they are both unable to lead functional relationships. The reasons for this are that, on the one hand, as a child, Hazel was abused by her father and, consequently, has a very negative attitude towards sex, while Mark, on the other hand, suffers from "junk-induced impotence" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 99). His relationship with Dianne leads to nothing seeing that she is only 14 years old and simply uses Mark to obtain cannabis. Kelly, however, is the closest thing to a real girlfriend for Mark; they even live together for six months (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 377). From the chapters told from Kelly's point of view, it becomes clear that, even though she seems to have fallen for Mark, she still does not believe in his being able to lead a real relationship. "Mark can be affectionate, but he doesnae seem to really need

[5] "Der Vergleich zwischen Droge und Sex fällt für Mark Renton dabei eindeutig zugunsten des Heroins aus, das neben körperlicher Ekstase auch ein Gefühl von wohliger Wärme und Zärtlichkeit vermittelt" (Heiler 151)

people" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 377). The latter sentence is an explicit altero-characterisation whereas the dysfunctional relationships serves as implicit-figural characterisation, all of which draw the picture of a young man who is unable to commit to anything other than his heroin-addiction.

Not only intimate relationships seem to be problematic for him, but also relationships with his so-called friends oftentimes seem very questionable. On the one hand, he feels quite affectionate towards them, especially when on drugs, and believes that he loves them all but is unable to tell them (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 71). On the other hand, he shares Johnny Swan's opinion that there are "[n]ae friends in this game. Jist associates" (Welsh Trainspotting: 7). Also in many situations throughout the novel, Renton's thoughts or actions prove that he does not really care as much about them as he cares about himself. In the first chapter, for example, he watches a Jean-Claude-Van-Damme movie with Sick Boy, who, however, wants them to leave and visit their drug-dealer Mother Superior because he already desperately needs a fix. Eventually Mark agrees to accompany him but only because he realizes that he himself will soon need drugs as well. In the same chapter, he refuses to visit Kelly, who is still depressed after an abortion, even though he might be responsible for her becoming pregnant in the first place. When baby Dawn dies, Renton is unable to comfort the crying mother but the only thing he can do is cook up some heroin. Not even in this situation is he able to take himself back and prioritise his friend but instead thinks: "The fuckers will huv tae wait. Lesley comes first, eftir me. That goes without saying." (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 72). This selfishness is not always without introspection. When one of his friends, Julie, dies, he does not go to the funeral because he is on drugs but in retrospect he regrets his behaviour - "It wis a shame, cause Julie n me wir good mates" (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 101). According to Senekal (28) "[n]o relationship – friendship or romantic relationship – has any substance" in Mark's life. However, sentences such as "Ah'm surrounded by the cunts thit ur closest tae us; but ah've nivir felt so alone" (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 219) can be considered as explicit- as well as implicit-figural information showing that he still feels pity and remorse for this lack of honest and true relationships.

Another topic in the novel is Mark's attitude towards his home country. Considering him unpatriotic is an understatement; he has a downright aversion for Scotland and its society and could be seen as being anti-patriotic.

> Ah don't hate the English. They're just wankers. We are colonised by wankers. We can't even pick a decent, vibrant, healthy culture to be colonised by. No. We're ruled by effete arseholes. What does that make us? The lowest of the fuckin low, the scum of the earth. The most wretched, servile, miserable, pathetic trash that was ever shat intae creation. Ah don't hate the English. They just git oan wi the shite thuv goat. Ah hate the Scots. (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 100)

In opposition to his hatred for his home country and society and his indifference to his friends stands his love for his parents which he explicitly mentions: "Nae doubt aboot it, thir no bad auld cunts. Ah love the fuck oot ay the bastards, if the truth be telt" (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 257). Weißenberger (415) also points out that Mark thinks that his mother deserves a better son and would therefore like to find a replacement. Changing his own life - which means withdrawal from the drugs and hence becoming a better son - is, however, no option for him. Obviously "[t]he love for his mother does not go this far" (Weißenberger 415).

Taking into account all the previously mentioned information, it can be argued that Mark Renton is, indeed, a dynamic figure because his character develops throughout the novel which can be seen in the fact that, in the end, he is able to change his life by leaving his friends, family and all his problems in Edinburgh and escaping to a new life in Amsterdam. The reader receives a lot of explicit-figural information, partly through auto-characterisation, partly through altero-characterisation and mostly through the use of monologues. However, most of the information on the character is provided through implicit-figural characterisation techniques, especially through his behaviour and his language, and the picture of a multidimensional, closed figure is drawn. Still, the information conveyed needs to be considered carefully since Renton's reliability as a narrator is questionable. On the one hand, he himself claims that it is easy to lie and this is also shown in his ability to deceive others, for example, by code-switching. "It felt strange telling the truth, he'd got so comfortable with deception. It made him feel real, and consequently vulnerable" (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 189). On the other

hand, “[h]is judgement cannot be as accurate as he wants it to be, which can be derived from the sentence “Renton thinks that he thinks she is beautiful” (p. 136)” (Weißenberger 414). Due to the fact that Mark has a very high sense of self-awareness and is able to reflect on his own character, it can be argued that his figure is transpsychologically conceived.

5.2 *Trainspotting*: Simon “Sick Boy” Williams

> *They call um Sick Boy, no because he’s eywis sick wi junk withdrawal, but because he’s just one sick cunt. (Welsh Trainspotting: 3)*

Simon David Williams is usually referred to a s Sick Boy in the story, a nickname which is probably chosen by the author as an authorial characterisation technique. But the nickname is also explained by Renton explicitly defining Simon as being “just one sick cunt” (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 3). He is Renton’s oldest and closest friend although, oftentimes, the friendship between the two seems more like a competition than friendly affection. Like Renton, he is also a drug user but in contrast to his friend, Simon is less affected by the drugs and is able to kick the habit whenever he wants to – an ability, which implicitly defines him as being more disciplined and having a higher level of self-control. According to Morace (*Trainspotting*: 54), Sick Boy does not need drugs and can quit almost at will because he is “[high] on himself”. When Renton tries to get off the drugs for the first time, so does Sick Boy. However, it seems as if Simon only kicks the drugs in order to undermine Renton’s struggle and to show his superiority. Again, this represents a kind of competition between the two friends.

The chapters told by Simon are easily recognisable due to the many references to Sean Connery whom he obviously has an obsession with. In many of his inner monologues, he converses with “Auld Sean” (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 37) and points out the similarities the two of them share. They were both born in Edinburgh, come from a working class background and were both “ex-co-op milk boys” (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 37). According to Sick Boy, however, they differ in looks because “Sean is completely out-Sean in that department by Simon” (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 37). In such inner monologues, in which Sick Boy comments on his

history, his looks and so on, the reader receives a lot of implicit information. Simon seems to be rather good-looking, which is also confirmed by the fact that he is very successful with women. Additionally, this auto-characterisation defines Sick Boy as being very self-confident, even smug. In the course of the story, it becomes clear that Simon feels superior and sees himself better than everyone around him.

Language as an implicit-figural characterisation technique is also very important when analysing Simon's character. Just like Renton, Sick Boy is able to code-switch to Standard English. He proves this when meeting some American girls whom he wants to impress with his posh language and knowledge of the Edinburgh Festival by mentioning the Anglo-Italian conductor Mantovani. "Follow us. Are you going to a show? Yes, you can't beat the Festival for bringing out the mantovani" (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 37). This verbal remark is followed by a depreciating thought on the festival which gives away Sick Boy's true attitude towards art and, consequently, depicts him as a pretender and pessimist:

> One of the (china) dolls hands us a piece ay paper wi *Brecht: The Caucasian Chalk Circle by Nottingham University Theatre Group* on it. Doubtless a collection of zit-encrusted, squeaky-voiced wankers playing oot a miserable pretension tae the arts before graduating to work in the power stations which give the local children leukaemia or investment consultancies which shut doon factories, throwing people into poverty and despair. (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 37)

While Sick Boy shows intelligence through the above mentioned qualities, he is also surprisingly naïve when it comes to other areas, for example how HIV is contracted. After he remembers someone he met in a cafeteria, who, out of the blue, told him that he had HIV, he reminds himself to buy some condoms. But then he thinks that "there's no way you can get HIV in Edinburgh through shagging a lassie" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 39). Another indication of some level of stupidity or naivety is that he has the theory that Spud and Raymie are the same person. Not because they look alike - which they do not - but simply because they are never seen together, despite moving in the same circles and having the same friends (Welsh Trainspotting: 9). After interpreting such implicit information on the

character, it is left for the reader to decide whether Sick Boy is indeed intelligent or just very good at *pretending* to be intelligent.

Sick Boy's moral conduct, however, is clearly questionable. Throughout the novel he repeatedly exhibits bad behaviour which again provides a great deal of implicit-figural information. While he takes part in both minor and major crimes (such as petty theft or organising the big deal at the end of the book) his amorality truly becomes evident when he starts pimping out drug-addicted girls he seduced earlier to other men in order to make money for himself.

Nevertheless, due to his good looks and eloquence, the good image of Sick Boy does not falter. Renton's parents, for example, never regard Simon for the deceiving and exploiting man he really is but instead always think very highly of him, very much to the dismay of their son:

> My parents find it impossible to believe that "Young Simon" […] could possibly have anything to do wi drugs, beyond the odd youthful experimental flirtation. Young Simon is identified with conspicuous success in their eyes. There's Young Simon's girlfriends, Young Simon's smart clathes, Young Simon's suntan, Young Simon's flat up the toon. […] Young Simon can do no wrong though. (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 249f.)

When looking at the figure of Simon, another interesting aspect is his relationship to his friends. As already mentioned above, his friendship with Renton is competitive rather than friendly and affectionate. He often explicitly points out how lowly he thinks of all his other so-called friends: "Some fucking friends I have" (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 38) and "Mates are a waste of fucking time" (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 36) are just two examples thereof. The most important person for Simon is himself which he emphasises in the following soliloquy:

> Spud, Second Prize, Begbie, Matty, Tommy: these punters spell L-I-M-I-T-E-D. An extremely limited company. Well ah'm fed up to ma back teeth wi losers, no-hopers, draftpaks, schemies, junkies and the likes. I am a dynamic young man, upwardly mobile and thrusting, thrusting, thrusting … … the 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. It's me, me, fucking ME, Simon David Williamson, NUMERO FUCKING UNO, versus the world, and it's a one-sided swedge. (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 38)

By having such thoughts, Sick Boy unintentionally characterises himself (again a form of implicit-figural characterisation) as an arrogant, pretentious egoist with little respect for others.

Simon does not change during the story; he is self-confident and charming as well as manipulating and exploitative. However, once or twice in the novel, the reader briefly catches a glimpse of another facet of the character even though the information is mostly provided implicitly. For example, when he mentions that he knows he is still alive as long as there is an opportunity "tae get off wi a woman and her purse" since those are the only things that can "fill this big, BLACK HOLE like a clenched fist in the centre ay my fucking chest …" (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 40). It becomes evident that, although he would never say something like this out loud, he is still deeply longing for something else in his life, some purpose that could fill the black hole in his chest. Another incident that briefly depicts another side of Sick Boy is when baby Dawn dies. After the group of friends find the dead baby in the cot, the question of the child's paternity arises. Mark comments that it is "weird" that Sick Boy is "noncommittal" since usually he is "barking orders at every cunt in sight" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 69). When his eyes start to fill with tears while he is touching the dead girl's cheek, it becomes clear that he is the father. This is the only time Simon shows true emotions instead of being his smug, pretentious self.

Heiler (163) states the following about Sick Boy: "Similar to Mark, Sick Boy is a perfect liar who, due to his eloquence and elegant looks, appears decent also in a bourgeois society. In reality, he is a cold, diabolic egomaniac, who withdraws from heroin already early in the novel but instead indulges in several other addictions. Even though alcohol and later on women become the most prominent aspects in his life, he is, similar to Francis Begbie, able to live up to society's expectations thus maintaining a normal, unproblematic existence"[6].

[6] "Ähnlich wie Mark ist Sick Boy ein perfekter Lügner, der mit seiner Eloquenz und seinem eleganten Äußeren auch in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft respektabel erscheint. In Wirklichkeit ist Sick Boy ein eiskalter, diabolischer Egomane, der zwar […] dem Heroin abschwört, jedoch stattdessen diversen anderen Süchten frönt. Obwohl nach dem Heroinentzug zuerst der Alkohol und schließlich die Frauen zur dominanten Größe in seinem Leben werden, vermag Sick Boy ähnlich wie Francis Begbie die an ihn gestellten Erwartungen der Gesellschaft vordergründig zu erfüllen und damit die Illusion einer normalen, unproblematischen Existenz aufrechtzuerhalten." (Heiler 163)

Looking at Sick Boy in relation to Mark Renton, one can easily find many similarities. While the latter probably exceeds the former in both eloquence and intelligence, it can still be argued that they are both rather resourceful as well as good-looking. They also have the drug-addiction in common, whereas Sick Boy is not as much affected by it as Renton. They are both very good at pretending to be something they are not and, hence, experts at lying, manipulating and deceiving. Friendships and relationships with women are superfluous for both of them, but while Renton shows at least some affection and loyalty towards them, Sick Boy just sees friends as a waste of time or also a means to an end and considers them limited. However, even though both are manipulating, they differ significantly in their morals. Renton, especially at the end of the story when he leaves behind money for Spud, shows that he is not totally amoral, whereas Sick Boy, by pimping out some of his female friends to strangers, proves quite the opposite.

In Sick Boy, Welsh created an exceptionally self-confident, yet also extremely shallow character. Taking into account the mostly implicit-figural characterisation information conveyed in the novel, the character can be considered to be rather flat. Although the reader sees some different facets, the distinguishing set of features is, in my opinion, very limited. The character, furthermore, does not develop or change throughout the story and can, therefore, be classified as being static. In contrast to Renton, Simon does not have the ability to reflect on his own character and, thus, lacks this heightened sense of self-awareness which leads to the figure being psychologically conceived.

5.3 *Trainspotting*: Danny "Spud" Murphy

> *It's hard for me man … ken? It's difficult tae git it thegither like that, likesay … ken? Ah git sortay likes, pure shy, ken? (Welsh Trainspotting: 83)*

The name Danny Murphy does not appear often in the book because this character is usually referred to as Spud, not only in outside but also in self-commentaries in the chapters told in first-person. He explicitly comments on this fact by saying "ah git called 'Spud' that often, even ma Ma calls us it, ah

sometimes forget ma name tae" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 157). The claim that he himself sometimes forgets his own name, implicitly defines Murphy as a very self-conscious, altruistic person. In a way, he can be seen as Welsh's counterpart for the self-confident, egoistic Sick Boy. Explicit-figural characterisations can be found in various utterances by Mark, defining him as, for example, as a "classic acid-heid by temperament" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 9) or as a "lazy, scruffy bastard, who's naturally spaced out and seems as if he's oan drugs, even when he's clean" (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 250). Sick Boy disapprovingly thinks that "[e]ven in his Ma's womb, you would have had to define Spud less as a foetus, more as a set of dormant drug and personality problems" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 411).

The chapters narrated by Murphy are linguistically the most easily recognisable because he developed the most distinct idiolect. The most prominent feature of his language is the usage of the words "likesay" and "ken" at least once in almost every sentence. Spud's language can be seen as an implicit-figural characterisation technique and according to Morace (Trainspotting: 54), those utterances "suggest his intellectual limitations". Furthermore, he has a great affection for cats and, therefore, repeatedly uses feline metaphors for describing or addressing people around him, such as "the squeaky voiced kitten in the suit" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 87) or "jungle cat" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 153). The following example, taken from a chapter in which both Renton and Spud are invited to the same job interview, illustrates Spud's verbal tics perfectly: "This speed is el magnifico, likesay. Ah feel sortay dynamic, ken, likesay, ah'm really lookin forward tae this interview. Rents sais: Sell yirsell Spud, n tell the truth. Let's go for it cats, let's get it on …" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 85).

Of all the *Trainspotting* characters, Spud is by far the most likeable as well as sympathetic one due to his good-natured and kind-hearted behaviour. He has a disdain for violence, especially if it is directed at animals and children, and thinks that "[v]iolence is fucking ugly man" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 197). At one point in the novel, he restrains Mark and Sick Boy from killing a squirrel and afterwards explicitly points out that it is wrong to hurt animals and that he hates his friends for being into that sort of thing. "[A]h start thinkin ay wee Dawn, the bairn, n that squirrel, like free n botherin naebody … n they wid jist kill it, like that ken, n fir what? It makes us feel really sick, n sad, n angry …" (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 203).

He, furthermore, is of the opinion that you are unable to love yourself if you want to hurt other things. Aside from his hate for violence and love for animals, the chapter in which he defends his half-black uncle Dode also presents him as being anti-racist.

Despite his good character qualities, he is a petty thief due to his inability and unwillingness to find any decent job. According to Sick Boy, he has an "effortless ability to transform the most innocent of pastimes into criminality" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 411). He lacks the intellect to improve his position and has the "fewest resources and prospects" (Morace *Trainspotting:* 54). While Renton, who, as already pointed out, is able to escape incarceration due to his wittiness and eloquence, Spud is sentenced to jail even though both of them in fact committed the same crime. However, Spud's lack of intelligence and especially his inability to express himself in coherent, Standard English sentences make him appear more likely to be a criminal than a Kierkegaard-discussing Mark Renton. In the following scene from the court trial, it seems as if Spud is unable to follow the conversation and, therefore, cannot even try to make excuses or justify what he did.

> - And you, Mr Murphy, you intended to sell the books, like you sell everything else that you steal, in order to finance your heroin habit?
>
> - That's spot on man … eh … ye goat it, likesay, Spud nodded, his thoughtful expression sliding into confusion.
>
> - You, Mister Murphy, are an habitual thief. Spud shakes his shoodirs as if tae say, its no ma fault. – The reports state that you are still addicted to heroin. You are also addicted to the act of theft, Mr. Murphy. […] Repeated attempts to get you to cease these petty, but persistent crimes, have so far proved fruitless. I am therefore going to give you a custodial sentence of ten months.
>
> - Thanks … eh, ah mean … nae hassle, likesay … (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 208f.)

Even though Spud's friends repeatedly mock him or take advantage of him, he always remains loyal to them and never questions their friendship. When Francis Begbie slips him twenty pounds, Spud immediately thinks: "Did ah ever say anything derogatory against ma man Franco? Well, likesay … he's no a bad punter" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 153). This remark simply shows that he has

extremely modest pretensions on his friendships. Even the smallest sign of affection or simply friendliness, such as in this case Begbie's slipping him some money, is interpreted by Spud as proof for their friendship and, consequently, enhances a person's status in his eyes. The relationship between Spud and Renton, however, is probably the closest thing to a true friendship in the novel and Renton, explicitly and implicitly, states it several times that he thinks highly of his friend. "Yir one ay the best, man. Remember that. That's no drink n drugs talkin, that's me talkin" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 204).

> Renton's real guilt was centred around Spud. He loved Spud. Spud had never hurt anybody […]. Nothing had gone right for Spud. The World had shat on him, and now his mate had joined it. If there was one person whom Renton would try to compensate, it was Spud. (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 429)

Spud plays the role of jester and serves as comic relief proven in the "comical misadventures that make up [his] sex life" (Morace *Trainspotting*: 54). In one recounted scene, for example, he has the prospect of having sex with Laura McEwan, "a girl with an awesome sexual reputation" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 335), only to end up in hospital after she applied Vicks VapoRub (a topical ointment used as cough suppressant) instead of Vaseline on his penis which, eventually, led to his falling down, crashing his head against a toilet bowl and being knocked unconscious.

Like most of the other characters aside from Mark, he lacks the ability of self-reflection. After a job interview, in which he lied about all of his references and ended up talking complete non-sense most of the time, he claims that the interview was good. "Possibly too good, likesay. Ah think the dudes might be gaunt ae offer us the job" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 88). Such overestimation of his own abilities and misinterpretation of situations, again, serves as implicit-figural characterisation, defining him as naïve, unworldly and small-minded.

When looking at the character functions, Spud is, above all others, most qualified to be seen as a foil character not only for the protagonist but for all the other characters as well. Compared to Renton, Sick Boy and Begbie, Spud is the least intelligent, least articulate but most empathetic and sympathetic character, having the highest morals of the group. Most of that information is conveyed to the

audience through implicit-figural characterisation techniques, mainly through Spud's behaviour or his friends' attitudes towards him. Unlike Renton, he is neither able to articulate himself nor to reflect on his own character, his level of self-awareness is rather low and, consequently, he is psychologically conceived. Just like Sick Boy, he does not change throughout the story – he remains loyal to his friends and good-hearted but is also unable to quit his drug-addiction or stop being a criminal. This inability to change creates a static character. While Sick Boy and Renton were characterised by their ability to lie, deceive and manipulate others, Spud is extremely honest – not only towards his friends but also, maybe unintentionally, in situation where lying would improve his situation, as seen previously in the court scene.

5.4 *Trainspotting*: Francis Begbie

> *The problem wi Begbie wis … well, thir's that many problems wi Begbie. One ay the things thit concerned us maist wis the fact thit ye couldnae really relax in his company, especially if he'd hud a bevvy. Ah always felt thit a slight shift in the cunt's perception ay ye wid be sufficient tae change yir status fae great mate intae persecuted victim. The trick wis tae inulge the radge withoot being seen tae be too much ay an obviously crawling sap. (Welsh Trainspotting: 97)*

Francis Begbie, also referred to as the General Franco (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 99), the Beggar (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 56) or Hurricane Franco (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 141), is "the novel's most menacing character" (Morace Trainspotting: 55). He is the only character in the novel who clearly and explicitly abstains from drugs and regards drug-users as the lowest of the low which, however, does not automatically make him a non-addictive person. Instead of being addicted to drugs, he is addicted to alcohol and violence in its most extreme form.

Concerning Begbie's attitude towards violence, the reader, however, receives contradictory information, coming, on the one hand, as an explicit auto-characterisation from Begbie himself, on the other hand, as implicit-figural characterisation deduced from his actions. While he himself explicitly claims to be "no the type ay cunt thit goes lookin fir fuckin bother" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 109), his behaviour clearly implies the opposite. In the course of the novel, he is

regularly involved in brawls and fights of all kinds. Being part of a fight, however, does not suffice for Begbie, most of the time he is the one who incites it. Renton once recalls an incident where Begbie's brother was stabbed but not badly hurt. Begbie, even though he hated his brother, used this assault against his brother as pretence to start "one ay his periodic drink and angst fuelled wars against the local populace" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 105). Mullan describes Begbie as follows:

> Begbie's narration is truly amoral. No wonder that Welsh invents the terrifying Begbie, a character next to whom all others seem hampered by scruples. We know that he is entirely without compunction or sympathy because he tells us so in the portions of narration allotted to him. […] He is always there to do something that others flinch from.

The above claim regarding Begbie's amorality is evidenced by his actions towards his pregnant girlfriend June, whom he even assaults and abuses during the pregnancy. In one scene, a discussion between the two ends in June screaming at Francis whereupon he starts beating her. "Ah punches it in the fuckin mooth, n boots it in the fuckin fanny, n the cunt faws tae the flair, moanin away. It's her fuckin fault, ah've telt the cunt thit that's what happens when any cunt talks tae us like that. That's the fuckin rules ay the game, take it or fuckin leave it." (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 140). Immediately after this assault, he ponders that the unborn baby is probably not even his own whereas some time later he thinks that "that cunt's deid if she's made us hurt that fuckin bairn" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 143). This behaviour, interpreted as an implicit-figural characterisation technique, makes Begbie a very fickle person who changes his mind constantly and abruptly. Aside from strangers and Begbie's girlfriend, also his so-called friends are not spared his emotional inconsistencies, which is explicitly indicated by Mark when he says "a slight shift in [Begbie's] perception ay ye wid be sufficient tae change yir status fae great mate intae persecuted victim" (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 97).

This leads to the next aspect which needs to be considered when analysing Begbie's figure – his relationship to his friends. In the course of the story, several characters, such as Renton and Sick Boy, explicitly comment on the relationship they have with Francis. According to Renton, all of his friends lie to Francis or lie to others about Francis, for example to justify his bad behaviour. They lie in order

to humour him, because they are afraid of otherwise incurring his wrath upon them. In reality, most or almost all of them do not like him at all, they only fear him, as is also explicitly pointed out by Renton in the Begbie mythology (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 106). However, their pretending, in fact, has led to Begbie to become the way he is because he has actually believed what they have told him (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 105).

> He'd (Sick Boy) spent his obligatory half hour boosting Beggar's ego. That is, Renton decides, the sole function of any mate of Begbie's. He reflects on the insanity of being a friend of a person he obviously dislikes. It was custom and practice. Begbie, like junk, was a habit. He was also a dangerous one. Statistically speaking, he reflects, you're more likely to be killed by a member of your own family or a close friend, than by anyone else. (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 170)

In this character, Welsh used one implicit-figural characterisation technique very extensively, which is language. In the text passages quoted above, there is over-extensive usage of strong swear-words in Begbie's language. The words "cunt" and "fucking" are used in almost every sentence. He, furthermore, often talks of himself in the first person plural whereas sometimes referring to June as "it". Another distinct feature of his language is the very strong Scottish accent and his inability to switch codes, for example, he is never found talking in Standard English in the novel. All of those mentioned language aspects point to a rather low level of education as well as low social background. The reader gets only very limited explicit information on Begbie's educational background through commentaries by Renton. They went to primary and secondary school together and Mark claims that he "only did well at school tae git intae an O Level class tae git away fae Begbie" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 107). Begbie gets expelled from school and they meet again at the Telford College, where Renton does his "national certificate modules in joinery" and Begbie is on a "specialist course in metalwork fir problem teenagers" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 107). Not only does he obviously lack education, but he has no interest in or rather a sheer aversion to high culture, which is shown in the following quote: "See if it wis up tae me, ah'd git ivray fuckin book n pit thum on a great big fuckin pile n burn the fuckin loat. Aw books ur fir is fir smart cunts tae show oaf aboot how much shite thuv fuckin

read. Ye git aw ye fuckin need ootay the paper n fae the telly" (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 148).

Begbie himself can be considered a very unreliable narrator due to the fact that his self-perception differs significantly from the information the reader receives from outside-commentaries. This is also proven by the fact that Renton is able to describe a whole "Begbie mythology" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 106) in which myths and reality about Begbie's character and, for the most part, about the relationship to his friends show great incongruences. As already pointed out earlier, Begbie thinks that his friends actually like him while, in reality, they simply fear him. In a chapter told from his perspective he claims that he is not the type of guy who is looking for trouble but "if any lippy cunt wants tae start, ah'm fuckin game" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 109). It is left for the reader to decide, whether his lack of self-awareness is caused by his naivety or stupidity or rather stems from the fact that he wants to delude himself into thinking that he is a better man than he actually is.

Begbie is the only *Trainspotting* character analysed in this thesis that is extremely monodimensional, even idiosyncratic. Throughout the story, Begbie's most prominent character trait is his readiness to use violence, which is emphasised and referred to in both self- and outside-commentaries, explicitly as well as implicitly. In combination with violence the stereotypical picture of the "hard man" is presented, made evident by his lack of empathy, for example, for his son, his misogynist attitude and also his harsh language. He is, furthermore, a very static character considering that he does not change at all throughout the story. His lack of self-awareness makes him a psychologically conceived character.

When comparing Francis with Mark, the most obvious difference between them is their attitude towards drugs. While Mark is unable to withdraw from them and also praises heroin as "the only really honest drug" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 116), Begbie has an outstanding aversion to it. There are several other aspects in which they differ significantly: in their propensity towards violence, in their attitude towards education and especially in their linguistic resourcefulness. Furthermore, while Renton is extremely self-aware and self-observant, Begbie completely lacks those qualities, as already pointed out earlier. It is also interesting to note

that while Renton (and also Sick Boy, for that matter), consider friends a waste of time, Begbie never claims such a thing. In fact, he is – or maybe only pretends to be - quite protective of his friends and, at least to some extent, it seems as if he feels indeed affectionate about their friendships while being totally unaware of the fact that his so-called friends feel quite differently.

5.5 *Trainspotting*: Tommy

Tommy is a minor character seeing that only one out of 43 chapters is told from his perspective. He starts out as the character that shows the least anti-heroic qualities but instead some traits that could even be considered heroic. In one chapter, for example, he defends a woman who is being abused by her boyfriend. He is, in contrast to most of his friends, not using heroin but prefers speed and alcohol, at least at the beginning of the novel. His biggest addiction is having sex with his girlfriend, Lizzie MacIntosh, "a shag extraordinaire" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 113) and he is fully aware of that addiction: "ah'm addicted tae having sex wi her. God, ah love it" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 92). Among his friends, he is probably the best and healthiest looking, also commented on by his friend Renton (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 113):

> Tommy looks offensively fit. Majorca tan still intact; hair sun-bleached, cut short and gelled back. Gold stud and hoop in one ear; mellow sky-blue eyes. It has to be said that Tommy's a fairly handsome cunt wi a tan. It brings oot the best in him. Handsome, easy-going, intelligent, and pretty tidy in a swedge. Tommy should make you jealous, but somehow he doesnae. This is probably because Tommy doesnae have the self-confidence tae recognise n make the maist ay his qualities; nor the vanity tae be a pain in the erse aboot them tae every other cunt.

This explicit-figural altero-characterisation defines Tommy as a good-looking as well as intelligent but still humble person having a low self-confidence. The combination of those character qualities makes him unique among his friends.

However, Tommy's life changes drastically in the course of the story and Welsh exemplifies in this figure how deep a good character can fall, from hero to anti-hero. His life starts to fall apart after Lizzy breaks up with him due to his buying a ticket to the Iggy Pop concert instead of buying her a birthday present. Tommy

afterwards comments that he should not have told her about the tickets but lacked the duplicity to do so (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 91). Tommy absolutely cannot cope with the situation, he starts drinking excessively and finally, in his greatest moment of despair, he asks Renton for a shot of heroin arguing that "[o]ne fuckin shot isnae gaunnae hurt us" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 117). Renton reluctantly gives in and afterwards tells him to stop doing it: "Yuv done it mate. That's you goat the set now. Dope, acid, speed, E, mushies, nembies, vallies, smack, the fuckin lot. Knock it oan the heid. Make that the first n last time" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 117). But Tommy is unable to stop and the downward spiral begins with him soon contracting HIV, although Welsh nowhere in the novel offers any details about how Tommy got sick.

In one of the last chapters, Renton visits Tommy, who by now lives in a "varicose-vein flat, called so because of the plastered cracks all over its facing" (Welsh *Trainspotting:* 395*).* While first, he thinks that his friend looks well, he soon re-evaluates his opinion. "Now ah see that Tommy doesnae look so well. Thir's something missin, some part ay him; as if he's an incomplete jigsaw puzzle. It's mair thin shock or depression. It's like a bit ay Tommy's awready died" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 394). And Tommy, indeed, has changed a great deal. He is angry and searching for a scapegoat. But above all, he is desperate because he does not understand why, out of all of his friends, it had to be him who got sick. He accuses Renton of even having shared needles and also of being responsible for his heroin addiction (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 396). In the end, Renton has a very pessimistic outlook for his friend: "Tommy cannae put hissel in a bubble, live in the warm, eat good fresh food, keep his mind stimulated wi new challenges. He willnae live five, or ten, or fifteen years […]. Tommy will not survive winter in West Granton" (Welsh *Trainspotting*: 397).

Since Tommy so obviously contrasts very strongly with almost all the other figures in the novel, he can be seen as another foil character, used to emphasise the good and bad qualities in the main protagonist(s) by contrasting various characters with each other. When comparing him with Renton, they differ, at least at the beginning, in their attitude towards drugs and, as a result, in their whole lifestyle. While Renton is unable to sustain a relationship and uses drugs as some kind of replacement, Tommy finds himself in a solid relationship with Lizzy even

though the attraction between them seems to be rather physical than emotional. Nevertheless, Tommy seems very content with his life which, compared to Renton's, seems to be much more fulfilled and less pessimistic. However, after the break-up, the situation is slowly reverses and in the end Tommy is the biggest loser of them all.

Considering Pfister's characterisation criteria, it can be argued that Tommy, due to his extreme change throughout the story, is a very dynamic character. Most of the information on the character is conveyed to the reader by implicit characterisation techniques, mostly through looking at and interpreting his behaviour. Some information, as pointed out above, is also provided explicitly in outside-commentaries by his friends. This draws a multi-dimensional figure showing many different facets over the course of the novel. While he starts out as being an optimistic, good- and healthy-looking, humble kind of guy, in the end he is depicted as sick, unhealthy, pessimistic, and angry. Like most of the other characters, he lacks a heightened level of self-awareness and is, thus, psychologically conceived.

5.6 *Ecstasy*: Rebecca Navarro

As opposed to the novels *Trainspotting* and *Filth*, *Ecstasy* is filled with female protagonists, one of them being Rebecca Navarro in *Lorraine goes to Livingston*. At first glance, it might seem as if Rebecca has a fulfilled life. She is a famous author, lives in abundance and has a loving husband whom she adores. The fact that she is a successful writer and also her language, which, in contrast to some other characters' in the story such as Lorraine's or Freddy Royle's, is rather eloquent, characterise her as linguistically resourceful and intelligent.

However, already on the first pages the reader receives a lot of explicit and implicit information, which characterises Rebecca as someone who experiences a lot of self-loathing and who is rather displeased with herself and especially her looks.

> This triggered a brief spasm of self-loathing before she altered her position from profile to face-on and sucked in her cheeks. The new image obliterated the one of sagging-flesh-hanging-from-the-jawline to the extent

> that Rebecca felt justified in giving herself a little reward. (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 3)

This paragraph, on the one hand, contains explicit information on Rebecca's looks as well as on her emotions but, on the other hand, the reader also receives implicit information on how the character feels about herself. She seems to be addicted to sweets but needs to justify this addiction to herself and rationalise it by "giving herself a little reward". Seeing that she has "*familiar* [emphasis added by author] anxiety attacks" (Welsh *Ecstasy*: 4) proves that she is by far not content with her life and has far-reaching emotional problems. The fact that she sees in Perky the perfect, loving husband und is unable to see through his façade of a deceiving, exploiting kind of man who secretly calls her a "self-obsessed bitch" (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 17) and a "sow" (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 20), can be considered another piece of implicit information, characterising her as naïve and maybe even a bit stupid.

The story contains further explicit-figural characterisation on Rebecca Navarro, especially from the nurse Lorraine. When Lorraine first talks to her friend Yvonne about Rebecca, she characterises her very deprecatingly: "She seems a bit dotty tae me […]. [A]nd she's really fat as well. That's how she had the stroke. She's a total pig now" (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 15). However, later on Lorraine thinks of Rebecca as an "essentially […] good, warm and honest person" (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 30). She is, furthermore, irritated by Rebecca and does not really know how to feel about her:

> Rebecca made Lorraine feel strange. Part of her detested her patronising and moronic behaviour. Part of her had an urge to shake this stupid, naïve and pampered woman, to tell her that she's been a fool, to try and get herself together, to come out of her child-like fantasyland. However, part of her pitied Rebecca, felt protective of her. (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 30)

The character of Rebecca Navarro develops in the course of the story from a stupid, naïve woman to a very strong and self-confident one and this development is also reflected in her improving looks. Her change is described explicitly in the text:

> She dressed differently, and even seemed different in a more fundamental sense. […] She was now more than two stone lighter than she had been at the time of the stroke. Her face looked back to normal. These changes were interesting to Perks, but the unfamiliarity was slightly unsettling and intimidating. He even found himself aroused by her presence one evening, and suggested that they forego their separate rooms to sleep together for the first time in about three years. (Welsh *Ecstasy*: 44f.)

Welsh uses various techniques to characterise this figure. On the one hand, he employs explicit-figural characterisation, which comes partly from Rebecca herself or from other characters, especially from Perky and Lorraine. On the other hand, a lot of information is conveyed implicitly, for example by looking at her language or interpreting her feelings. The character that is created through those techniques is multidimensional since new facets are revealed over the course of the story. Her being able to change and develop makes her, furthermore, a dynamic figure that is psychologically conceived.

5.7 *Ecstasy*: Lorraine Gillespie

Lorraine is the second character from the novella *Lorraine goes to Livingston*who will be analysed. She works as a nurse in the St. Hubbs hospital and in her spare time enjoys going to raves and taking drugs. The path lab technician Glen, who secretly admires her at the beginning of the novella, characterises her as follows: “Beautiful Lorraine. Student Nurse Lorraine Gillespie. He knew she worked hard: conscientious, dedicated on the ward. He knew she raved hard: AWOL, The Gallery, Garage City” (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 9).

Her figure stands in stark contrast to Rebecca Navarro’s. While Rebecca is seemingly well educated, very eloquent and always nice to everybody (at least at the beginning of the story), Lorraine is quite the opposite. She is, implicitly, very much defined by her language, which is extremely harsh and filled with numerous swear words, “fuck” and various variations thereof being the most frequent ones. She mostly speaks in strong dialect, especially when she is angry, but is also able to code-switch to Standard English. Her language might implicitly characterise her as uneducated and coming from a lower social background. However, the reader also receives explicit information on her education which does not

completely conform with the implicit assumptions. She got “eight O. grades”, “was studying for [her] Highers” and then went off to Uni” (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 42) which leads to the conclusion that she is intelligent and already received, at least some, higher education. However, she was abused by her mother’s new husband and, consequently, was unable to sit her exams. In order to get away from him, she applied to the nursing programme at the St. Hubbs hospital.

Lorraine has a very negative attitude towards men, her abusive stepfather being only one of many reasons for that. She had her first bad experience with the male gender already in high-school where she was “called […] a lesbian just because I was a thirteen year old with tits who didnae want tae fuck every guy that leered at me or hassled me” (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 42). As mentioned above, she went to St. Hubbs to escape from her stepfather but, apparently, “jumped from the frying pan into the fire” since she is “still getting it, still getting hassled and fucked around by wankers at the hospital” (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 42). It is hardly surprising that Lorraine, as a result, is sexually confused and also drawn to women, proof is provided (very subtly) implicitly as well as explicitly in the text. When Yvonne visits her at the beginning of the story, Lorraine smells at Yvonne’s hair, “feeling a funny dryness in her throat” (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 7). Later-on, at the club she kisses her friend, who, however, seems very uncomfortable and retreats. When Yvonne, some days later, tells Lorraine that she “ain’t […] like that” (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 55*),* Lorraine replies that she does not know either.

> When I kissed you, I was treating you like guys treat me … it was out of order. It was weird, but I wanted to see what they felt. I wanted to feel how they felt. I wanted to fancy you, but I didn’t. I thought that if I was a dyke, then it would be easier, at least I’d know something about myself. But I couldn’t get aroused by you. (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 55)

In the end, Lorraine and Rebecca return to her home town Livingston to a club where Lorraine finally meets someone. “She found herself necking with somebody, snogging the lips on a face that had been close to hers all night. It felt good. It felt right” (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 72). By using the genderless “somebody”, Welsh leaves it open, whether Lorraine, eventually, falls for a man or a woman.

Another defining character trait is her directness. When Lorraine first tells her friend Yvonne, who is a great fan of the Miss May Regency novels, that Rebecca Navarro was admitted to the hospital, she describes her deprecatingly as “a bit dotty”, “really fat” and as “a total pig” (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 15). Comments such as these implicitly characterise her as a direct person, as someone who always speaks her mind freely, which is a further character trait that sets her apart from Rebecca who generally considers each and every word very carefully. She is also the one who, with no regard for Rebecca’s feelings, tells her the plain truth about Perky’s selfish reasons for staying with her and how he actually abused and exploited her. Furthermore, she persuades her to take her life in her own hands and become independent.

> Lorraine looked her in the eye. – It’s no what you’re gaunny dae. It’s what that fuckin creep, that fuckin parasite’s gaunny dae. You’re the one wi the money. Ye cannae rely on everybody else, Rebecca, especially some fuckin creepy man. Look around you. He’s got away with it cause you’ve had your heid stuck up your fanny for too long in that never-never land of yours. […] [He was a]lways there, watching you get fatter and more ridiculous, jist encouraging ye tae sit aboot and be a fucking fat stupid vegetable. Making a fool ay yersel for other people’s amusement… (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 41)

These statements also implicitly characterise the nurse as someone who deeply cares about the fate of another “troubled sister” (Welsh *Ecstasy: 41),* which is further explicitly indicated when she offers that “part of her pitied Rebecca, felt protective of her” (Welsh *Ecstasy*: 30).

Lorraine is probably best described by the saying “hard shell, soft core” because she appears as a very harsh, self-confident woman on the outside but seems to be very emotional, caring and also self-conscious on the inside. These different facets create a very multidimensional character. Most of the information on the character is, again, provided through implicit characterisation techniques, mostly through behaviour and language. As pointed out, some information is also given explicitly, partly in self-commentaries and partly in outside-commentaries, for example Glenn’s statement on Lorraine’s beautiful looks. What is interesting is the fact that the explicitly given and implicitly deduced information does not always conform completely or is even contradictory which leads to the

assumption that Lorraine is an open character. However, concerning the character's development throughout the story, I would categorise her as a static character, as her defining features do not really change. Lastly, she also lacks the raised level of self-awareness and is, consequently, also psychologically conceived.

5.8 *Ecstasy*: Samantha

Samantha is the protagonist of the second novella in Welsh's *Ecstasy, Fortune's always hiding*. Suffering from a serious birth defect, caused by her mother's taking pain-killers called Tenazadrine during her pregnancy, Samantha has no arms. Nevertheless, she is depicted as a very beautiful woman, mainly through outside-commentaries by Dave, a hooligan who instantly falls in love with her and whom she uses to get her long-desired revenge. Such an explicit description of a character's physical appearance as the following is very rare in Welsh's works. "Her legs are so long and shapely, just like a gel's should be, and she's got that lovely flat stomach, a beautiful arse, great tits and that face. That fucking face, like a fucking angel's" (Welsh *Ecstasy*: 124).

Nevertheless, a great dealof other information makes her seem a very angry person, filled with self-loathing (Welsh *Ecstasy*: 104), hatred and fear. Andreas in an outside-commentary, for example, explicitly states "I sense that you are a very angry person, yes?" (Welsh *Ecstasy*: 105). Meeting other Tenazadrine victims, according to her, had always been

> an embarrassment. A topic of conversation, their deformity, was staring them in the face. […] It hung over every casual conversation like a black cloud. There was more: part of her hated them. They reminded her of how she looked, how she would be perceived by the rest of the world. Someone with a deficiency: a deficiency of arms. And once people pinned the label of deficiency on you, they tended to make it a universal one, applying it to all areas; intellect, luck, hope." (Welsh *Ecstasy*: 105)

Her rather negative world-view becomes also evident in statements like the following: "Didn't anybody ever tell you that there ain't no love in this world? It's all money and power" (Welsh *Ecstasy*: 125). The most powerful force that drives

her is the need for revenge on the people who have caused her deformities. She blames them for making her a “freak, an incomplete woman” (Welsh *Ecstasy*: 115) and, therefore, she wants to make them pay, especially Bruce Sturgess, who marketed the drug. Her ultimate goal is to show him how a Tenazadrine victim feels by hacking off his limbs (Welsh *Ecstasy*: 115).

Her act of revenge, however, also claims a very innocent victim, namely the baby of the German Emmerich, a scientist who played an important role in developing the pain-killer. Samantha together with another Tenazadrine victim brutally kill the baby by cutting off its arms in order to send them back to the parents and, thus, sending a message. By killing the baby, she changes her life drastically and leads it in a certain, misguided direction. Furthermore, such an action also serves as implicit characterisation from which the reader can deduce that she is ruthless, on the one hand, and extremely easily influenced by others and hence pliable, on the other hand.

> When she killed the baby, part of her died with it. When she surveyed its small, broken, armless corpse, she realised that her life was also effectively over. She wondered if it had ever really started. She tried to remember times she had felt truly happy; they just seemed like embarrassingly small harbours of respite in a life that was a sea of torment. No, there was no chance of happiness, only opportunity for further revenge. (Welsh *Ecstasy*: 142)

A very prominent topic in the story is Samantha’s relationship with men. In one of the chapters told retrospectively, right before she meets Andreas, she thinks about “another gig, another band, another face, another fuck; another mechanical, loveless fuck” (Welsh *Ecstasy*: 104). Up until that time, she, obviously, had several meaningless, sexual relationships with men. But then she meets Andreas, whom she instantly falls for because, even though he also lives with the same deformity, he radiates self-confidence and enthusiasm. For a short while, when she is with him, she can be a different person, feeling “a freedom and a lack of inhibition unlike anything she’d experienced before” (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 108). He is, however, also the one who inspires and encourages her cruelty. In the end, considering that at their last meeting he reveals to have a wife and children, it seems as if he had just used her to act out his evil plan.

In her other, serious relationship, it appears as if the roles were now reversed – she is the one who is on a revenge mission and exploits Dave's love for her by using him to get to Sturgess. Dave comments on her obsession with Sturgess by thinking that, while they were just talking, he "[does not] really like the way the conversation heads. She keeps going on about her arms and about the geezers that sold the stuff that made her like that" (Welsh *Ecstasy*: 115). Finally, she even gives him an ultimatum by claiming that if he really loved her he would do it, thus capture Sturgess and hack off his arms (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 126). By interpreting this implicit information, it is revealed that Samantha has turned into a manipulative, deceiving kind of person over the course of time.

The character of Samantha is partly characterised by explicit information, provided by outside-commentaries through the figure of Dave, but mostly implicitly through her behaviour and her actions. Her most obvious character trait is anger and most of her actions are based thereupon. Therefore, her figure can be described as rather monodimensional considering that her set of distinguishing features is very limited. She is also a static figure because she is unable to move on, to change her life. Her whole life revolves around the need for getting revenge. In a way, one could argue that this is yet another form of addiction in Welsh's works; she is literally addicted to plotting and acting out her revenge on the pharmaceutical industry.

5.9 *Ecstasy*: Heather

Heather is the female protagonist of the novella *The Undefeated*. The reader gets some explicit figural information in the form of auto-characterisation, for example regarding her age, her education and especially her feelings towards her husband and work. She is 26 years old (Welsh Ecstasy: 216) and has a degree in English literature (Welsh Ecstasy: 198). University is also where she met her husband Hugh. While they both finished their studies at the same time, their careers have developed in completely different directions ever since: Whereas Hugh has become a successful "manager of a building society" with a lot of responsibilities, she is "exactly where [she] was six years ago" (Welsh Ecstasy: 171). Heather's job is not explicitly defined in the text, but she seems to be working at an office

where she is “typing up [reports] using the mainframe’s word processing package” (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 167). At work, she is constantly annoyed by her colleague Brian Case who is often calling her the “light of [his] life” (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 167).

The reader, furthermore, receives a great deal of information on her marriage and her feelings for her husband, mostly provided explicitly in the form of inner monologues. In one scene, she describes her feelings and thoughts while having sex with her husband. Instead of feeling passion and excitement, she seems to feel resentment, even disgust. After the act, she comments that even though Hugh is holding her tightly, there is “no love or tenderness in it, just desperation” probably caused by him realising that she is “slipping away from him, slipping away from this world he wants me to inhabit: his world, which is not our shared world. It’s not our shared world cause I’m his, his property and he won’t relinquish it easily” (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 178). She, furthermore, argues that Hugh is only protecting her while she does not want to be protected but rather wants to be in love (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 178f.).

By interpreting the information provided about Heather at the beginning of the story, partly explicitly by the character and partly implicitly by deducing it from her thoughts and behaviour, a picture is drawn of a woman who seems to resent her existence – her work, her husband, her love- and sex-life. She is well-educated, confident and able to speak her mind and assert herself in a discussion which she proves in an argument about politics with her husband and her father (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 190). Yet, somehow she is unable to exploit her full potential because she is limited in her workplace, unable to reach a higher position and, furthermore, suppressed in her role as a self-confident woman. As a consequence, she is looking for a change in her life and, eventually, finds it after going out with her best friend and taking drugs.

> [T]hen I did something truly visionary: I stopped consuming for its own sake. The fat started to fall from my body. It started to fall from my brain. Everything was lighter. Fantasising about getting fucked properly was the start. Then about telling them all to fuck off and die. It was the books I starting [sic!] reading. It was the music I started listening to. It was the television I started watching. I found myself thinking again. I tried to stop because it was only causing pain. I couldn’t. When all this is in your head

> it has to come out into your life. If it doesn't, you get crushed. I'm not going to get crushed. (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 217)

After that, the character changes drastically which is depicted explicitly in her outburst at work in which "the bad Heather's taking over" (Welsh *Ecstasy*: 223) and finally tells Brian Case what she really thinks about his daily comments. The bad Heather, hence, is the character's suppressed sub-conscious, who had "only been thinking before [and now] started talking" (Welsh *Ecstasy*: 223). Her change in personality is also reflected in her change of lovers – from reserved, traditional, protective, boring Hugh to jobless, drug-using, carefree Lloyd. What Heather likes about Lloyd is that "he's interested in me. He listens to me. He doesn't laugh or sneer or cut in or put down or counter-argue with what I say, or, if he does, at least I know he's heard me. I don't feel ridiculed or belittled or patronised when he challenges me" (Welsh *Ecstasy:* 263). All those changes she is willing to make implicitly characterise her, evidently, as brave and self-confident, on the one hand, and probably a bit naïve, on the other hand.

As with almost all the characters previously discussed, Welsh mainly uses implicit characterisation techniques to convey information about Heather, be it her eloquent and educated way of speaking and thinking or her changing behaviour throughout the story. In contrast, the explicit information, for example on her education and her job, is extremely limited. Taking into account the information provided, Heather can be classified as a round and dynamic character, considering the different and especially changing facets the reader is presented with. She also seems to lack a raised level of self-awareness and is, hence, psychologically conceived.

5.10 *Filth*: Bruce Robertson

The back of the novel *Filth's* book cover claims that this book is "suitable only for persons of strong constitution" and that it contains "drug use, perversion, murder, corruption, sexism, racism [and] law enforcement" (Welsh *Filth*) which, interestingly, are all combined in only one person, namely the protagonist Bruce

Robertson, who is the last character in this analysis. A brief but very fitting and concise definition of the character is found in a book review by Marshall (1999):

> Racist, misogynist, homophobic and psychotic, Robertson devours hard-core pornography whilst mentally and physically abusing himself and everybody around him. Despite his appalling personal hygiene supplemented by a genital rash and an attack of tapeworms […], he nonetheless manages to have sex with almost every female he meets, in between setting up colleagues for queer-bashing or driving others to the brink of suicide.

Evidence of all the above claimed accusations about Robertson's character can be found in the text, partly given explicitly, partly implicitly. The first aspect I want to focus on is a form of implicit-figural characterisation: Robertson's language use, which is marked by his heavy Scottish accent, heavy reliance on profanity and some very distinct and easily recognisable uses of idiolect. He uses two phrases continually throughout the novel, namely 'I kid you not' (for example on pages 18, 41, 52, 65) and 'same rules apply' (31, 39, 57, 85, 101, 111, 164 etc.). He, furthermore, uses some words or phrases, mostly proper names, and assigns them new meanings taken completely out of the context. Examples would be the word 'aylesbury'ed' (Welsh *Filth:* 22), which seems to be a synonym for "being exhausted", 'as if I give a Luke and Matt Goss' (Welsh *Filth:* 45), meaning "as if I give a toss" and 'Judi Dench' (Welsh *Filth:* 19, 35, 285) referring to an extremely bad smell. A typical example for his discourse would be the following: "Who the fuck cares what you think, ya fuckin silly wee hoor." (Welsh *Filth:* 105). On the other hand, however, he is able to code-switch and speak very eloquent Standard English. Clandfield and Lloyd (106) comments on this by saying that "Robertson intersperses the sexist, racist, expletive-laden language of his own thoughts with a perfect command of the discourse of political correctness". This ability implicitly defines him as being intelligent as well as educated.

Even though he claims that "[racism] doesn't mean anything to me. I just treat everyone the same" (Welsh *Filth*: 47), his behaviour and also numerous statements throughout the novel clearly prove the opposite and define him as racist, explicitly as well as implicitly. While his racism is primarily directed at black minority ethnics due to the fact that his wife left him for a black man (which,

however, the reader only learns rather late in the novel), he also comments very pejoratively on other nationalities as well, for example on Italians (whom he refers to as “shirt-lifters” and “erse-shaggers” (Welsh *Filth:* 129)) or the French (“Fuckin froggy cunts” (Welsh *Filth:* 37)). The following are a collection of statements concerning blacks, which serve as explicit-figural characterisation. “So why the hassle? It’s just a nigger. Not exactly a shortage of them, is there? I joke.” (Welsh *Filth:* 14) “It’s white man’s soul music Gus. We came, conquered and enslaved, I explain.” (Welsh *Filth:* 30). “Only a slag that’s not right in the head, that’s sick and diseased would look at a darkie, I tell him.” (Welsh *Filth:* 152).

Next to being racist, he is also misogynist and sexist, althoughthere is a strong disparity between his thoughts about and his actual behaviour towards women. While his behaviour might implicitly define him as a womanizer, a man who knows how to read women and as someone who empathises with them, his thoughts explicitly characterise him as a misogynist. He generally sees women as sex objects who need to be reduced to submission (“the blonde piece looks some ride (Welsh *Filth:* 21), “I […] make a mental list of the women I’d like to reduce to a state of slavery and bondage […]” (Welsh *Filth:* 135)) or as some kind of trophy. He also considers himself an expert on women and generously gives others advice on how to treat them properly: “Listen mate, a bit of advice in the affairs-of-the-heart department. With women what you have to do is shag them regularly. Keep them well-fucked and they’ll do anything for you. Well-shod and well-shagged, that’s the auld phrase.” (Welsh *Filth:* 40). Outwardly, he indeed seems to be a womanizer which is proven by the fact that, as already pointed out by Marshall (1999) in the opening quote, he is able to seduce almost every woman he meets, despite his lack of proper personal hygiene and genital rash This disparity is a visual proof of his ability to deceive and manipulate others.

Manipulating others is his own personal kind of sport, he even has a name for it calling it “The Games”. Robertson claims that “[e]verybody has their wee vanities, their own little conceits. My one is that nobody plays the games like me” and he further argues that “[t]he Games are always, repeat, always, being played” (Welsh *Filth:* 3). Those games include the deception and manipulation of everybody around him – be it colleagues or superiors at work, neighbours, strangers or even friends. According to Bruce, everyone has their Achilles’ heel

and he is extremely keen on finding, remembering and using these weaknesses against his associates. His dearest game partners are his competitors for the Inspector's promotion, on the one hand, and his best friend Bladesey, on the other hand. Some of those pranks include him writing messages on the walls of the police office's lavatories to spread rumours about his colleagues and afterwards purposefully accusing others in order to pit them against each other. Furthermore, seeing that he is in the position of Fed rep[7] and, hence, others are looking to him for leadership, he has absolutely no intention of really helping them but just pretends to be. "No way would I put my neck in the line for any spastic in this place, although I obviously keep them thinking otherwise" (Welsh *Filth:* 21). His greatest and poorest victim, however, is Bladesey who actually sees in Robertson a true friend he can rely on and come to for advice on his broken marriage with Bunty. Bruce, however, constantly mistreats him and in the end even causes him to go to jail for allegedly stalking and verbally assaulting his wife on the phone, while, in reality, it was again Bruce himself who did it. All those "games" can be seen as an implicit-figural characterisation technique because they define Robertson as deceiving, manipulating, lying and amoral.

His amorality seems to know no limit; on the news of one of his colleague's attempted but failed suicide he thinks:

> This news sends me into an excited rapture. Even more thrilling than Clell attempting suicide is the thought tha he must have been so miserable to try, and that by failing he's merely succeeded in humiliating himself and the pain will still be there. […] I try to compose myself, to convert my feelings into a horrified shock, but I can't hide the glee […] (Welsh *Filth*: 220)

Similarly telling, when he visits Bladesey in jail and sees him cry he just considers him "pathetic[, having no] fuckin pride" and thinks that "[h]e deserves to die, to be forced into committing suicide and dying" (Welsh *Filth*: 323). Trying to justify his amorality, he claims that "[y]ou can't afford a conscience in this life, that has become a luxury for the rich and a social ball and chain for the rest of us. Even if

[7] A fed rep (short for Federation Representative) is a member of the Police Federation who is responsible for representing the members of the police force in several areas. More information can be found, for example, on http://cheshirepolfed.org.uk/become-a-rep/.

I wanted one, which I certainly do not, I wouldn't have the faintest idea as how to go about getting one" (Welsh *Filth:* 109).

Another distinctive trait which is important for the analysis is the feeling of superiority which he explicitly points out several times in the novel. It is clear for him that "*nobody* tells [him] what to do" (Welsh *Filth*: 14) and that "the Bruce Robertsons of this world […] are moving off on a different tangent" than all others (Welsh *Filth*: 214). Even though he likes to read tabloid papers like the *Sun*, he is, of course, nothing like "the rest of the festering plebs who read [it but] more like somebody who writes the thing, edits it even" (Welsh *Filth*: 25). He also claims that while he might not be the best police officer in the world, he is definitely one of them (Welsh *Filth*: 41). Such thoughts and statements are explicit-figural information, characterising him as egocentric, self-obsessed and self-assured.

His actions in the course of the novel furthermore implicitly define him as a pathological liar who even sometimes deceives himself out of fear of accepting his life and all the things that have gone wrong in it. This self-delusion includes his relationship to his wife Carole, who left him for another man after he had been betraying her and abusing not only her but also their daughter Stacey. Unable and unwilling to accept this, he constantly claims that Carole will come back to him, that Stacey just told some "silly wee lies" (Welsh *Filth:* 166) and that they would be a happy family again. This non-acceptance in connection with possible bipolar and schizophrenic illness lead to his dressing up as Carole, roaming through the streets and, as the reader eventually finds out, committing the murder of the black Efan Wurie, which was the subject of the police investigation in the first place. Hence, the bold-printed sections in the novel labelled with "Carole" are, indeed, told by Bruce himself at those times when he is dressed up as Carole.

These sections as well as the parts told by the tapeworm are the main sources from which the reader derives figural-explicit information on the character, considering that all those voices come from Bruce himself (whereby the tapeworm can be seen as his sub-conscious talking). "Carole" explains that Bruce has seen terrible things which have affected him, considering that he is a "very sensitive man underneath it all" (Welsh *Filth:* 42). She recounts a case in Australia where Bruce found a horribly tormented and mutilated man named Costas and

claims that “for Bruce that image of Costas became a symbol for extreme possibilities of evil. That’s why Bruce is how he is” (Welsh *Filth*: 241).

Explicit information on Bruce’s childhood, his first real relationship, his parents and his biological father all come the tapeworm. Bruce grew up in a mining village and had a younger brother, Stevie, whom his father always treated more kindly and which made Bruce jealous. One day, sent out by their father to steal coal, in the heat of an argument Bruce pushes his brother down a coal mountain and Stevie is buried underneath the coal and dies. Bruce’s feelings during the accident are also described by the tapeworm: “You don’t mean to move the coal but you still experience a strange elation as well as a crushing fear as it starts shifting and comes sliding down on Stevie, sealing him in.” (Welsh *Filth*: 354). After this accident, Bruce is sent to live with his grandmother where he finds out the truth about his real father: a criminal who raped his mother amongst other women and was sent to prison where he is known as “The Beast”. In an attempt to leave all this behind, he joins the police force, settles down, gets married and has a child, and hence, leads a “normal life”. “You were normal. Only, there came the anxiety attacks. The depressions. The desires” (Welsh *Filth:* 386). This information seems to be given in order to somehow justify Bruce’s behaviour and development into the man he has become.

Apart from this, all other explicit altero-characterisation on the main protagonist is very limited. His colleague Gus calls him “an awfay man” (Welsh *Filth*: 28, 66, 127) several times throughout the novel and another, female colleague describes him derogatively as follows:

> Bruce, you’re an ugly and silly old man. You’re very possibly an alcoholic and God knows what else. You’re the type of sad case who preys on vulnerable, weak and stupid women in order to boost his own shattered ego. You’re a mess. You’ve gone wrong somewhere pal. (Welsh *Filth*: 338)

The information provided as auto-characterisation is a bit paradoxical, considering that, for example, he first claims “I only care about me and about why I don’t care about anybody else” (Welsh *Filth*: 391) while one page later he says that “We hate ourself for being unable to be other than what we are. Unable to be better” (Welsh *Filth*: 392). In those two statements, there is, however, an

important shift in personal pronoun. While in the first example he talks about himself in the first person singular and is his typical egocentric self, in the second instance he uses the first person plural (probably a sign for his progressing bipolar disease) and now seems to care about others as well.

Indeed, there are two different sides of the character. While for most of the novel he is characterised implicitly and explicitly as a rather detestable person, there are also some instances in which another facet is revealed. First of all, he helps a woman with a plaster climb out of a taxi and remembers something about his past. As the reader later finds out, Bruce is reminded of his first true love, Rhonda, who had a paralysed leg (hence the reference to the plaster) and who was tragically killed by a lightning strike. The thoughts he has during that encounter make it clear that he is, indeed, able to feel something but does not want to admit such feelings but instead wants to disguise and downplay them – "It isn't her. It could never be. But I wished with all my heart that it was. Ha! Bullshit! I wished with all my heart I could get another pint!" (Welsh *Filth:* 68). Some time later in the novel, he tries to save a man's life but does not succeed, after which he feels "tears rolling down my cheek […]. The woman is in my arms, her head in my chest. I want to hold her forever, to never let her go" (Welsh *Filth:* 114). Even though he fails, the diseased man's wife remains extremely thankful for his attempt and she is also the only character in the novel who provides a positive explicit-figural characterisation on Bruce telling her son that "[t]hat's a really kind man. Mister Robertson. A good man […]" (Welsh *Filth*: 361).

Over the course of the story both Robertson's physical and mental health increasingly deteriorate. Physically, his extremely unhealthy lifestyle of binging on fast-food and sweets and having sexual relationships with numerous different women finally takes his toll and leads to him having a serious genital eczema as well as tapeworms in his guts. Mentally, his bipolar disease and schizophrenia become more evident and it seems to be difficult for him to differentiate between reality and hallucination. He starts to refer to himself in the first form plural, shows violent and even psychopathic behaviour for no reason and also constantly hears voices.

> Robertson attempts to silence the voices in his head by overwhelming them with as much noise as possible. He realizes just how populated his

> unconscious is, so he tries to make it even more crowded, to get lost in the silence of total noise.[…] Robertson uses work, sex, and television to keep a constant stream of voices screaming from the outside. Unable to sleep at night, Robertson works overtime. When his overtime hours are cut, he turns to sex. [...] Still, the voices persist, and Robertson grows more and more horrified of the night as the novel progresses. (Karnicky 145f.)

In the end, the only alternative left for Robertson, after having suffered numerous indignities in the last chapters – such as the nervous break-down and his being beaten up by his enemies and found by his colleagues and superior still dressed in drag - is suicide, his final attempt to silence all the voices. According to Morace (*Welsh* pos. 1881), this "serves the reader's desire for poetic justice and Bruce's need to inflict an additional measure of guilt and pain on others", considering that he is wearing a T-shirt with the caption "YOU CAUSED THIS" and hangs himself right before his wife and daughter enter the room. All these actions again can be interpreted as implicit information, characterising Bruce as weak, pathetic, desperate and hopeless.

Summing up the findings and taking into account Pfister's characterisation criteria, the last chapter has shown that the novel *Filth* contains much implicit-figural information but, in contrast to the other novels analysed before, also a great deal of explicit-figural information on the main protagonist. While implicit information is, again, provided mostly through the character's language and his behaviour, Welsh chose an unconventional way to convey explicit information, namely through the tapeworm and "Carole". The amount of explicit information coming from other sources, however, is very limited. While at the beginning Robertson might seem rather flat, even idiosyncratic, defined mostly through his desire to manipulate and deceive others, throughout the novel the character continually gains depth as more and more facets are revealed. This makes him multidimensional as well as dynamic. Robertson himself can also be considered an unreliable narrator due to the fact that he often simply denies reality, whereas the tapeworm is a reliable source of information on the protagonist.

6 Are they truly anti-heroes, after all?

In the course of the thesis, I have presented and analysed ten very different characters out of three works written by Irvine Welsh. The last chapters have aimed at finding out how they are characterised by the author, which characterisation techniques he uses and which types of characters are created thereby. They were presented by describing their actions and interpreting their behaviour. After having taken a close look at each and every character, it can definitely and easily be claimed that none of them can be classified as a hero. The final chapter, now, will serve to tackle the last remaining research question, namely whether those characters described earlier can be classified as anti-heroes or anti-heroines and what leads to such a conclusion.

In order to be able to answer that question I will very briefly summarise the characteristics of anti-heroes pointed out in the first chapter. Character traits that are considered to be of antiheroic nature are the following: “petty, ignominious, passive, ineffectual, or dishonest” (Abrams 11), “incompetent, unlucky, tactless, clumsy, cack-handed, stupid, buffoonish” (Cuddon 46), “weak, ineffectual, pale, humiliated, self-doubting, inept, occasionally abject characters [who are] often afflicted with self-conscious and paralyzing irony” (Brombert 2). The model by Jonason et al. (194f.) introduces the term ‘The Dark Triad’, according to which anti-heroes show characteristics of narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism.

The first character analysed, Mark Renton, does not really fall into any of the categories associated with the Dark Triad, even though, for example, he is deceiving and manipulative at times, he cannot be considered narcissistic or Machiavellian. Still, he displays other anti-heroic character traits. Aside from being dishonest and, as mentioned, deceiving, he is also tactless and clumsy. Although he is intelligent and eloquent, he still does not exploit his full potential, mostly because he is unable (and, hence, undisciplined) to quit the drugs. His raised level of awareness also makes him vulnerable for self-doubt and self-consciousness. One fact, however, which clearly sets him apart from the archetypical anti-hero, is his development throughout the story. In the end, he is

able to change his life and, at least tries to turn it around and improve it by leaving not only his friends but also the drugs behind.

In contrast to Mark, Sick Boy can be considered a textbook example of an anti-hero according to the Dark Triad model. He shows signs of narcissism, explicitly manifesting themselves in some of his monologues. His “numero-uno-speech” already quoted in chapter 5.2, for example, depicts him as someone who clearly thinks extremely highly of himself, subordinating everybody around him as minor and limited. In the “conversations” with his idol Sean Connery, furthermore, it becomes clear that he has a high sense of self-admiration. He can also be classified as a primary or instrumental psychopath, considering his shallowness and little to no empathy for other people. His manipulative nature becomes evident in the end when he pimps out some of his former girlfriends or sexual partners to other men in order to make money, which is a sign of Machiavellianism.

Spud, on the other hand, is a completely different kind of character. Similar to Mark, he does not show any traits of the Dark Triad but displays qualities that are completely the opposite. Instead of being manipulative, aggressive, showing little empathy, he is strongly against violence, is unable to lie and shows empathy towards not only people but almost every living creature. Considering the character traits listed by Abrams, Cuddon and Brombert, however, he still can be categorised as a typical anti-hero. His actions and life history prove that, even though he might be good-hearted and the morally most proper character described, he is still unlucky, clumsy, stupid, inept and self-doubting. Furthermore, he is extremely passive and static, he does not really try to change his life and make something out of it, which, again, is a typical characteristic of anti-heroes.

The next character, Francis Begbie, can most definitely be classified as a secondary or hostile psychopath, considering that he often displays both aggressive and impulsive behaviour. It can be argued that this is the character trait that most clearly defines him, his proclivity for aggression and violence. He also shows some signs of narcissism, even though they may be a bit subtler than in the character of Sick Boy. While he does not explicitly claim that he is better

than his peers, he somehow still sees himself as their protector and leader which, again, implies some feeling of superiority. Consequently, he can definitely be classified as an anti-hero.

Tommy starts out rather as a hero than an anti-hero. He is good-looking, does not have any harmful addictions, even shows a noble quality at the beginning when he tries to defend a girl's honour. However, from all the characters described in this thesis, he goes through the greatest change and falls the farthest. He turns into a pessimistic, angry, sick young man who has absolutely no positive outlook in his life. I think that it is probably wrong to describe him as an anti-hero; he is instead a victim – a victim of drugs, of disappearing dreams and of society.

The next characters, taken from *Ecstasy,* are four extremely different women. Aside from Samantha, none of them falls into any of the categories described by the Dark Triad but all of them show at least some other character traits ascribed to anti-heroes. Rebecca, unaware of her husband's exploitation and beguilement, is (or rather starts out as) a weak, stupid, self-conscious and self-doubting character. In the course of the story she undergoes an extreme transformation, not only of a physical but also of a mental nature. After finding out that Perky has been deceiving her the entire time she loses weight and thereby gains self-confidence. However, she also plots her revenge on her husband, and in the process becomes both manipulative and dishonest.

Lorraine is a completely different kind of character. She differs in physical appearance from Rebecca in that she is good-looking, but she is still troubled by self-doubt, which in her case is probably mostly rooted in her sexual confusion. Unlike most other anti-heroes, she cannot be described as being passive – she takes her destiny, and Rebecca's as well, into her own hands. She, furthermore, becomes a loyal friend to Rebecca in the course of the story. In comparison to most of the other characters analysed, she is probably one of the least anti-heroic.

Samantha is the only female character analysed in the course of this thesis who falls into at least one category of the Dark Triad model. Considering her actions described throughout the novella, it can be claimed that she is psychopathic,

showing extremely violent and ruthless behaviour. Furthermore, due to her deformity it seems likely that she felt unlucky, weak, self-doubting and self-conscious at the beginning of the novella. However, after meeting Andreas and plotting their revenge on the pharmaceutical industry, she transformed into a self-confident, socially manipulative, and aggressive person showing little to no empathy for people around her. Killing people in order to get her revenge, including the brutal murder of an innocent baby, make her the most violent and ruthless anti-heroine in this thesis.

Next to Lorraine, Heather, the protagonist of the last novella in *Ecstasy,* is the second female character displaying few anti-heroic qualities. While she may be described as self-conscious, self-doubting and maybe even weak at the beginning of the story, she changes drastically over the course of time. She does not only accept that her marriage is over but is willing and able to end it and start a completely new life. By leaving her husband and beginning a romantic relationship with Lloyd, who is a completely different kind of man than her ex-husband, she proves that she is, indeed, very brave and does not feel the need to conform to society's conventions. As a consequence, she is more an active and dynamic character than a passive one.

Finally, the last character analysed is probably also the one with the greatest potential of being labelled a true anti-hero. Bruce Robertson falls into each and every category of the Dark Triad. He clearly considers himself superior and feels that he stands above everyone around him. Furthermore, he can be considered both a primary and secondary psychopath. He shows very low empathy and almost no interpersonal warmth, but is also extremely socially manipulative, aggressive and neurotic. Lastly, he is also Machiavellian, sharing the opinion that the ends always justify the means. He shows this by manipulating and deceiving even his best friends and colleagues in order to get his desired promotion. In the course of the novel, however, the reader also finds out that Bruce has a completely different facet, one that he constantly suppresses but which surfaces in the information provided by the tapeworm and "Carole". The hard and violent man he claims to be is just a mechanism to cover for his insecurities and his unhappy past. In reality, he is an insecure, pathetic and weak man who is troubled by his past, especially the accident which caused his younger brother to die and

the separation from his wife and his daughter. A very fitting quote at this point and in order to conclude this paragraph comes from McGuire (26) who claims that “Robertson is an anti-hero, an accumulation of all that is most loathsome in Welsh’s earlier creations”.

To sum up this chapter, it can be argued that all of the characters described and analysed in the course of this thesis share at least some qualities with typical anti-heroes found in literature. While some of them can be categorised as archetypical anti-heroes, such as Francis Begbie and Bruce Robertson, others are less easily branded as anti-heroes due to their development throughout the story, such as Mark Renton, Lorraine Gillespie and Heather.

7 Conclusion

This thesis aimed to shed light on the topic of anti-heroes in literature in general and in the depiction of them in three major works by the Scottish author Irvine Welsh in particular. The introductory chapter on the development of anti-heroes in literature showed that there is an increasing trend in substituting the conventional hero with a new figure called the anti-hero. While the former shows noble, brave and heroic qualities, the latter usually lacks those and instead is defined, for example, by some of the following traits, passivity, naivety, stupidity, narcissism, psychopathy or Machiavellianism. The two figures differ not only in qualities but also in how they develop throughout a story. While heroes are usually on a quest with a specific aim, and, in the end, are successful and achieve their ultimate goal, anti-heroes are generally stuck, are unable to overcome certain obstacles or are even too passive to go on a quest in the first place.

The findings, furthermore, suggest that there are several reasons for being able to identify with anti-heroes and, as a possible consequence, even prefer stories employing them. First of all, readers can develop certain coping mechanisms such as the moral disengagement strategy. Here, the reader interprets a character's amoral behaviour as morally proper, which means that he or she somehow distorts reality. By doing so, he or she is able to identify with a character even if this character's behaviour and actions are amoral and unjustifiable which, consequently, leads to an increased reading enjoyment. Secondly, there are other, more general reasons such as the simple fact that the common man or woman can more easily identify with a flawed, unsuccessful, passive protagonist than with one who is always on the winning side of life and constantly takes the moral high road. Of course, this oversimplified explanation may not make sense with truly amoral characters such as Robertson, as it is unlikely that many readers want to identify with such a character.

The biography of Irvine Welsh showed that he also had a rather "anti-heroic past". Growing up in a socially outcast part of Scotland, he came into contact with drugs and even had a brush with the law before he was able to turn his life around and became an extremely successful writer. Knowing his past, it becomes clear when

reading his books that he included autobiographical clues in some of his characters as well.

The major goal of this thesis was to analyse several different and yet somehow significantly similar characters from three books by Welsh, namely *Trainspotting, Ecstasy* and *Filth.* By using Manfred Pfister's theory on figure conception and figure configuration as basis for the methodology, the characters were described, interpreted and analysed. By taking a close look at their actions, their behaviour, their relationships and character traits, I tried to discover whether the characters invented by Welsh could be categorised as anti-heroes.

In order to sum up the results, two different aspects need to be considered: HOW did Welsh convey the information on the characters, on the one hand, and WHAT KIND of characters did he thereby create? Concerning the first question, it was shown that Welsh mostly employs implicit-figural characterisation techniques. It is almost always a character's behaviour which provides the most important information about that character; this in turn is deduced and interpreted by the audience. Another implicit characterisation technique that is extensively used by the author is language and how the various characters are able to master different codes. Most of the characters analysed converse in some kind of dialect or idiolect. While some of them are able to code-switch to Standard English, others are unable to do so, often leading to them being stuck in their social environment, unable to improve their position. In my opinion, the best example of how a character is defined by language is Spud, who, in contrast to Renton, is unable to advance his life or take advantage of situations due to his inability to speak proper Standard English.

Aside from implicit-figural behaviour, Welsh also conveys some information on the characters through explicit-figural characterisation techniques, for example in statements about a character's looks or education. In the case of *Filth,* Welsh was able to invent a completely different technique for conveying information about his protagonist by employing two different voices from the main character's subconscious – a tapeworm living in Bruce Robertson's intestines, on the one hand, and his schizophrenic alter ego in the disguise of his ex-wife Carol, on the other hand. Information coming from those two sources included a great deal of

explicit characterisation. All in all, however, there is much more implicit than explicit information on the characters found in the books.

The characters created by that information are very different. While some of them are well rounded, showing various facets and traits, for example Mark, Sick Boy or Rebecca, others are rather flat, and in the case of Begbie almost idiosyncratic. Most of the characters undergo some kind of development throughout the story, for example Mark, Tommy, Rebecca, Heather, and can therefore be categorised as dynamic characters, others remain static throughout the story, examples being Begbie and Spud. Concerning their psychological conception, it can be argued that aside from Mark all other characters are psychologically rather than transpsychologically conceived.

Finally, the last chapter was dedicated to answering the remaining research question whether or not, taking into account all the information gathered in the course of the thesis, the characters analysed can indeed be categorised as anti-heroes. While not all of them can be seen as archetypical anti-heroes, most show at least some anti-heroic traits, such as stupidity, passivity, and futility, for example. However, at least some characters, especially Begbie and Bruce Robertson, have turned out to be textbook examples of anti-heroes.

To conclude, I think that we, the readers, like such characters and take delight in stories featuring them so much simply because we enjoy to be surprised. Anti-heroes such as Bruce Robertson and Francis Begbie do not obey traditional rules, they do not adhere to society's conventions and norms but behave irrationally and counter-intuitively. Those characters make choices we would never dare to make because they do not care about the consequences. Still, readers might have mixed feelings about characters such as Robertson and Begbie because while no one really wants to identify with or actually BE like them, one secretly admires or even envies them for their carelessness, relentlessness and independence. Furthermore, it is also imaginable that deep at heart readers hope for their favourite anti-hero to eventually turn around and change into a better person "through some kind of redemptive act. Whether it's to see them make better choices, slowly improve over time, or lay down their lives so that someone else might live, redemption is a powerful and resonating piece of

storytelling” (Michael 2013). Whatever the case may be, I dare say that especially those characters make the works by Welsh so interesting, amusing, thrilling and brilliant.

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9 Appendix

9.1 English abstract

Irvine Welsh is one of the most influential and popular authors of Scottish fiction and his works have become well-known all around the world. Most of the characters in his writings come from a lower social class and are criminals, drug users, alcoholics, sociopaths, etc., frequently showing violent, immoral, questionable behaviour. Considering this, one is drawn to the conclusion that those characters can be classified as so-called anti-heroes, i.e. protagonists who lack the conventional noble qualities of traditional heroes.

It is the aim of this thesis to take a close look at three of Welsh's works, his most famous novel *Trainspotting*, a collection of short stories *Ecstasy* and another novel *Filth,* and analyse and interpret the characters presented in those stories. The most relevant question discussed is whether these characters can, indeed, be labelled as "true" anti-heroes. To do that, the first step is to define the terms hero and anti-hero, consider their relevance and prevalence in literature and come up with defining criteria that such literary figures have in common. Secondly, the author and the respective works are introduced whilst taking into account relevant information concerning structure, type of narration, focalisation, etc.

The main part of the thesis is dedicated to establishing a methodology that helps to analyse Welsh's protagonists, whereas, Manfred Pfister's model of figure conception and characterisation (laid out in Pfister's *Das Drama: Theorie und Analyse* (1977)) is used as basis for this methodology. Pfister identifies various criteria based upon which fictional characters can be characterised, such as roundness vs. flatness, mono- vs. multidimensionality, etc. Having outlaid those criteria, 10 protagonists taken from the three works previously mentioned are analysed, thereby describing their character, their actions and behaviour. In the final section, the question is answered whether they are truly anti-heroes, after all.

9.2 German abstract

Irvine Welsh ist einer der einflussreichsten und bekanntesten Autoren der Schottischen Literaturwelt und hat bereits weltweite Bekanntheit erlangt. Eine Vielzahl der Charaktere in seinen Werken stammt aus einer niedrigeren, sozialen Klasse, es finden sich unter ihnen häufig Kriminelle, Drogensüchtige, Alkoholiker, Soziopathen, etc. Sie legen meist gewalttätiges, unmoralisches und fragwürdiges Verhalten an den Tag. Unter diesem Aspekt drängt sich einem der Verdacht auf, dass solche Figuren als Antihelden eingestuft werden können, also als Protagonisten, die nicht über die noblen Qualitäten traditioneller Helden verfügen.

Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es, drei von Welshs Werken genauer zu betrachten und die Figuren, die in diesen präsentiert werden, zu analysieren und interpretieren. Folgende Werke werden verwendet: einerseits sein bekanntester Roman *Trainspotting,* außerdem eine Sammlung von Kurzgeschichten unter dem Titel *Ecstasy* und schließlich der Roman *Filth*. Die wichtigste Frage die es zu beantworten gilt, ist, ob es sich bei den Charakteren tatsächlich um Antihelden handelt und ob man diese folglich auch so betiteln kann. Um dies herauszufinden, müssen zuallererst die zwei Termini ‚Held' und ‚Antiheld' genau voneinander differenziert werden. Die Relevanz und Verbreitung dieser literarischen Figuren in der Literatur wird betrachtet um schlussendlich Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede herauszufinden. Als zweiter Schritt werden sowohl der Autor als auch die drei Werke vorgestellt, vor allem in Hinsicht auf Struktur, Erzählart, usw.

Im Hauptteil der Arbeit wird eine Methode entwickelt, mit deren Hilfe später die Charaktere analysiert werden. Diese Methode basiert auf Manfred Pfisters Modell der Figurenkonzeption und -charakterisierung (beschrieben in Pfisters *Das Drama: Theorie und Analyse* (1977)). Pfister identifiziert mehrere Merkmale, anhand derer man Charaktere analysieren kann. Nachdem diese Merkmale aufgelistet wurden, werden 10 Protagonisten aus den drei Werke analysiert. Dabei werden Charaktereigenschaften, Handlungen und Verhalten beschrieben. Im abschließenden Kapitel wird schlussendlich die Frage beantwortet, ob es sich nun wirklich um Antihelden handelt oder nicht.