A Glasgow Voice

A Glasgow Voice:
James Kelman's Literary Language

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Kelman's use of language in his literary works and how, in order to present a spoken Glasgow working-class voice in his stories, he breaks down the traditional distinction made between speech and writing in literature. Three main facets are explored: the use of Glaswegian/Scots language, the inclusion of working-class discourse features, and an expressive preference for language as it is spoken rather than written. The thesis approaches Kelman's writing by examining his use of punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, grammar, swearing, and body language. Punctuation is argued to be a key element in the enforcement of the authoritative voice in the literary text, creating a hierarchical framework for the language that appears within it. Kelman shifts this use of punctuation to one of prosodic performance. Spelling is shown to be a device that Kelman uses to hint at pronunciation. This strategy reveals the accent associated with the language depicted and firmly places the text in a particular geographical place. It is explained why Kelman refuses to adopt an established Scots orthography. Kelman's use of vocabulary is explored in the context of dialect and slang, and how it signals place, community, and social class. It is argued that Kelman's hybrid Glaswegian language poses a linguistic purity threat, both to English and traditional Scots alternatives. Grammar is analysed in terms of its contribution to both a Glasgow and working-class identity. There is a focus on Scotticisms, auxiliary verb negation, and other grammatical features. In the latter part of the thesis, the literal and non-literal use of swear words is explored. The thesis elucidates the significant expressive functions that non-literal swearing plays in Kelman's writing. Swearing is revealed to be an important way to articulate experiences and thoughts into words. The final part of the thesis deals with body language and reveals it to be a key element which allows the speech-based discourse to appear fully-formed in Kelman's writing. Throughout the thesis, examples from Kelman's writing are analysed and statistical comparisons are made between his writing and the language found in the Scots Corpus of Texts and Speech. In summary, this thesis provides a detailed and systematic analysis of Kelman's use of language in literature, pointing out linguistic patterns, identifying key textual strategies and features, and comparing it to the standards that precede him and those that surround his work.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

—Christine Amanda Müller

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

James Kelman's writing and aims

James Kelman is a Scottish author whose main subject matter is urban Glasgow life. He is notable for using innovative textual techniques to infuse Glasgow speech forms into his writing. Indeed, Kelman's self-stated aim is to write about experiences from his own community using the language of his home, his culture, and the Glaswegian working-class.[1]

Kelman has long been recognised as a prominent author in Scotland, as his literary honours and awards suggest: three *Scottish Arts Council Book Awards* (1983, 1987, and 1989), *James Tait Black Memorial Prize (Best Novel)* in 1989, the *Scotland on Sunday/Glenfiddich Spirit of Scotland Award* and *Stakis Prize for Scottish Writer of the Year* in 1998, and the *Saltire Society's Book of the Year Award* and *The Aye Write! Bank of Scotland Prize for Scottish Fiction* in 2008. Outside of Scotland, but still within Britain, he won the *Cheltenham Prize* in 1987, was shortlisted for the *Booker Prize* in 1989, and won the *Booker Prize* and the *Writers' Guild Award (Best Fiction)* in 1994. Despite the recognition given to Kelman's works, his literary career has been 'embattled', as Simon Kovesi observes in his book, *James Kelman*, and this conflict has been mostly produced 'by the huge gulf between the polite linguistic affectations of the literary establishment and the quotidian world and vernacular language of Kelman's work' (p. 3).

The key characteristic of Kelman's style is his creation of a Glasgow working-class voice that uses non-standard hybrid language, one which is characterised by careful and deliberate deviation from the standardising hierarchical norms of written English. Kelman's writing style developed through an exploration of how different types of language affect subject-object relations in narrative representation. His experimentation has extended to altering typographical features such as orthography, punctuation,

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[1] This sentiment is explicitly expressed in Kelman's *Some Recent Attacks* (p. 81) and 'And the Judges Said...' (pp. 17), and his interview with Ledbetter (p. 9).

and spacing on the page. He is particularly noted for matching the narrative language to that spoken and used by the characters.

Kelman's short stories have a geographical range which covers Glasgow and surrounding area (as far south as Ayr), London and various areas of England (including the Channel Islands and Manchester), and America. However, his short stories and novels can be described as primarily set in Glasgow and the surrounding south west Scotland, with some minor advances into England and even less so into America. Although other countries might be referred to in the short stories, there are no stories based in wider Europe, the Commonwealth, Latin America, or Africa. During the period of his work that this thesis examines, Kelman's novels are set exclusively in Glasgow.

Kelman's stories occur in a variety of places. The homes might be a tenement, housing estate, or bedsit. The workplaces are often the factory, warehouse, industrial site, farm, and transient workplaces involved with council work, gardening, and transport. Socialising occurs in places such as the pub and open air venues such as the park, the street, the riverside, the football field, disused industrial sites, and the countryside. Characters frequent gambling venues such as the betting shop, private casino, and greyhound racecourse, and they are seen in institutional settings such as the DHSS office, school, and the medical centre.

His subject matter is the ordinary daily working-class life, usually from a male point of view. Kelman's short stories are generally preoccupied with the inner lives of characters, following their discovery of self-knowledge and the social discourses that influence them. Their social relationships are examined, with Kelman studying interpersonal themes of friendship, marriage, family, management of conflict, and intergeneration relationships, as well as how strangers interact, the experience of dealing with institutions, the relationship between employee and employer and co-workers. Kelman also examines the lives of those with few significant social relationships, such as the single unemployed male, the vagrant, and tramp. Kelman's theme might be a childhood experience, an attempt to cope with circumstances, a family scandal, the loss of a significant other, or a criminal act.

The thematic concerns of his work are bleakness and alienation, the quotidian, the post-industrial and the urban and the disintegration of traditional class allegiances. Kelman frequently settles into an existential approach and focuses upon the relationship between the person and their social world, and the struggle with the self. His work studies how people relate to their family and friends, how free time is spent, and issues to do with limited employment or unemployment, dangerous workplaces, and

problems with health. Thus, his characters are depicted in various stages of coping or falling apart, yet finding some joy in their lives, with a few gaining stability and even long-term satisfaction.

It is useful to understand the unique perspective and experiences of the author himself to understand the motivations that influence his stylistic choices. Indeed, Kelman's self-stated aims have acted as a touchstone during this analysis. His stance provided the impetus to analyse how the creation of Glasgow working-class voice is achieved in his work — how a traditionally speech-based form of language could be moulded to a literary format. Kelman's fundamental social position as an author can be found in this assertion made in an interview with Fabio Vericat:

> You have to remember that Scotland has existed as a sort of colony of England for the past three hundred years; its ruling class sold the country back in the early 18th century. Scottish children have been educated to recognize not only their own inferiority but the inferiority of their parents, community and wider culture, including language. (para 3)

He seeks a voice in literature for this marginalised people. Kelman's own generation were not allowed, by education policy, to use their own language, so he started writing during a time when Glasgow speech was officially denigrated. In an interview with Sarah Lyall, Kelman remembers the time when his two daughters were reprimanded in school for using the Scots *aye* instead of the English *yes* (pp. B1-B2). In his Booker Prize speech, published within a newspaper article called 'Elitist Slurs Are Racism by Another Name', Kelman comments that he expected his daughters to suffer reprimands such as that previously mentioned because

> as a white parent from an ordinary Glaswegian environment I expected my children to receive various intellectual humiliations and the attendant psychological abuse as they journeyed through the lower and higher educational system, this on account of the language and culture that was natural to them. (p. 2)

He reinforces this point in his article, 'And the Judges Said…', where he identifies the education system as 'a crucial instrument of the state', one which seeks to suppress and disenfranchise the language of working-class Glasgow (p. 18).

In the same article, Kelman further identifies prejudice in English literature against the working-class community:

> The English Literature I had access to through the normal channels is what you might call state-education-system-influenced reading material. People from communities like mine were rarely to be found on these pages. When

they were they were usually categorised as servants, peasants, criminal 'elements', semi-literate drunken louts, and so on; shadowy presences left unspecified, often grouped under terms like 'uncouth rabble', 'vulgar mob', 'the great unwashed'; 'lumpen proletariat', even 'riotous assembly'. (p. 17)

His perception is that in the majority of nineteenth and twentieth century literature, the picture of working-class communities such as his has usually been disparaging, where the people are conceptualised as an undifferentiated homogenous unit and the individual lives as unworthy of deeper literary attention. Kelman argues this in his book of essays, *Some Recent Attacks*, where he asserts that when working-class individuals were included in literature they were unrecognisable from their real-life counterparts:

Whenever I did find somebody from my own sort of background in English Literature there they were confined to the margins, kept in their place, stuck in dialogue. You only ever saw them or heard them. You never got into their mind. You did find them in the narrative but from without, seldom from within. And when you did see them or hear them they never rang true, they were never like anybody I ever met in real life. (p. 82)

Kelman would agree with Peter Keating's summation given in *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction*, and presumably also apply it to some modern fiction:

There are few English novels which deal with working-class characters in a working-class environment in the same sense as there are novels about the middle or upper classes in their own recognizably real settings: in other words, novels which treat of the working class as being composed of ordinary human beings who experience the range of feelings and emotions, social aspirations and physical relationships, that it is the special province of the novelist to explore. Most working-class novels are, in one way or another, propagandist. They are usually written by authors who are not working class, for an audience which is not working class, and character and environment are presented so as to contain, implicitly or explicitly, a class judgement. (p. 2)

More specifically, in *Some Recent Attacks*, Kelman outlines a predominant vision of the Glaswegian in English literature as an unreflective, inarticulate, one-dimensional 'hard man':

How do you recognise a Glaswegian in English Literature? He — bearing in mind that in English Literature you don't get female Glaswegians, not even the women — he's the cut-out figure who wields a razor blade, gets

moroculous drunk and never has a single solitary 'thought' in his entire life. He beats his wife and beats his kids and beats his next door neighbour. And another striking thing: everybody from a Glaswegian or working-class background, everybody in fact from any regional part of Britain — none of them knew how to talk! What larks! Every time they opened their mouth out came a stream of gobbledygook. Beautiful! their language a cross between semaphore and morse code; apostrophes here and apostrophes there; a strange hotchpotch of bad phonetics and horrendous spelling — unlike the nice stalwart upperclass English hero (occasionally Scottish but with no linguistic variation) whose words on the page were always absolutely splendidly proper and pure and pristinely accurate, whether in dialogue or without. And what grammar! Colons and semicolons! Straight out of their mouths! An incredible mastery of language. Most interesting of all, for myself as a writer, the narrative belonged to them and them alone. They owned it. The place where thought and spiritual life exists. Nobody outwith the parameters of their socio-cultural setting had a spiritual life. We all stumbled along in a series of behaviouristic activity; automatons, cardboard cut-outs, folk who could be scrutinised, whose existence could be verified in a sociological or anthropological context. In other words, in the society that is English Literature, some 80 to 85 percent of the population simply did not exist. (p. 82)

This is an image of the inarticulate drunken violent man who has no spiritual or inner life. This man is mentally void and speaks a contorted language that is contrasted against a Standard English narration. The use of such a stereotype produces supremely unsatisfactory literature for Kelman. Instead, as he says in an interview with Jenny Turner, he seeks to remedy this situation by producing imaginative writing that focuses on working-class characters who are articulate in their own terms and capable of abstract thought (p. 24).

The careful use of language is a key vehicle for achieving such a remedy. Critical to Kelman's overall philosophy, as he tells Duncan McLean, is a vision of language as both a basic element and expression of culture:

language is the culture—if you lose your language you've lost your culture, so if you've lost the way your family talk, the way your friends talk, then you've lost your culture, and you're divorced from it. That's what happens with all these stupid fucking books by bad average writers because they've lost their culture, they've given it away. Not only that, what they're saying is it's inferior, because they make anybody who comes from that culture speak in a hybrid language, whereas they speak standard English. And their language is the superior one. So what they are doing, in effect, is castrating their parents, and their whole culture. (p. 112)

Kelman's notion of language as culture and his desire to write from within his culture is repeated in many interviews and essays.[2] This focus on language as a key component of culture means a Glaswegian-based voice is essential to his work, or 'the foundation of Kelman's artistic project' as Simon Kovesi aptly describes it in 'James Kelman Margarined' (p. 16).

Complementing the above observation, Kelman states in an interview with James Ledbetter that he is 'not content to take language as it's given through the structures of authority' (p. 9). This sentiment is found elsewhere in Kelman's article 'And the Judges Said...':

> I reached the age of 22 in the knowledge that certain rights were mine. It was up to me what I did. I had the right to create art. Not that I thought in these terms, I just wanted to write stories. But I didn't have to write as if I was somebody not myself (eg. an imagined member of the British upper-middle-classes). Nor did I have to write about characters striving to become other persons (eg. imagined members of the British upper-middle-classes). I could sit down with my pen and paper and start doing stories of my own, from myself, the everyday trials and tribulations; my family, my boss, the boy and girl next door; the old guy telling yarns at the factory; whatever. It was all there. I was privy to the lot. There was no obligation to describe, explain or define myself in terms of class, race or community. I didn't have to prove anything. And nor did I have to prove anything about the people roundabout me, my own culture and community. In spite of dehumanising authority they existed as entire human beings; they carried on with their lives as though 'the forces of evil' did not exist. My family and culture were valid in their own right, this was an intrinsic thing, they were not up for evaluation. And neither was my work, not unless I so choose. Self respect and the determination of self, for better or for worse. (p. 17)

Essentially, as Kelman says to Ledbetter: 'I have a right to write from my own experiences, from my own community' (p. 9). Kelman uses his written stories as a site for validation of his own working-class cultural background and addresses an omission in the imaginative world. Kelman's writing undermines middle-class views of the world by using one of their primary sources of imagination and symbolic dominance: formal written literature. Literature is a good choice for this because it is theorised as a place where the boundaries with other classes are more malleable than others.

Kelman's reflections in the quotation above raise a second issue to do with the role of literature as an expression of culture and a means to

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[2] Ledbetter (p. 9); Margetts (para 5); Kelman, 'And the Judges Said…' (p. 17); Walsh (p. 2); and Kelman, *Elitist Slurs* (p. 2).

examine human experience. It can be argued that Scottish literature, which rejects the local or national language when dealing with Scottish subjects — instead using Standard English as the main language of expression — is not only giving away an important part of Scottish culture, it allows a form of colonisation to take place in the literary text. This notion is bolstered by the historical evidence that the Scottish upper class and middle class adopted prestige English language varieties, whereas the lower classes were more likely to use local dialect. In this sense, Kelman's definition of the term 'colonisation' incorporates a class dimension that is based upon linguistic differentiation. Thus, not only was there the colonisation of Scotland which was essentially a stateless nation, there were also class tensions that contributed to the suppression of the Scottish working-class voice. In 'And the Judges Said...', Kelman concentrates on class as the more important problem for literature:

> How could I write from within my own place and time if I was forced to adopt the 'received' language of the ruling class? Not to challenge the rules of narrative was to be coerced into assimilation, I would be forced to write in the voice of an imagined member of the ruling class.... This meant I had to work my way through language, find a way of making it my own. (p. 17)

He resolves this issue of 'colonisation' by incorporating local language forms in his writing. He asserts to Helen Elliot, that 'I write exactly as I hear people speak' (p. 15) and he aims 'to give a translation of language as it is used orally', as he tells Luke Slattery (p. 5). However, Kelman's objectives are often obscured in the reception of his language, which, as he tells Laurence Chollet, is tarred by linguistic bigotry:

> The whole kind of simplistic criticism I received after the Booker took pains to evade the serious questions – like how would it be possible for this character to exist without the language he uses, which is the language of his culture? These arguments that say you can't use this kind of language are basically saying, 'We don't want to know of the existence of these people.' (p. 3)

Kelman's point is that an author who represents the reality of a character needs to also recognise the language used to express that character's experiences.

John Douglas Macarthur identifies the dignity and power inherent within Kelman's strategy of using the subject's language for their own literary representation: 'The fundamental principle of Kelman's writing is the democratic impulse that, as far as possible, the characters be allowed to

speak for themselves' (p. 28). Macarthur also recognises the literary nature of the linguistic depiction that 'Kelman starts with the rhythms and power of everyday speech and transforms them' (p. 85). While Kelman's writing is not a transcription of speech, in his interview with Duncan McLean, Kelman agrees that he is approaching language in a similar way to Lewis Grassic Gibbon — that is, 'to mould the English language into the rhythms and cadences of Scots spoken speech, and to inject into the English vocabulary such minimum number of words from Braid Scots as that remodelling requires' (p. 102).

In 'And the Judges Said...', Kelman outlines the rationale for his literary strategy:

> I had to work my way through language, find a way of making it my own. When I was making my first stories it didn't occur to me that I was breaching linguistic and social taboos. My only concern was how to enter into my own world, how to make use of myself, my own experience, my own culture and community, and so on. (p. 17)

His aim of using the Glaswegian language was aided by a focus on a Glasgow subject, providing a firm localised position that made this use of local language a logical option for his literature:

> Eventually I had as a project to write a group of stories set wholly in Glasgow, that self-contained Glasgow, not subject to the yays or nays of ruling authority. I got into the habit of evaluating my own work, training myself to recognise when a story was finished as well as it could be finished, when it was working and when it was not working. (p. 17)

This made it easier for Kelman to turn away from conventional literary language if a commonly-used local linguistic resource made more sense in the context of the story.

Kelman is clearly aware how the structure of authority in literature could disempower his linguistic and literary project. Kelman's plight might be situated within Pierre Bourdieu's theory of literary struggles outlined in *The Field of Cultural Production*:

> the fundamental stake in literary struggles is the monopoly of literary legitimacy […] the monopoly of the power to say with authority who are authorised to call themselves writers […] the monopoly of the power to consecrate producers or products. (p. 42)

In this debate about literary versus non-literary language, the dialect (local) language is the product. However, in Kelman's case, he does not seek consecration from outside authority. Instead, he makes a stand, as

stated in an interview with Luke Slattery, using local language 'for standard literary purposes' (p. 5). As explained earlier, Kelman feels unobliged to prove himself in literary terms in order to create what he feels is valid art.

Perhaps Kelman has had to persist so vehemently with his position of self-validation because non-standard language in literature often has a negative connotation, frequently viewed as an unedited transcription of speech which does not contribute serious intellectual content to written discourse. In an interview with *The Guardian*, Kelman recounts evidence of this assumption that his work is merely a transcription of speech rather than a crafted piece of literature:

> Occasionally textual suggestions were made as though they never would have occurred to me. There was a vague assumption that the stories had just come. All I did was write them down. It was weird. I sweated blood over the damn things. Seventeen years later my novel *A Disaffection* was shortlisted for prizes and a member of an adjudicating panel asked if I ever revised 'or did it just come out?' (p. 4)

What is particularly telling in this passage, and revealing of the misguided idea that Kelman's writing is a transcription rather than a crafting of language, is the question of whether he 'ever revised' his work. Kelman summarises the argument underlying this question in 'Elitist Slurs are Racism by Another Name':

> the gist of the argument amounts to the following, that vernaculars, patois, slangs, dialects, gutter-languages etc. […] are inferior linguistic forms and have no place in literature. And *a priori* any writer who engages in the use of such so-called language is not really engaged in literature at all. It's common to find well-meaning critics suffering from the same burden, while they strive to be kind they still cannot bring themselves to operate within a literary perspective; not only do they approach the work as though it were an oral text, they somehow assume it to be a literal transcription of recorded speech. (p. 2)

Essentially, he outlines the lack of recognition given to his crafting of local language for serious literary purposes. Despite this, Kelman constantly situates himself within a Glasgow context, repeatedly expressing the sentiment in *Some Recent Attacks* that 'I wanted to write as one of my own people, I wanted to write and remain a member of my own community' (p. 81). As a result, the use of the Glasgow language has become the central characteristic of Kelman's voice and writing style. Before Kelman's treatment of narrative can be examined further, a brief explanation needs to be made about how the term 'class' is used in the thesis.

Weber's notion of social class

The concept of class used in this thesis is not an oppositional concept of power based on the Marxian theme of the opposition between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, where one class dominates the other due to its ownership of the means of production. Rather, the situation in Scotland is somewhat based on the differentials in power between those who own or control the means of cultural production and re-production, particularly the education system and the media. However, there are other factors involved in the struggle over language which are acted out in the social realm through groups based on occupational, geographical, and arguably, ethnic distinctions, in addition to the status held by these groups in the class hierarchy.

A more appropriate approach when examining the situation of language exclusion through power relations might be to use Max Weber's concept of social differentiation based on status groups. This conceptualization does not exclude class-based relations based on economic position in society. Frank Parkin, in *Max Weber,* argues that Weber's theory allows for class and status overlap because the people who have social prestige and honour also happen to be higher in the class hierarchy (p. 96). Status is not only derived from economic factors, instead it is a two-way relationship. As Parkin points out, 'sometimes, social honour flowed from material possessions, sometimes it was more like a springboard to the attainment of such possessions' (pp. 96-7). In Weber's conceptualisation, the fact that such groups may belong to the middle-class or even the upper-class is not based on the ownership of the means of production in the Marxian sense of the term. Parkin outlines how, for Weber, status is 'housed' in collectivities – social groups – which gain their status through their 'communal identity' which may be based on racial, religious, linguistic, occupational or a myriad of other possible commonalities that may bind a group together (p. 95).

For the purposes of this thesis, the Weberian characterisation of social division within a society being based on social status, and therefore on status groups as the social and collective manifestation of social status, is particularly powerful when analysed in terms of the actions of a status group. In *Economy and Society*, Weber argues that status groups act as collectivities that mobilise their members in order to monopolise or exclude other groups from competitive struggles for social resources (p. 935).

This provides a highly flexible basis for a number of the arguments in this thesis. For example, there may be many people in Scottish society

who are unconcerned about questions of language, regardless of their position in the class hierarchy. The interests in such debates are more centred in status groups based on occupation (journalists, educationalists, politicians, book-sellers, etc) and social prestige associated with geography and economy, and arguably, ethnicity (for example, a working-class Glaswegian Scot versus a middle-class Edinburgh 'Brit', and to some extent, the 'British' upper-class in the highlands).

As Parkin states, status groups are 'more likely to have a powerful sense of their own common identity and of the social boundary separating them off from others, especially if there is a racial, religious or ethnic component present. As a consequence, they can be more readily mobilized for collective ends' (pp. 97-8). Robert Holton and Bryan Turner argue in *Max Weber on Economy and Society* that this maintenance of boundaries and separation is based on what Weber calls 'social closure', where certain status groups gain social benefit through restricting opportunities to other groups (p. 136). Such practices are usually associated with occupational groups who exclude (or restrict) an outsider's entry into the group through examinations and certification. For the purposes of this thesis, the groups based on occupation, geography, and economy (and arguably, ethnicity) are the ones that seek to exclude, and to diminish, the status of the working-class language of Glasgow. This will become especially evident in the latter discussion of 'Bad Scots'. However, Kelman's treatment of narrative needs to be understood before a discussion of his linguistic preferences can take place.

Kelman's treatment of narrative

Kelman's use of the Glasgow voice, mixing Scots and English freely across narrative and dialogue, is his attempt to democratise the narrative. Kelman's two-year spell as an apprentice compositor between 1961-63 undoubtedly drew his attention to the visual presentation of words on the page and the type of language that made it into printed form. As already seen, Kelman tells McLean about the act of telling a story in English literature and the common outcome of this process:

> You see, one of the things that goes on in say English Literature is the wee dialogue going on between author and reader about character. All the wee signals and codes. […] For instance, in the average novel written about a working-class character, the assumption is that the character doesn't know as much as the writer and the reader, and often you'll get all those wee things such as dialect, for instance, in phonetics. In other words, the person

who speaks is not as good, or rather not as intellectually aware as the writer or reader. (p. 68)

In response to this problem, Kelman instead seeks to use the spoken Glasgow working-class language in his stories without these 'wee signals and codes'. Kelman attempts to address what Martha Nussbaum identifies as a long-standing imbalance of social class representation in the novel, one that presents a moral problem for literature:

For generations, at least since Dickens, there have been gestures of inclusion, in which working-class characters figure in a literary novel; but their voices first had to be assimilated to a middle-class norm of literary discourse. (pp. 98-9)

Kelman addresses this moral issue by democratising the relationships between the different voices in his writing. This can only be achieved if some of the hierarchical structures involved in literature — in fact, many accepted English conventions of writing — are modified or removed. This would allow a non-standard voice to be used without being textually demoted in value against a Standard English norm. Scott Hames feels that a politics of form is found in Kelman, one that involves 'the dynamic negotiation of value and authority' enacted through 'structures of textural representation' (p. 10). Lee Spinks makes a similar point:

It is the function of third-person narrative to stand behind and beyond the discourses it sets into play in order that the reader can make sense of them within a stable interpretative and ideological framework. But Kelman's prose challenges this formal economy by continually dissolving the meta-textual position of third person narratives into the novel's general play of discourses and by raising moments of dialogue and self-reflection to the status of third-person narrative. (p. 95)

Kovesi, in his book *James Kelman*, similarly makes a link between narrative and language in the process of marginalisation. He recognises that one of the main ways that the Glasgow voice has been marginalised is by presenting it in contrast to Standard English in narrative:

When standard English surrounds and voices an omniscient narrative position, the contrasting non-standard varieties render their non-standard speakers 'other'; they are made to seem unlike 'us' – that 'us' being the collusive narrator and reader. (p. 27)

Macarthur similarly focuses on the omniscient position:

> The fundamental principle of Kelman's writing is the democratic impulse that, as far as possible, the characters be allowed to speak for themselves. The narrative forms must therefore satisfy this principle. As a result, Kelman is dismissive of the omniscient third person narrator. (p. 28)

Kelman himself writes in 'And the Judges Said…' that he felt it was important to 'challenge the rules of narrative' (p. 17). He is keenly aware that language plays an important role in the 'othering' of the Glasgow voice, and writes:

> In prose fiction I saw the distinction between dialogue and narrative as a summation of the political system; it was simply another method of exclusion, of marginalising and disenfranchising different peoples, cultures and communities. (p. 17)

In response to the problem of marginalisation, Kelman uses a mix of language types in both dialogue and narrative, a quality of his writing often observed by critics.[3] Cairns Craig, in *The Modern Scottish Novel*, describes Kelman's strategy as resulting in:

> no distinction between the narrative voice and the character's speech or thoughts: no hierarchy of language is established which orders the value to be put on the characters' language in relation to any other mode of speech or writing within the text. The text is designed visually to resist the moment of arrest in which the reader switches between the narrative voice of the text and the represented speech of a character, and what this does is to create a linguistic equality between speech and narration which allows the narrator to adopt the speech idioms of his characters, or the characters to think or speak in 'standard English', with equal status. (p. 101)

Mary McGlynn makes the same point, and writes that in response to the problem of the structural dominance of English, Kelman 'disrupts narrative hierarchy' by reconfiguring 'conventional hierarchical distinctions between narrator and character, between educated and uneducated speech, and between written and spoken expression' (p. 61). This seems to be a strength of Kelman's work, as Craig writes in 'Resisting Arrest':

> The validity of Kelman's prose comes precisely from his refusal to accept any standard for the narrative voice in his novels: narrator, character,

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[3] Bernstein; Bohnke (pp. 66-78); Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*; Dixon (pp. 124-5); Gilbert; Hames; Klaus, *Kelman for Beginners*; Klaus, *James Kelman*; Kovesi, 'James Kelman Margarined'*;* Kovesi, *James Kelman;* McGlynn; Murphy; Nicoll, 'Gogol's Overcoat'; and Spinks.

language—all explore what happens when you cease to accept fixed positions in a structure but move restlessly between them. (pp. 194-5)

Thus, the third-person narrative voice can be intermingled with that of the main character, which means, as Corbett notes, that 'the perspectives of narrator and character are merged' (p. 149).

Through his treatment of language and narrative position, Kelman further addresses traditional literature's tendency to establish binary oppositions in the novel. Kovesi notes in *James Kelman* that these binary oppositions are marked by 'a hard linguistic boundary' between the narrator and the narrated, between English and Scots, and between educated and uneducated (p. 18). Kovesi further explains that:

[Kelman's] narrator's voice and character's voice are so intertwined that it is often impossible to separate the two; direct speech and indirect speech, speech and thoughts, have fuzzy borders in Kelman, as do subject-object relations. (p. 18)

Kovesi explains:

Aesthetically the result is a fluidity of position for a merging voice which conjoins protagonist with narrator to the point where the first person is almost implicated, without the concurrent limitations of that first person. (p. 18)

He argues that the result is a unified voice which is simultaneously based upon a consistent mixing of language types (p. 12).

The general consensus of the critics can be summarised in a quotation from Simon Baker, who feels that Kelman resists 'bourgeois fictional modes and devices' (p. 240):

Kelman liberates the strictly third-person narrative voice and plunges it into the same world as his characters, denying the usual authoritative, pseudo-omniscient, 'standard English' voice its hegemony over his fiction. (p. 247)

Kelman's approach is revolutionary and, as Kovesi in 'James Kelman Margarined' concludes, Kelman's efforts 'to resist a largely unchallenged literary power structure' is groundbreaking (p. 16).

Traditional bourgeois basis of book publication

It is clear that Kelman objects to what he perceives as a middle-class bias in literature. This bias is complex in nature, and is a long-standing feature