A Study of Narrative Form in the Short Fiction of James Kelman

John Douglas Macarthur

This thesis is submitted for the degree of

Master of Letters

University of Glasgow
Department of Scottish Literature

August
2001

Abstract

This thesis looks at the way in which the ideological and philosophical views of Scottish author James Kelman have aesthetic implications for the narrative form of his fiction. It does so by a close analysis of his short stories. These constitute a major part of the writer's total output, indicative of the importance which Kelman attaches to the form, and they provide examples of some of his best work. The study seeks to remedy the critical neglect of Kelman's writing.

The Introduction considers Kelman's connection with realism, particularly American realism, a connection which he has himself acknowledged, and identifies an affinity with Modernism, and thereby tries to place Kelman within a Scottish and international context. It further considers the short story form itself and its suitability for achieving Kelman's aims.

Chapter Two investigates how Kelman's political views have consequences for the narrative options selected by the writer, especially his extensive use of the free indirect style and the 'ground level' perspective of his narrators. It further examines his awareness of space and position in relation to his characters. Some consideration is given to a group of very short pieces which may be termed 'prose poetry', and their experimental nature, particularly in respect of use of punctuation, is discussed.

In Chapter Three language issues are focused on, especially the interaction of social class and language hierarchies. Kelman's 'swearing' is viewed as a feature of his realism and at the same time as a challenge to imposed social and literary values. Kelman's ability to manipulate language through register is looked at, prior to an examination of his use of dialogue to express themes of isolation and non communication.

Chapter Four deals with the presentation of the interlocking ideas of community and place in Kelman's work. It charts the breakdown of community and examines two groups in detail, women and young people. The former is considered partly to assess the validity of accusations of Kelman's inability to deal with women in his work, and the latter to demonstrate the inevitable isolation of life, pointing forward to existential themes noted in the subsequent chapter. The extent to which breakdown in the community leads to the impossibility of political action in his fiction is then looked at. The idea of place is tied up with the notion of community and the thesis goes on to identify how Kelman's attitude to the urban/rural contrast differs from most writers, and how he deals with the concept of 'home' in his work. In no respect do any of these offer redemption or security.

Chapter Five looks at the effect on Kelman's writing of another acknowledged influence, existentialism. The solipsistic nature of his characters points towards the issue of the failure of language in the philosophical context. This highlights the paradox in Kelman's work of the author's political views concerning language and literature, which are self assertive and empowering, coexisting with a philosophical world view expressed in his fiction which is nihilistic and sees language as powerless.

Note

In this thesis the use of upper or lower case letters in titles has been determined by the format in the index of each edition used. The fact that within the same index some stories use upper case and others use lower case would seem to indicate that the publisher is following Kelman's instructions in this regard, rather than those of a book designer.

Contents

Acknowledgements

I would especially like to express my gratitude to Dr. Margery Palmer McCulloch, my supervisor in the Department of Scottish Literature at Glasgow University, for her guidance which was kind, patient and, above all, insightful.

I would also like to thank Dr. Alan Riach, also of the Department of Scottish Literature, who read a late draft of this thesis and generously offered many useful comments.

Finally, I am grateful to Dr. Anette Hagan of Edinburgh University Library for her help in sourcing journal articles on Kelman's work.

1

Introduction

The amount of attention paid to James Kelman in the press and the notoriety he has gained thereby would lead one to expect that this media attention would be matched by serious analysis of his work. However, there is very little academic scrutiny of his writing. This may be accounted for in part by its difficulty, but difficulty is a feature which usually lures researchers. More pertinent may be his views on academic institutions and those who represent them. Kelman would plainly position university literary critics at the heart of the established order which he is seeking to confront. It is essential, however, that his work is studied in a serious and systematic manner as there can be little dispute that he is one of the finest writers active today, and that within the sphere of Scottish literature he assumes an even greater importance in his quality and influence.

Kelman has asserted that the roots of his work are in the American realist and the European existential tradition in literature.[1] This assertion may take us to the heart of his writing. Furthermore, although he does not directly associate himself with Modernism there are clear affinities there also. Kelman refers on several occasions to the problems for the artist of time and space and it is his response to these problems that place him firmly within the bounds of Modernism.[2] This creates a problem in that realism and Modernism may be difficult to reconcile in a satisfactory way, but Kelman's achievement is to fuse the two convincingly.

There is a logical progression in how this is done. Kelman's political views lead him to confront established centres of power and lay claim to certain social and cultural rights. This has consequences for the content of literature. Kelman explores the sectors of society which have hitherto been excluded: the working class, the unemployed, the poor. The political view has additional

[1] 'Foreword - Letter to My Editor', *Busted Scotch* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), p.9
[2] 'A Reading from Noam Chomsky and the Scottish Tradition in the Philosophy of Common Sense', *Edinburgh Review*, 84 (1990), p.71 and *Some Recent Attacks: Essays Cultural & Political* (Stirling: AK Press, 1992), p.18

aesthetic implications. Kelman believes that the voices of those people should be expressed by themselves and in a language which is their own and not the voice of those who have usurped and colonised their culture. Suitable narrative forms and structures have to be found adequately to achieve these ends. To defy the colonisers is self-assertive and affirming. It vitalises the language and concerns of those who were previously disregarded. It places great faith in the power and potential of art to execute this task. At the same time, however, Kelman wishes to portray a world view which is nihilistic and despairing, where community and communication have broken down and where isolation is the norm. This isolation necessitates a movement from the objective to the subjective, a movement spatially into the mind of the central consciousness of his stories, which has repercussions for the treatment of time. In the short stories, Kelman's characters live mainly in the past through recalled events or emotions, sometimes in the present, but rarely in the future through anticipation of what is to come. In this sense they are truly despairing in that they are without hope, without anticipation of a future. Here is the existential element which brings with it the notion of Kelman's characters as being 'everyman'. This response to time and place also fixes Kelman firmly within the dominion of Modernism. This is reinforced by the desire to make the local universal. Of course, Kelman is writing decades after what is usually considered the Modernist era, but like Modernist artists he challenges established views about the nature of art and manipulates available techniques to deal with a new set of circumstances.

It must be stressed that the real and the subjective do not exist in some hierarchical relationship. Manfred Malzahn, for example, would have it that the realism in Kelman is only on a 'surface level.'[3] This implies that it is somehow less important than the modified reality which is the result of the operation of the character's imagination. In fact the two are mutually interdependent and coexist as equals.

This thesis will first of all look in more detail at realism, American realism and Modernism. As the focus is on Kelman's short stories then the

[3] Manfred Malzahn, 'The Industrial Novel' in Cairns Craig, ed., *The History of Scottish Literature, Vol.4: Twentieth Century* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press,1987), p.239

characteristics of the short story form will be examined with consideration of its relation to the above. The next section will attempt to explore how Kelman's political views affect narrative forms and perspectives, and some attention will be paid to the author's exploitation of these. This will be followed by a similar approach to the issue of language. The connected themes of community and place will be looked at before a discussion of the philosophical aspect in Kelman's work, with particular reference to existentialism. All of these sections will make detailed reference to the stories themselves.

The attempt to achieve a definition of 'realism' is a daunting task. Writers have been engaged with the problem of approximating reality since storytelling began, and even a form as stylised as Japanese Noh drama seeks to present a kind of reality. A good starting point may be to consider the critical term as applied to literature with reference to its roots in philosophy. Thomas Reid's 'commonsense' school stated that objects of perception *are* objects and have a real existence outside the perceiving mind. This type of reality is empirical and scientific in that it believes in an external world which can be understood by observation and comparison, and that there is agreement by the majority in the description of that world. In the context of literature it would follow that portraying life with fidelity to this objective reality would constitute realism. An author such as Walter Scott took great pains accurately to depict scenery, costumes, dialects and manners but is usually associated with the historical novel rather than the realist tradition. Intention may be a factor. For Scott this detailed transcribing of the world added plausibility to his creations, but his focus was elsewhere in history and chivalry. Realism as a conscious movement in literature began in the mid-nineteenth century and its intention was to deal with the here and now and with everyday events in the writer's environment. It was a Europe-wide phenomenon. The political upheavals in Europe, especially around the pivotal year of 1848, stimulated the political overtones of realism. The painter Gustave Courbet was influential in fusing the political and the aesthetic. His politics were clearly stated. He considered himself

> not only socialist, but even more democrat and republican, in a word

> supporter of the whole revolution, and above all realist, that is to say sincere friend of the real truth.[4]

Courbet asserted that the peasant and worker were the proper subjects for a painter and rejected any idealisation in art. This democratic idea transferred to literature and writers such as Balzac and George Eliot inclined to the belief that ordinary people in ordinary situations should be the concern of fiction. Eliot's principle was stated in *Adam Bede*, 'the faithful representing of commonplace things'. While Eliot declares that she will 'walk with her characters', continental realism, as it developed into naturalism and the 'scientific' examination of the poor, seemed to be excited by wretchedness, turning it into something exotic and thereby distancing the author from the characters. This is the case in the work of Zola, for example. Kelman, however, is not distanced from his characters and he makes a plea for the author to write about the surrounding environment. He wants

> a literary art being created out of life on supplementary benefit, concerning itself with drug addiction, glue sniffing, alcoholism, young people of 18 being forced onto the streets; stories, poetry and song about old people surviving the outrageous costs of medicine, heating and public transport; the latest round of humiliations being endured in the offices of the DHSS or the Gas Board or the Housing Department or whatever the daily humiliation happens to be occurring this morning; police brutality, trades union corruption and political corruption, and everything else that comprises what reality actually is in this country.[5]

This is a comprehensive catalogue of the 'here and now'. A writer like Eliot, through sensitive characterisation and a sharp ear for dialogue, could depict the reality of her own social milieu as indeed Kelman does with his. This also entails presentation of a psychological reality in order for a character in fiction to behave in character. There is therefore the necessity of analysing thought and feeling to exclude any inconsistency. Kelman comments on this in relation to his own work:

---

[4] Quoted in Damien Grant, *Realism* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.,1970), p.21

[5] 'Introduction' in James Kelman, ed., *An East End Anthology* (Glasgow: Clydeside Press,1988), pp.4-5

> The way I build my stories is like the shaping of a human being. Part of the shaping that goes on is to do with consistencies. There are then things which become a possibility and things which become a logical absurdity in terms of this human being, who *is* the story.[6]

There has to be a logically justifiable progression in the character's behaviour. All of this assumes a common reality between writer and reader. Problems arise when this common reality breaks down, as will be seen later in the discussion on Modernism.

It is with 'American realism' that Kelman specifically associates himself, rather than European realism, perhaps evidence of his affinity with the democratic aspect of American literature.[7] There were shared concerns with European realism, but the zeal with which American writers took to realism was greater, for it seemed to be the ideal vehicle to express the American egalitarian spirit, a spirit which may be consistent with the Scottish character also. At various times authors as apparently diverse as Henry James, Jack London, Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, and William Dean Howells have had the term applied to them. The 'American' part is self explanatory, and the above writers were all active in the period extending from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, a period of rapid change in American society. Although the roots of realism are in Europe, with authors such as Balzac and Tolstoy, and George Eliot in England, certain factors favoured the development of this literary idea in America. Literary historian Robert Spiller refers to the democratic strain and the turmoil of the mid-century:

> The growth of the democratic spirit made it easier for writers to accept the low and the common as suitable literary material, and the Civil War, mingling men from widely separated regions, stirred interest in local peculiarities and violently destroyed certain romantic misconceptions.[8]

The democratic basis of the nation is engrained in the American psyche. When this is coupled with a rate of change unsurpassed in any other society the two factors fuel each other and new ideas are absorbed with unmatched

[6] Catherine Lockerbie, 'Deep in the Heart of Kelman', *The Scotsman* 18 July 1998, p.16
[7] 'Foreword - Letter to My Editor', *Busted Scotch*, p.9
[8] Robert E. Spiller et al., eds., *Literary History of the United States* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Ltd.,1974), p.879

enthusiasm and vigour. In his study of American realism, Harold H. Kolb has delineated the similarities of American realist writers thus, and his views may serve as a useful summary of what constitutes 'realist' in the American context:

> Their rejection of omniscient narration, their experimentalism with point of view and a language appropriate to the central consciousness, their anti-romanticism, their moral commitment, their humor and satire, their condemnation of American materialism [...] and their ultimate faith in style and art.[9]

Perhaps satire and the overt condemnation of materialism could be omitted from any assessment of Kelman's work, and do not need to be examined here, but all the other characteristics are directly applicable. The above definition stresses the means of expression, but there were implications for content too, hinted at in the reference to anti-romanticism. American realists echo the sentiments of their European counterpart George Eliot. Marcus Cunliffe, in his overview of American literature, states that:

> Realism in America [...] meant writing about people of the kind to be met every day. These, the divine American average, were not murderers, seducers, burglars, prostitutes; nor princes in disguise, nor unwitting heirs to fortunes and estates. Coincidence operated only mildly in their lives, according to a sensible consideration of probability and not in obedience to the demands of romance.[10]

Kelman has repeatedly asserted the necessity for literature to attempt 'a realistic portrayal of the lives of ordinary people [...] the day to day existence of ordinary women and men'.[11] Of course, there may be some dispute about what constitutes 'ordinary'. As Kolb points out, how can Huck Finn be described as in any way ordinary, even within his own fictional community, and many would pose the same question about Kelman's characters. Definitions of ordinariness and reality can therefore be problematic. The allusion to coincidence above is also important as it confronts the authorial devices and

[9] Harold H. Kolb, *The Illusion of Life: American Realism as a Literary Form*, (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press,1989), p.15
[10] Marcus Cunliffe, *The Literature of the United States*, (London: Penguin Books,1987), p.226
[11] 'Introduction', *An East End Anthology*, p.1

contrivances necessary to satisfy the demands of fiction where the plot is all important. As Kolb concisely states: 'The subdued plots of the realists negate narrative acrobatics; they affirm character'.[12] For Kelman's plots even the word 'subdued' may be an overstatement, but the link with the American realists is clear.

Huckleberry Finn is useful as an example of the realist requirement for an appropriate language. The American idiom had previously only been used for humorous purposes, but here it was used in a serious novel and was the language of the narrative. This parallels Kelman's attempts to overcome the dominance of Standard English and to defy the establishment assumptions about 'literary' language. This defiance of a perceived authority had repercussions too in the rejection of omniscience. For the American realists this was partially a result of the climate of thought and belief after the Civil War which initiated a decline in religious influence and, with the formidable changes in the American economy and social conditions, the rise of political philosophies such as socialism. Once again, in the questioning of what defines authority and who grants it, we can see an affinity with Kelman.

It is worth noting that the reaction to the American realists in their own time bears a remarkable resemblance to the reaction in some quarters to Kelman. Kolb reports that their opponents 'praised or condemned, largely in moral terms. The argument was based upon a fundamental disagreement concerning the purpose of fiction.'[13] Contemporary critics called the work of William Dean Howells, one of the foremost American realists, 'decadent', 'immoral', 'a corrupting influence', 'hopeless', and 'distinguished by its vulgarity'.[14] Kelman's work has attracted dismissal along similar lines. The realists' version of reality may go against some sensibilities but there is no doubting their social commitment and belief that art is relevant to the society we live in and has the power to portray truthfully life in that society. Howells expressed his literary principles in this way:

Is it true? - true to the motives, the impulses, the principles that shape

[12] Kolb, *The Illusion of Life*, p.104
[13] Ibid., p.22
[14] Ibid., p.23

> the life of actual men and women? This truth, which necessarily includes the highest morality, and the highest artistry - this truth given, the book cannot be wicked and cannot be weak.[15]

This social commitment and the belief in the power of art to communicate truth could be a summary of Kelman's own literary principles. This has ramifications for both content and its formal representation.

Within the context of twentieth century Scottish fiction, Kelman is not unique in depicting working class people. Realistic portrayals of 'ordinary' people can be found in a host of novels. True representation is inevitably bound up with the conditions, intellectual as well as social, which prevail at the time of writing. Thus James Barke's *The Land of the Leal* (1939) deals with rural poverty and the hope offered by socialism, a theme which also occurs in Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *A Scots Quair*, although the latter work is much more complex. Gibbon influenced Barke greatly; although first collected into one volume in 1946, the three novels which make up Gibbon's trilogy were published in 1932, 1933, and 1934. Edward Gaitens' *Dance of the Apprentices* (1948) looks back to the period of the First World War and describes urban poverty in the Gorbals. Like Edwin Muir's *Poor Tom* (1932), there is an element of the author's personal story in the portrayal of the harshness of working class life, but there is always a sense of the potential for change. In post-World War Two fiction the idea of working class community and solidarity breaks down, although it persists, for example, in the work of William McIlvanney. The shift of large numbers of people to the housing schemes brings with it a bleaker and more pessimistic tone. Archie Hind's *The Dear Green Place* (1966) ends with the realisation of the impossibility of breaking away from this bleakness, in this case through art rather than socialism. George Friel also charts the breakdown of the working class community in *Mr Alfred M.A.* where disaffected teacher Mr Alfred deplores the breakdown but is powerless to halt it. Robin Jenkins, one of the most prolific of Scottish authors, presents a similar working class environment in novels such as *The Changeling* (1958)

---

[15] William Dean Howells, *Criticism and Fiction* (1891), quoted by Malcolm Bradbury, E. Mottram and J. Franco, *The Penguin Companion to Literature Vol.3: United States and Latin American Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books,1971), p.216

and *Just Duffy* (1988), in both of which he focuses on confrontation between different social classes as well as on issues of morality. Kelman's realism in a Scottish context is clearly not new, therefore, but in order to be 'true' he has to present the reality he sees around him in his own time. There is no doubt that in the period in which Kelman has been active there has been a degeneration into hopelessness, and a pessimism about the alleviation of poverty. When politics or religion seem to have failed then despair is the remaining option.

Finally, any discussion of realism in literature must always have at its foundation the awareness that fiction is by definition artificial. The artist gives an *illusion* of reality and does so by selecting and presenting in a calculated way. Writers emphasise and suppress, and although they may devise frameworks to conceal their involvement they can never do so completely. As Wayne Booth observes in his study of fictional techniques:

> We must never forget that though the author can to some extent choose his disguises, he can never choose to disappear.[16]

In a rather hostile review of Kelman's novel *How late it was, how late,* Adam Mars-Jones, referring to Kelman's denunciation of cultural colonisation, has claimed that 'authorial distance is a form of literary imperialism and is certainly an illusion, but so is suppression of the author.'[17] This raises the question of whether the degree to which the suppression is carried out makes a difference to the extent of the authority assumed by the writer, or whether authority can, in fact, ever be ceded in any way.

Turning now to the question of Kelman's relationship with Modernism, it can be proposed that in its concern with form, and its promotion of the American language in all its variety, American realism may perhaps be considered as transitional in the movement towards Modernism. This is especially true in respect of Henry James who was a pivotal figure in Modernism, but is also placed in the American realist camp. It has been pointed out more than once that the techniques exploited in Modernism were not entirely new. It is a question of the degree to which those techniques are used and the emphasis they are given.

---

[16] Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (London: Penguin, 1991), p.20

[17] 'In Holy Boozers', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 1 April 1994, p20

Kelman's enthusiasm for America and American writers is often expressed. He seems to regard America as symbolic of the freedoms which are absent in the United Kingdom, a view he holds in spite of his mixed experiences there as a young man and his political awareness of the destructive power of American corporations.[18] It is also the case, however, that the writers he cites as influential, such as Sherwood Anderson or William Carlos Williams, are associated with Modernism rather than realism. The crossover between American realism and Modernism suggested above is perhaps in Kelman's mind when he cites Gertrude Stein as 'at the root of the American realist tradition'.[19] Stein is usually firmly fixed by critics in the Modernist movement.

The difficulty of defining Modernism may alert us to the fact that it is not *one* thing. As Sara Blair asserts, Modernism's inhospitability to definition resides in its nature as a 'set of ongoing activities.'[20] The word 'ongoing' implies something which is fluid and subject to constant reappraisal. In addition it allows us to subsume contemporary writers like Kelman into the Modernist tradition. It should not be seen as a unified movement. Divergence in ideas within Modernism itself confirms the breakdown of hitherto prevalent assumptions in the scientific, ethical and social arenas. However, a retrospective view permits us to see basic affinities within the divergence. Randall Stevenson summarises this well:

> [Modernism] was never a movement fostered through participants' contacts or collective agreement about aims, goals or styles. Modernism is a critical construct, a recognition, some years after writers completed the works involved, of substantial similarities, even a collective identity, in the initiatives they took and the styles and concerns they made a priority.[21]

What was shared by artists was the understanding that fundamental changes in the world around them necessitated new approaches in all art forms:

---

[18] Kirsty McNeill, 'Interview with James Kelman', *Chapman*, 57 (1989), p.1

[19] 'K is for culture: Interview with James Kelman', *Scottish Trade Union Review*, 68 (January/February 1995), p.26

[20] Sara Blair, 'Modernism and the politics of culture' in Michael Levenson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1999), p.158

[21] Randall Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction: an Introduction* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf,1992), p.8

writing, music, the visual arts, to express the new world view. Realism, which relied on consensus in the scientific, the ethical, and the social, and implied a common reality for reader and writer, therefore had limitations which could not deal with the new complexity of relativism and subjectivity. The first thirty years of the twentieth century were years of such turmoil, centred by the Great War, that traditional representations were not adequate to give shape to and express reality. In other words, the problems of how the creative artist deals with space and time became of paramount importance, and this is essentially a technical problem, as Kelman recognises.[22] This acute consciousness of the medium of expression is characteristic of Modernism.

The notion of space in this context is the movement from the objective to the subjective. That is, the narrative moves from the external and objectively verifiable to the internal and relativistic. There is concern not only with *what* is perceived but *how* it is perceived. Stevenson observes that during the Modernist period there was

> a change in something as fundamental as the relation of mind and world - a kind of epistemological shift from relative confidence towards a sense of increased unreliability and uncertainty in the means by which reality is apprehended in thought.[23]

The major influences here were developments in psychology where notions of the conscious and subconscious were being formulated, and philosophy where increased emphasis was being given to the role of the agent in creating the reality he or she experiences. Peter Faulkner, discussing Henry James, a transitional figure in the movement towards Modernism, and two of Modernism's greatest writers James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, notes:

> Consciousness [...] is not the passive reception of impulses from the outer world but is creative, perception itself, and not just its representation in novels, is intentional, implying the activity of making meaning, structuring reality.[24]

In the absence of one universal reality and where each consciousness creates

[22] *Some Recent Attacks*, p.18
[23] Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, p.11
[24] Peter Faulkner, *Modernism* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.,1997), p.32

its own individual reality, then in fiction the emphasis will shift towards how that reality is created and communicated. This has inevitable formal consequences. Modernism exploited a wide variety of techniques. Amongst these was free indirect style, which was not wholly new, having been used by authors such as Austen, albeit in a very limited way, something which will be discussed in more detail later. The important point is the degree to which it was used and its extension into interior monologue and stream of consciousness. The concern with understanding the modern mind enacted in the Modernist era an unremitting degree of formal experimentation and intense concern for language, the medium of its expression. The centrality of the individual consciousness could provide a type of unity, however, while continuing to recognise human complexity. Fragmentation of previously unifying common belief and experience leads to the loss of community and human isolation, especially at a time when there were population movements from the country to the city. The vision of the individual is the means by which some stability can be achieved and, in an industrial world where experience can be reductive, individuals can wrestle back some control to reinvest their lives with meaning.

On the other hand, an examination of the political aspects of Modernism may help us understand why Kelman seems reluctant to express a direct debt to the Modernist movement. It cannot be denied that there was an elitist element which manifested itself in a contempt for popular culture. Lawrence Rainey, in an essay examining the economic foundation of Modernism, has suggested that around the turn of the century

> British popular fiction undergoes an unmistakable transformation, one in which the novel gradually acquires a class structure analogous to that of the social world surrounding it. By the decade 1900-1910 [...] the polarization between 'high' and 'low' literature is firmly in place, and the modernist project issues its claim to aesthetic dignity by repudiating that Victorian literature, above all fiction, which had sold itself to a mass reading public.[25]

[25] Lawrence Rainey, 'The cultural economy of Modernism' in Michael Levenson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, p.33

The greater part of what is now designated Modernist literature was published in limited editions under a revived system of patronage. This was done deliberately in many cases to restrict the publications to those who had a financial interest in their scarcity. The mass market was similarly bypassed by the little reviews, periodicals with very limited readerships mostly sold through subscription. The sector of society who could afford to sponsor or participate in Modernist works was inevitably from the upper classes. Dissemination was further restricted by Modernism's 'notoriously resistant complexity and its rarified religion of art'.[26] For many the dislocated structures and experimental narrative forms made for incoherence. The academic world had a vested interest also in being the interpreters and arbiters of 'serious' literature. To compound all this there is the notorious involvement with Fascism, most marked in Ezra Pound, and the anti-semitism of, especially, T.S. Eliot and Wyndham Lewis. This has been referred to directly by Kelman in 'English Literature and the Small Coterie' in *Some Recent Attacks*, where he refers to the fascist leanings of certain writers, although he seems to be saying that they can still be considered 'good' writers, albeit with some qualification. By the 1930's there seems to have been a withdrawal from Modernism and a shift to more direct political engagement as writers' increasing preoccupation with the rise of Fascism and the Depression made Modernism appear self-indulgent and detached. The Marxist critic George Lukàcs asserted that Modernist writers failed to see man socially and historically. Lukàcs formed this view in the assumption that the world was objectively real and that this ensured a general trend towards more realistic treatment of subject matter in fiction.[27] Here we can see a troublesome opposition between the objectively real of the realist movement and the subjective and relativistic views of Modernism.

While the above criticisms have validity, Modernism can contain much more than this. The problem may be one of focus. Sara Blair, considering the political aspect of Modernism, can present an alternative view which may

[26] Marianne Dekoven, 'Modernism and Gender' in Michael Levenson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, p.175
[27] Cited in Faulkner, *Modernism* , p.69

align more with Kelman's own political and cultural outlook:

> Why, the latter-day reader of Modernism might ask, has the circumference of politics been so narrowly drawn in our readings of the era? The traditional critical focus on Modernists as fascists - while certainly important, especially as an historical corrective - has obscured the much broader range of commitments to which modernist projects, polemics, and concerns were being harnessed. If the burden of modernist experimentation was the imperative to 'make it new' as Pound's mantra would have it, the project of renewal encompassed a vast array of social traditions, norms, and gestures. [.....] Modernism, in other words can with qualification be understood as a unified movement promoting a distinct set of concerns, foremost among them a commitment to experimenting with the cultural power of literary traditions and forms. But to understand that commitment as necessarily linked with conservative, fascist, or right-wing political ideas is to miss the contestatory nature of Modernism's investments in form, technique, and literary value. If the landscape of modernity reads to [T.S.] Eliot and company as a symbolic wasteland, it appears for other writers to be a Mecca, a metropolis of multivalent possibilities.[28]

Blair is referring to a wide range of writers with broadly left-wing sympathies, for example e.e. Cummings or D.H. Lawrence, for whom experimentalism in itself was a political act, subverting hierarchies and assumptions about culture and versions of reality; thus internal liberation of the psyche could have its external counterpart in liberation from colonialist views, as Michael Bell proposes.[29] Scottish writer and academic Robert Crawford has identified the provincial nature of Modernism which complements the metropolitan and allied it with the international.[30] It is perhaps from this perspective that we can most satisfactorily view Kelman's connection with Modernism. Hugh MacDiarmid is the dominant figure in a Scottish context. He

[28] Sara Blair, 'Modernism and the politics of culture' in Levenson, *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, pp.163 and 166

[29] Michael Bell, 'The metaphysics of Modernism' in Levenson, *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, p.23

[30] Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1992)

exploited the 'multivalent possibilities' of language and form to reassert a distinctly Scottish cultural and political identity. By mining the syncretic spirit of Middle Scots poetry, especially William Dunbar, and restructuring the Scots language to his own literary ends, he attempted to make Scottish literature contemporary; in Ezra Pound's dictum, he tried to 'make it new'. At the same time he sought to make the local international, a notion perhaps most expressed by another of his contemporaries, American poet William Carlos Williams. In fiction, Scottish writer Lewis Grassic Gibbon used Modernist techniques to express a vision of both past and future and address issues of community in *A Scots Quair*. Gibbon's use of Scots and his merging of the voices of character and narrator solve the problem of having the characters speak in one language and the narrator speak in another. In this, and in, for example, his experimental use of punctuation to effect this, Gibbon is an undeniable forerunner of Kelman. Much of MacDiarmid's work was to do with assertion of nation and nationality. For Kelman the assertion is one based on class. Several decades after the high point of Modernism Kelman seeks to experiment with language and technique to address a different set of circumstances. In this context, Kelman's contemporary Tom Leonard is an important figure. In his poetry Leonard uses a phonetic representation of Glasgow speech to challenge received ideas about what constitutes 'proper' language for literature. The political basis is the 'right to an equality of dialogue'.[31] His concern, as with Kelman, is that certain types of language are held in contempt and that this relates to class and power hierarchies. Scottish working class people can be viewed 'as forming linguistically a colony within a colony'.[32] For Kelman and Leonard, Scotland is a colony of England and working class Scots are a colony of the Scots middle-classes. It is not surprising that Leonard, like Kelman, often expresses an admiration for American writers, especially the Modernist poet William Carlos Williams.[33] America is seen as a place where at least partially such issues have been resolved.

---

[31] 'Introduction' in Tom Leonard, ed., *Radical Renfrew* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990), p.xxvi

[32] Ibid., p.xxiii

[33] See, for example, Leonard's essay 'The Locust Tree in Flower, and why it had Difficulty Flowering in Britain' in Tom Leonard, *Intimate Voices* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Galloping Dog Press, 1984)

It may not be surprising that the greater part of Kelman's fiction is in the short story form, as it seems a particularly apt medium through which he can display his range as a writer, presenting a diversity of characters and voices which depict the fragmentation of the society he writes about, as well as being a useful form for experimentation. Indeed, the development of the short story form raises the questions of reality and how it is presented which reflect the realist and Modernist convictions. Writer and critic Frank O'Connor has identified one of the features and strengths of the short story as its ability to deal with the downtrodden and defeated in society, what he terms the 'submerged population group' which dreams of escape from defeat:

> That submerged population changes its character from writer to writer, from generation to generation. It may be Gogol's officials, Turgenev's serfs, Maupassant's prostitutes, Chekhov's doctors and teachers, Sherwood Anderson's parochials, always dreaming of escape. [...] 'Defeat' - what does that mean? Here it does not mean mere material squalor, though this is characteristic of the submerged population groups. Ultimately it seems to mean defeat inflicted by a society that has no sign posts, a society that offers no goals and no answers. [...] Always in the short story there is this sense of outlawed figures wandering about the fringes of society.[34]

This is quite consistent with the world-view presented in Kelman's short stories.

A case could be made that the short story is one of the most 'democratic' forms of literature. In his study of the short story, Ian Reid has stated that the novel form implies social cohesion, that novels are 'urban, urbane, and bourgeois' and 'concerned chiefly with morals, manners and money'.[35] There is the implication also that a great deal of time and comfort are required to sit down and finish a novel. Reid claims that short stories developed to such an extent in the United States in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century because its regional settlements lacked the social cohesion of England. The

---

[34] Frank O'Connor, *The Lonely Voice: A Study of the Short Story* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1963),pp.18-9

[35] Ian Reid, *The Short Story* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1977), p.29

short story was particularly favoured by the working man. Reid contends that the tall tales and Southwestern humour of writers such as Bret Harte and Mark Twain were a force in the development of realism, because the colloquial tellers of the tales were convincing as personalities and obviated the need for a 'narrator in the frame'.[36] One must bear in mind, however, that the type of tale in this case depended heavily on plot, holding attention by, as O'Connor says, 'piling incident upon incident, surprise on surprise'.[37] This is not a feature of Kelman's work.

On a mundane level, as most short stories are published in periodicals, it is one way for a writer to publish work regularly without the long wait to see a novel in print. It gives him the opportunity to experiment in his work and refine his technique. From the reader's point of view, a novel needs a continuous effort and time to be completed, whereas a collection of short stories can be read piecemeal, each story an independent entity. This may even be beneficial to an understanding of writing as challenging as Kelman's.

The short story should be considered as something separate from the novel. It has its own techniques and underlying set of principles. However, Valerie Shaw has observed that because these principles have not been clearly defined, and as it has been a form not highly regarded, then writers have felt more inclined to experiment.[38] She has also noted, with reference to twentieth century developments in the short story, that it has developed in parallel with the visual arts, and in particular, photography. Kelman's interest in the visual arts is evidenced by his declared affinity with William Carlos Williams, whose own writing was shaped by his views on painting especially. Shaw contends:

> Because the short story often depicts one phase of a process or action, the complete time-structure and experience of duration offered by film can be telescoped into a single striking image in which drama is inherent. If the photographic image is defined as a self-sufficient illumination which does not require the help of a 'plot' or 'story' to give it meaning, then it is possible to say that the creation of images

[36] Ibid., p.26
[37] O'Connor, *The Lonely Voice* p.29
[38] Valerie Shaw, *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction* (London: Longman, 1983), p.22

> which do not need to be elaborated or explained, but which do expand in the reader's mind, is the storyteller's method of achieving a comparable effect.[39]

This very much applies to Kelman whose stories favour the unresolved and unexplained. His stories start *in medias res* without any imparting of prior events or resolution at the end. This echoes Chekhov's belief that the writer should delete the beginning and the end of a story, leaving only the middle.[40]

Kelman belongs to the realist tradition in the short story, but this is allied with an awareness of the formal experiments of the Modernists. Charles E. May has noted the reaction against the romantic movement which took place during the latter part of the nineteenth century and defined it thus:

> The basic difference between romantics and realists is a philosophic disagreement about what constitutes 'reality'. For the romantics, what was meaningfully real was the ideal or the spiritual, a transcendent objectification of human desire. For the realists what mattered was the stuff of the physical world. For the romantics, pattern was more important than plausibility; thus their stories were apt to be more formal and "literary" than the stories of the realists. By insisting on a faithful adherence to the stuff of the external world, the realists often allowed content - which was apt to be ragged and random - to dictate form.[41]

May notes also that the idea of reality was modified further around the beginning of the twentieth century through the influence of Modernism, particularly through the influence of Chekhov and Joyce who 'communicated complex emotional states by setting up artful patterns of simple concrete detail'.[42] Kelman's work is consistent with Chekhov's view that such detail includes all aspects of life, even the ugly or repellent:

> Artistic literature is called just so because it depicts life as it really is. Its aim is truth, - unconditional and honest. [... A writer is] a man bound,

---

[39] Ibid., pp.14-15
[40] Anton Chekhov, cited by Reid, *The Short Story* p. 63
[41] Charles E. May, 'Introduction' in Noelle Watson, ed., *Reference Guide to Short Fiction* (Detroit: St. James Press, 1994), p.3
[42] Ibid.

> under compulsion, by the realization of his duty, and by his conscience to overcome his aversion, and soil his imagination with the sordidness of life.[43]

Frustration with conventional expectations about cause and effect in plot also led such writers as Virginia Woolf to write stories which centred around consciousness. In many respects Kelman seems to align himself with the ideas of Modernism in respect of formal innovation. Experimentation is at the heart of Modernism, and is seen as offering social perspectives, challenging the former consensus in many areas such as politics, philosophy, society, and psychology. Modernists recognised that finding the medium of expression for new perspectives was their task.

The short story can therefore be viewed as the quintessentially Modernist form, and Kelman's use of it places him within the Modernist sphere. The view of time as a series of discrete points rather than a wave-like flow favours a presentation of life as episodic and disjointed. Virginia Woolf, in her study *Modern Fiction*, written in 1919, emphasised this view of time by insisting that modern fiction was 'recording the atoms as they fall.'[44] William Carlos Williams chose to write short stories rather than the novel to deal with the lives of the poor people he came into contact with because he wanted to chart 'the briefness of their chronicles' and to highlight their 'brokenness [...] isolation, color. A novel was unthinkable.'[45] This social perspective requires a form which is capable of sustaining that view, and the short story, where preoccupation with form is intensified, may satisfy the Modernist need to innovate and experiment formally. The short story collection reflects the isolation of individuals from each other, a recurring theme in Kelman's work, but at the same time is able to show variety (Williams' 'color') and create a collage effect. Readers may or may not perceive a pattern. Kelman's collections are not 'story cycles', defined by Ian Reid as

> a book of short stories so linked to each other by their author that the

[43] Anton Chekhov, 'Letter to M.V. Kiselev, January 14, 1887', in Anton Chekhov, *Letters on Literature*, ed. by Louis S. Friedland (London: Geoffrey Bles,1924), p.275
[44]Quoted in Peter Faulkner, *Modernism* (London: Methuen, 1977), p.27
[45] William Carlos Williams, 'A Beginning on the Short Story (Notes)' (originally published in 1949) in *Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams* (New York: Random House,1954), p.300

> reader's successive experience on various levels of the pattern of the whole significantly modifies his experience of each of its component parts.[46]

There is however an overall pattern of tone, and a theme of fragmentation in Kelman's work for which the short story form is an ideal vehicle, and therefore a fruitful area of study to discern Kelman's nature as a writer.

[46] Reid, *The Short Story*, p.46

2

Narrative Forms

The coexistence of the realist and the Modernist in Kelman's short fiction can be seen in the complex use of a wide range of narrative techniques. Kelman's strong views about who is represented in literature and who has the right to represent them involve political issues of class and cultural colonialism. This has inevitable consequences for narrative perspective and the necessity to experiment with form to express a particular world view. The international aspect of the Modernist movement is emphasised by Kelman's connection with the Scottish Renaissance, albeit a connection unacknowledged by Kelman himself, and the crosscurrents of international influence through Japanese prose poetry. All of these points will be considered in this section.

As with his contemporary, the poet Tom Leonard, Kelman's beliefs regarding politics and the influence they have on the form and content of his fiction have been consistently expressed throughout his writing career. Over a period of almost thirty years he has espoused the idea that the class bias in the power structures of the United Kingdom is indisputable and that this bias is conspicuous in the value judgements placed upon literature. The working class has no option but to battle against a view that places no value on their lives or the literary expression of them. In an interview from 1973, at the outset of his career, he linked himself with another group who have had to struggle for recognition in the literary world:

> I feel I have a lot in common with black writers who have to write from the point of view of class. They can't do otherwise.[1]

Just as the fight for black equality continues to threaten the comfortable status quo of the establishment, so too does the articulation of British and Scottish working class voices. In a piece written fifteen years later Kelman states:

> The very idea of literary art as something alive and lurking within reach of ordinary men and women is not necessarily the sort of idea those who control the power in society will welcome with open arms. It

[1] Anne Stevenson, 'Off the Buses', *The Weekend Scotsman*, 14 July 1973, p.2

> is naive to expect otherwise. Literature is nothing when it isn't being dangerous in some way or another and those in positions of power will always be suspicious of anything that could conceivably affect their security.[2]

Asserting that ordinary people have an equal right to chart events in their lives and give expression to their concerns and feelings remains Kelman's task today. In the Foreword to his collection of short stories *Busted Scotch*, published in 1997 and intended for American readers, he persists in defining himself and his work in similar terms:

> I reached the age of twenty-two in the knowledge that certain rights were mine. It was up to me what I did. I had the right to create. I didn't have to write as if I was somebody not myself (e.g. an imagined member of the British upper middle classes). Nor did I have to write about characters striving to become other persons (e.g. imagined members of the British upper middle classes). I could sit down with my pen and paper and start making 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.[3]

American readers might find it odd that a writer has to insist on such rights, given that the history of American literature is the constant search for the authentic voice of the ordinary man and woman, a true reflection of the disparate groups, racial, national, religious, social and sexual which make up the nation. Nevertheless, for Kelman and other writers who challenge accepted values, there is a continuing struggle for self determination in an often hostile literary environment.

Kelman refers often to his view that his culture, i.e. the Scottish working class, has been colonised. The colonisers all speak with 'the voice of power and authority', Received Pronunciation:

> It doesn't matter to me greatly who is colonising my culture, just that it is being colonised and they all have the same voice, the voice which is

[2] 'Introduction' in *An East End Anthology*, p.2
[3] 'Foreword - Letter to My Editor', p.9

> the expression of the cultural elite of this country, be the owners of the voice from England, or Ireland or Wales or Scotland. That voice holds the power.[4]

Scottish writer Tom Leonard, with whom Kelman has a great affinity, has emphasised the economic root of language division, rather than the geographical, and has noted the consequences:

> [T]o have created, or at least to have preserved, a particular mode of pronunciation on a strictly economic base, cannot but have very deep repercussions in a society, and in the *literature* of a society - and there's no use in anyone trying to minimise the importance of this fact, because it's got to be seen for what it is, and what it's done.[5]

This alerts us to the primary importance of money and class, and with them power, over nationality. Kelman's undertaking to present a different, Scottish working-class voice has value, not because it is a Scottish voice, but because it is one of many voices which are unrepresented and discarded by the cultural elite. This applies equally to the language of West Indian or Irish authors, for example. Kelman has recognised the importance of precedents set by authors such as Sam Selvon from the 1950's to the 1980's,[6] a particularly apposite comparison because of his use of Trinidadian not only in dialogue but in the narrating voice. In the 1930's and 1940's, New Zealand writer Frank Sargeson attempted the same. He sought to give voice to the poor and rootless in New Zealand society by employing a narrating voice which was working class, suppressing the author as narrator.[7] Walter Allen, in his review of the short story form internationally, has described Sargeson as a liberator for New Zealand writers in the way that Sherwood Anderson was for Americans.[8] Sargeson uses the first person narrator almost exclusively in an attempt to present more authentically the thoughts or feelings of his characters 'so that

---

[4] 'James Kelman, 'Relying on DHSS rather than the Fringe Benefits', *Glasgow Herald*, 27 August 1987, p.4

[5] Tom Leonard, 'The Locust Tree in Flower, and why it had Difficulty Flowering in Britain' in *Intimate Voices* (Newcastle: Galloping Dog Press, 1988), p.95

[6] Maya Jaggi, 'Speaking in tongues', *Guardian Weekend*, 18 July 1998, p.30. See, for example, Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (Essex: Longman, 1998)

[7] See, for example, *The Stories of Frank Sargeson* (Auckland: Longman Paul, 1980)

[8] Walter Allen, *The Short Story in English* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p.333

they seem to be transcripts of experience'.[9] What is shared is the determination to depict a reality which has hitherto been rejected.

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, what he refers to as 'the everyday 3rd party godvoice of the Anglo-American literary tradition'.[10] This voice of authority is equated with the set of literary values which has belittled or ignored the culture to which Kelman belongs. In fact Kelman employs the third person narrative extensively, but does everything within his power to ensure that such a narrator is not an intrusive one: only the concrete is rendered. Descriptions which could in any way suggest a value judgement are avoided. Terms such as 'beautiful' or 'horrible' can exist only in the mouths of the characters; one will find no narratorial judgements or comment. Metaphor is banished to curb any possibility of apparent intervention by the narrator. The dictum of William Carlos Williams 'no ideas but in things' is the obvious and stated influence, and, in light of Valerie Shaw's comments above concerning the parallel development of the short story and the visual arts, a comparison with Williams' contemporary, the photographer Walker Evans, is particularly apt. According to Evans' biographer Belinda Rathbone, the guiding principle of Evans' photography was the 'dogged pursuit of an anonymous style'.[11] As far as possible he sought to avoid intrusion of the photographer into the photographs, to avoid judgement or comment, to reveal what e.e. Cummings referred to as 'the cruel radiance of what is'.[12] Perhaps his most well known photographs are those he took for the Farm Security Administration in the American South during the Depression.[13] He encouraged his subjects, poor farmers and their families, to arrange themselves as they chose and he thereby confers a dignity on them which contrasted with the approaches of his contemporaries, such as Margaret Bourke-White who

[9] Ibid., p.331
[10] James Kelman, 'No Fixed Realities?' *Cencrastus*, 7 (Winter 1981-2) p.41
[11] Belinda Rathbone, *Walker Evans* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1977), p.84
[12] Quoted in Rathbone, p.93
[13] Published with a text by James Agee, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (London: Peter Owen, 1965)

manipulated her subjects to dramatize their poverty. It was a feature of Evans' technique that he used a small lens aperture to keep as much of the picture in focus as possible.[14] Every object was given equal importance, even the most mundane.[15] Further, Evans' use of a small, hand-held camera, revolutionary in the 1930's, allowed him to satisfy his democratic impulse to become part of the group he was photographing, rather than adopting a separate and therefore implicitly superior position. If we consider the role of the photographer as analogous with the role of narrator in fiction, then Evans and Kelman seem to complement one another.

Much of the negative criticism of Kelman's work seems to echo that imposed on Evans. Reviewers of Evans' first major exhibition saw it as 'a parade of dreary, drab, and depressing scenes' and included him among the 'cultists of the ugly'.[16] Compare this with Merit Mosely on *How late it was, how late* and the Booker Prize:

> Unfortunately, nominated novels that deal with the reality of today are often depressing and dismal. [...Kelman's novel] is a murky and tedious account of the squalid adventures of a drunken Glasgow vagrant.[17]

A more contemporary parallel in the visual arts would be the American documentary filmmaker Frederick Wiseman whose approach, which he terms 'direct cinema',[18] is that of the non participating witness. There is a desire to let the scenes and the people speak for themselves and allow the audience to make their own interpretation. His films have no narration, no titles, no explanation of what we are seeing, and no music to manipulate the emotions of the viewer. His subject matter tends to be people and places who have been ignored by the mainstream: prisoners, fishermen, people on welfare, occupants of public housing. Needless to say, like Evans and Kelman, the critical reaction to his

---

[14] Evans' technique is discussed by Jerry L. Thompson, 'Walker Evans: Some Notes on His Way of Working' in Walker Evans, *Walker Evans at Work* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), p.13

[15] This use of extreme depth of focus was used by the Japanese film director Hiroshi Teshigahara in his 1964 film of Kobo Abe's existential novel *The Woman in the Dunes*. Even grains of sand seem to become as important as the human characters. Note Kelman's use in a literary context of the technique of extreme closeup in, for example, 'the same is here again' in *Lean Tales*.

[16] *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times Book Review*, quoted by Rathbone, p.164

[17] Merit Mosely, 'The Booker Prize' in Samuel W. Bruce and L. Kay Webster, eds., *Dictionary of Literary Biography Yearbook: 1996* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1997), p.281

[18] See, for example, *Welfare* (1975), *Public Housing* (1997)

films has often been antagonistic.

Whether the narrator is first or third person, and there seems to have been a shift to favouring the first person in his latest short story collection *The Good Times* (1999), Kelman strives to ensure that there is as little distance between character and reader as possible. Helmut Bonheim[19] has noted the increasing focus on consciousness rather than plot in twentieth century fiction, something certainly true in Kelman's work, and this results in speech and its internal equivalent thought necessitating appropriate forms for their transmission.

In order to discuss these issues some definition of terms to describe narrative processes is necessary. It is assumed that widely understood terms such as monologue, dialogue, and omniscient narrator need no explanation at this point. However, there is a frustrating lack of precision or agreement about some other terms, the result of reassessments over time. The situation is further complicated by the numerous possible permutations for representing speech and thought, a resource fully and fruitfully utilized by Kelman, which occasionally presents problems of identification for the reader. What follows relies to some extent, though by no means exclusively, on Katie Wales' attempt to provide a clear account of accepted definitions.[20] As she is usually a dependable source in stylistics, a field which demands exactness, then this may be a judicious starting point.[21] The illustrative examples are the present writer's own, unless otherwise stated.

It is necessary first of all to be clear about the difference between *direct* and *indirect speech.* In direct speech (DS) the actual words spoken by an individual are represented in quotation marks and with a reporting tag or 'inquit'[22] like 'He said' or 'She shouted':

[19] Helmut Bonheim, *The Narrative Modes: Techniques of the Short Story* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1982), p.35

[20] Katie Wales, *A Dictionary of Stylistics* (London: Longman, 1997)

[21] John Corbett's excellent work *Language & Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997) adapts Roger Fowler's framework of analysis in this context, while Wales largely follows Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short, *Style in Fiction* (London: Longman, 1981). These frameworks do not differ to a great extent in substance, but may differ in the detail of terminology.

[22] This Latin term is used by Bonheim, (1982). It is not current in English linguistics, which does not have a good catch-all expression, but it is the perfect word to avoid the tedious repetition of the imprecise expressions 'reporting tag', 'reporting phrase', or 'reporting clause'; the Latin *verbum dicendi* and *verbum credendi* are also used.

"I am a good player," said Peter. (DS)

In indirect speech (IS) the words of the speaker are presented in a nominal *that* clause after a speaking verb or clause. Certain grammatical changes have to be made in the process. In the above simple example the first person pronoun 'I' becomes third person 'he' and the present tense 'am' becomes past tense 'was':

Peter said that he was a good player. (IS)

In more complex examples the changes which are made in the reporting of what has been said include adverbs of proximity (time or space) being altered to adverbs of distance, and dropping the colloquial characteristics of actual speech or the personal idiom of the speaker, such things as emotive exclamations, interjections, non Standard English forms, or rhetorical questions. The original message is retained but is transformed by the reporter into a type of paraphrase, as Wales says, 'filtered or interpreted [...] through the mind of the reporter or narrator'.[23] For example:

"There's nae bloody chance of that happening here today, mate, is there?" said Joe. (DS)

becomes:

Joe said that there was no chance of that happening there that day. (IS)

As we can see in the above, as well as the required grammatical changes the 'bloody' of the original words spoken has been dropped, as has the colloquial address 'mate' and the Scottish form 'nae', along with the final rhetorical question tag. The degree to which such changes have to be made are clearly relevant in any discussion of Kelman's work.

[23] Wales, *A Dictionary of Stylistics* (1997), p.246

This allows us, then, to move on to *free direct speech* (FDS). As with direct speech, the actual words spoken are given, but without using inquits or (usually) quotation marks.

"I am a good player," said Peter. (DS)

I am a good player. (FDS)

This may not on the surface seem of great significance, but it has the important effect of potentially making it difficult to distinguish speech from narration, and thereby suggesting, as Wales states, an empathy between character and narrator.[24] It serves also to speed up the tempo of the passage concerned. Inquits can be intrusive and act as a kind of punctuation breaking up the flow of the text. Where there is no interference with comprehension, inquits become unnecessary and simply remind us of the interference of a narrator. Through punctuation, layout on the page, or differentiating between the speech characteristics of each speaker, there should be no confusion if they are omitted. It also helps to increase the sense of immediacy. Kelman is not unique in this, but it does feature extensively in his writing. Here is an example from the story 'pulped sandwiches' in *The Good Times*:

You meeting the missis?

Eh.

She coming to the gate?

Eh.

I reckon about seven, a half after, that should see it.

She can come back.

You'll be paid through four.

Right. (*The Good Times* 45)[25]

Admittedly the absence of inquits here is less problematic because only two speakers are involved, but it is particularly effective because Kelman wants to highlight a style of communication between two workers which is staccato and

[24] Ibid., p.189

[25] James Kelman, *The Good Times* (London: Vintage, 1999). All subsequent references are to this edition.

unexpansive. In the form it is presented it has a dramatic force which would be lost by a wearisome repetition of reporting tags.

It would seem to follow that *free indirect speech* (FIS) would simply be indirect speech without the reporting 'she said that'. This is true in that respect. For example:

> She said that she wanted to go home. (IS)
> She wanted to go home. (FIS)

However, free indirect speech is more complex. It retains some of the grammatical features of indirect speech such as change of tense or pronouns, and this helps to distinguish it from simple narrative report, but is much more flexible in respect of maintaining other features such as the original proximity references or idiosyncratic features of the original speaker.

> "There's nae bloody chance of that happening here today, mate, is there?" said Joe. (DS)
> Joe said that there was no chance of that happening there that day. (IS)
> There was nae bloody chance of that happening here today, was there? (FIS)

In his study of the use of FIS in fiction of the 1800's, Roy Pascal[26] has noted that the narratorial ordering of the raw material, evidenced by grammatical changes, and the retention of the subjective style of the speaker creates a 'dual voice' consistent with Henry James' assertion of the necessity to get 'within the skin' of the characters. This is not exactly the same as obliterating the narrator however, as free indirect speech embodies a narratorial element. Pascal cites Charles Bally who observed that this is essentially a literary device not found in actuality, but which gives the impression of actuality.[27]

[26] Roy Pascal, *The Dual Voice: Free indirect speech and its functioning in the nineteenth-century European novel* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977), pp.14ff
[27] Ibid., pp.18-19

The terms explained so far have dealt only with speech. Even a cursory reading of Kelman will see that much of what goes on is not uttered aloud. There is a general tendency, however, to think of thought as a type of 'inner speech' and to compare the methods of presenting it with the methods used to present ordinary speech. By analogy, then, there will exist *free direct thought* (FDT) and *free indirect thought* (FIT) which share the features of speech presentation examined above. This is certainly confined to literary narrative since, as Wales again asserts, 'access to thought processes is implausible in real life'.[28] It may be clear from context whether a character is speaking or thinking, although not always, as will be seen later. It is useful, then, to have at hand the terms *free direct style,* to cover both free direct speech and free direct thought, and *free indirect style,* to include both free indirect speech and free indirect thought.

There remains the task of fixing a point of reference for the terms *stream of consciousness* and *interior monologue.* These are often used interchangeably, but a distinction between the two may be useful. The expression stream of consciousness uses the metaphor of flowing water to describe the movement of thoughts through our minds. Attributed to William James it has been applied to the literary techniques used to render what cannot in fact be rendered accurately: the internal workings of the mind. In his study of stream of consciousness Robert Humphrey begins with this definition:

> Consciousness indicates the entire area of mental attention, from preconsciousness on through the levels of the mind up to and including the highest one of rational communicable awareness.[29]

It is not surprising that a variety of techniques is necessary to deal with such complexity, and Humphrey uses stream of consciousness to mean the representation of thought by the available means, including direct and indirect thought, and free direct and free indirect thought. This has an unstructured aspect. Humphrey also applies it to any type of novel which is primarily concerned with the thought processes of their characters. Kelman

[28] Wales, *A Dictionary of Stylistics* (1997), p.190
[29] Robert Humphrey, *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), p.2

would seem to qualify on all counts. *Interior monologue* is taken to be one of the techniques, free direct thought, but sustained over long periods in the text. Although James Joyce openly acknowledged the earlier work of French novelist Dujardin in this area, Joyce is usually considered responsible for developing the technique, especially in *Ulysses.*[30]

It is a feature of Kelman's work that the various forms discussed above often coexist or modulate into one another. Here is one example from 'By the Burn':

> He continued on, steering clear of the clumps of long weeds, the kind that told you where the worst of it was, but it was bad and each step now his boot sunk in an inch or so, but still not as bad as before. Imagine if he had lost the fucking boot but Christ almighty, hirpling down the road for the train then into the interview office, trying to explain to the folk there how you had lost your shoe in a fucking swamp. My God, a fucking joke right enough. (*The Burn* 239)[31]

This short passage includes a variety of narrative devices. It begins with an omniscient third person narrator describing the man's progress in the first sentence. The omniscient narrator does not get very far, however, before the reader can note the possibility that the character's own thoughts encroach from 'the kind' to the end of the sentence. It is a measure of Kelman's skill that it is possible to attribute these words to both the omniscient narrator and to the character. The shift is not a sudden one but a merging of the two to fashion a transitional point. In the next sentence there is no doubt that we have free indirect thought. It is clear that this is not uttered aloud but it is the thoughts of the character being reported, evident from the retention of his individual speech pattern, the use of 'fucking', the deferred 'but', the interjection 'Christ almighty', and the use of the Scots word 'hirpling'. We realise, therefore, that the 'he' in the second sentence is the required pronoun substitution for 'I' in the original thought. The final sentence can be a continuation of free indirect thought, because there would be no alteration in the reporting of it, or it could be an example of free direct thought, the reproduction of the actual thought in

[30] Wales, *A Dictionary of Stylistics*, p.254

[31] James Kelman, *The Burn* (London: Vintage, 1999). All subsequent references are to this edition.

its original form. Either is possible because there would be no alteration in changing it from a direct to indirect form. There is the further possibility that it has been uttered aloud and is therefore free direct or indirect speech. Both would be again possible. It certainly takes the form of an exclamation. This example may give an indication of the complexity of Kelman's narrative.

This narrative complexity has a precedent in the work of another twentieth-century Scottish author, Lewis Grassic Gibbon, and a brief comparison allows us to link Kelman with Modernism and the Scottish Renaissance. Although Kelman claims only to have 'kinda glanced' at Gibbon he is familiar enough with his work to identify his experimentalism and socialism:

> I think that he was a man of his time, Grassic Gibbon, cause that was going on. He was a near contemporary of Joyce and Kafka. That kind of thing was going on throughout literature, and it's good that somebody in Scotland was aware of it too and working in prose, you know eh. Only a good socialist could make that statement.[32]

This seems to place Gibbon within the context of international Modernism. The statement Kelman refers to is one made by Gibbon with regard to his use of Scots language, and one can see many affinities with Kelman. Modernism in its radicalism could embrace more than one political outlook, and it is often the concomitant of radicalism that, in MacDiarmid's phrase, 'extremes meet', and apparently opposing ideologies can merge. This meant that Gibbon's communism could lock in with dubious notions concerning 'Golden Age' simplicity. However, especially in his trilogy of novels *A Scots Quair*, the use of free indirect style allowed the Scots of the many voices of his characters to become the narration itself. This bypassed the problem of the division between the Standard English narrator and the Scots of the characters. This in itself is democratic, but the effect is heightened by the use of multiple voices to permit an entire community to speak. Ian S. Munro summarises this well:

> [Gibbon's] aim was to keep a single unity of expression in which narrative, description, thought, and dialogue were one - each a part of

[32] Duncan McLean, 'Interview with James Kelman', *Edinburgh Review*, 71 (1985), p.66

> the 'folk mind.' The prose had to be continuous; inverted commas would have made a sharp break instead of merely a change of inflection. There must be no end and no beginning - the voices coming and going - the flow endless, always incomplete, yet always exciting in its variations.[33]

Kelman also uses punctuation unconventionally to avoid sharp breaks, but there is some divergence between the two authors. For Kelman the solitary voice predominates. There is little other option as community has broken down. Interestingly enough, in the final novel of Gibbon's trilogy, *Grey Granite*, these multiple voices diminish as the central characters have moved from the country to the city and lose the sense of belonging to a community, although there is potential for reestablishment of that voice in the solidarity of the workers. Kelman and Gibbon share the desire to recreate an unimpeded flow in their voices, albeit for different reasons. For Gibbon this modulation of one voice into another asserts the unity of a multiplicity of voices; for Kelman the flow denotes the unstoppable flux of the inner voice.

The logical assumption might be that if Kelman wants his characters to speak as directly as possible then free direct style would be the only possibility. Using an indirect method would serve only to distance the reader from the character due to narratorial intervention. However, Kelman has referred on more than one occasion to the idea of characters observing themselves. For example he refers to the artist Juan Gris' declaration that 'the elements of a picture must be explored by the painter as if he were his own spectator'.[34] Furthermore, referring to his novel *The Bus Conductor Hines*, he described it as 'a first person narrative in the third person'.[35] The characters, then, may become their own narrators, externally charting their internal lives. In view of the notion that Kelman's work expresses stasis, it is paradoxical that the narrative forms outlined above are perhaps the most dynamic available. Thought and speech are directly and swiftly conveyed without an overbearing

---

[33] Quoted in Francis Russell Hart, *The Scottish Novel: A Critical Survey* (London: John Murray,1978), pp.236-7

[34] 'A Reading from Noam Chomsky and the Scottish Tradition in the Philosophy of Common Sense', p.71

[35] McLean, 'Interview with James Kelman', p.65

narrator or the embellishment of descriptions or narratorial comment. The conflict between the static and dynamic creates a potentially interesting creative tension.

Free indirect style is a feature of but not the creation of Modernism. It is a question of the degree of use. The nineteenth-century realist novel, with its desire for 'objective' narration, had to use a variety of techniques to let the author try to speak only through the events and characters of the story. Thus, authors like Jane Austen, whose plots centre on the characters' changing attitudes to one another, thereby making their thoughts and feelings the structural elements in the story, can be seen to be introducing elements of free indirect style[36]. For example, this passage from *Sense and Sensibility* exhibits features of free indirect thought:

> When he [John Dashwood] gave his promise to his father, he meditated within himself to increase the fortunes of his sisters by the present of a thousand pounds a-piece. He then really thought himself equal to it. The prospect of four thousand a year, in addition to his present income, besides the remaining half of his own mother's fortune, warmed his heart, and made him feel capable of generosity. -- "Yes, he would give them three thousand pounds: it would be liberal and handsome! It would be enough to make them completely easy. Three thousand pounds! he could spare so considerable a sum with little inconvenience." -- He thought of it all day long, and for many days successively, and he did not repent.[37]

The inverted commas in the latter half of the passage do not indicate direct speech or thought. The third person 'he' and the 'would' tell us this can not be the case. Neither does one enclose plain indirect speech or thought within inverted commas. By doing so Austen makes us aware that she is executing something different. Retaining the features of the speaker's actual words is characteristic of free indirect style. The exclamations 'Yes...!' and 'Three thousand pounds!' are the actual words in the mind of John Dashwood, not a narratorial interjection. There is tentativeness in its use, however, with

[36] Pascal, *The Dual Voice*, p.45
[37] Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (London: Penguin Classics, 1995), p.5

commentary by an external narrator still strongly evident. This is the case also with George Eliot who, like Austen, includes some examples of free indirect style, but very much subordinate to the narratorial presence. This passage from *Mill on the Floss* describes a quarrel between Tom and the poor Bob. Bob has second thoughts about flinging back the knife given to him by Tom, and picks it up again:

> The knife would do no good on the ground there - it wouldn't vex Tom, and pride or resentment was a feeble passion in Bob's mind compared with the love of a pocket knife. And there were two blades, and they had just been sharpened! What is life without a pocket knife, to him who has once tasted a higher existence?[38]

The presence of the narrator's voice is strong here, but there is also a limited attempt to recreate the actual thoughts of the character in a reported form. The middle sentence of the above passage, 'And there were two blades, and they had just been sharpened!', are not direct speech/thought because of the grammatical changes in the reporting of them. However, the retention of the exclamatory feature alerts us to the fact that they are not plain reported speech/thought either. This is free indirect style but used in a limited and tentative way. The essential point is that both writers felt the need for new ways to present their characters and were beginning to explore new techniques to accomplish that.

Pascal seems to have reservations about using free indirect style exclusively. Writing of Georg Büchner's *Lenz* (1836), an early example of the narrator's voice and the character's voice merging, he says:

> The great limitation of Büchner's achievement is that only one character can thus be known. The narrator so identifies himself with the main character that other characters acquire no substance; they and the whole environment exist for us only through Lenz's mind.[39]

He believes that in any piece longer than the novella (as *Lenz* was) the style might become wearisome and unsustainable. This is a criticism similar to that which writer and critic Adam Mars-Jones applies to Kelman's novel *How late it*

[38] George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 1995), p.41
[39] Pascal, *The Dual Voice*, p.66

was, how late:

> Interior monologue [i.e. the extended use of free indirect thought] is a highly artificial way of representing the mind's activity as speech, most effectively used as one element of a compound style. Served up raw and in quantity, unsustained by the world, it is highly indigestible.[40]

If one accepts this as true, then there may be advantages in the short story form to avoid the 'indigestible'. By using a number of techniques the author can vary the presentation effectively.

Kelman exploits fully the possibilities of narrative forms and by adjusting the perspective of the narrative voice he demonstrates not only a political viewpoint but also a philosophical one. When he considers the relationship of narrators and readers, and narrators and their material, he constructs a complex structure of interaction which requires some analysis.

In an essay dealing with how politics and discourse interact[41], Marie Louise Pratt has observed that many of the descriptions of landscape in travel and exploration accounts of the colonial era betray an ideological position as well as an aesthetic purpose. She takes as one example Sir Richard Burton's account of his 'discovery' of Lake Tanganyika in 1860. Pratt notes how Burton seeks out a high point and describes the panorama below him. By doing so he establishes his dominance and authority over the scene below: 'the whole scene is deictically ordered with reference to his vantage point.'[42] The manner in which he describes a scene reflects his assumption of the right he has, as an agent of a colonial power, to exert authority over the countries subsumed into the British Empire. The analogy with the narrator in works of fiction is obvious. The perspective of the narrative viewpoint in relation to place can tell us much about the social and aesthetic values of the author, or the values of characters in fiction. This is important in Kelman's writing, but he is by no means unique, and precedents can be found in the Scottish novel. George Blake, in his novel *The Shipbuilders,* uses this idea of perspective to great

[40] Adam Mars-Jones, 'In Holy Boozers', *The Times Literary Supplement*, p.20
[41] Mary Louise Pratt, 'Conventions of Representation: where discourse and ideology meet' in Willie Van Peer, ed., *The Taming of the Text: Explorations in Language, Literature and Culture* (London: Routledge, 1988)
[42] Ibid., p.15

effect when he wants to contrast his two main characters, Leslie Pagan, a wealthy shipyard owner, and Danny Shields, one of the yard workers. Class differences are implicit in the way their situations are presented. On one occasion Leslie's vantage point could not be any higher as he flies with his son above the scene in his aeroplane:

> The plane steadied at last on her course some two thousand feet above Clydeside, and all that crowded realm lay before for all the world as if a child had laid it out on the nursery floor. Insects crawled along narrow ribbons - cars on the innumerable, quaintly intersecting roads. Houses were mere comic blocks set in silly rows; the bunkers of a golf course were rosy pock marks on diseased skin. The great river itself had narrowed to a strip of lead and in Leslie's brooding eyes the gantries over the empty berths of the shipyards lining the banks from Dumbarton up to Glasgow seemed at once frivolous, pretentious and pathetic.
>
> (*The Shipbuilders* 57)[43]

This is only part of a long description which serves to emphasise Leslie's detachment from the troubled reality of a declining Clydeside. By distancing himself from it he can reorder the harsh reality as he pleases, like the child laying out toys on the nursery floor. He becomes superior in terms of physical placement but also god-like in that he can render human life below as like that of insects. Even when Leslie is on the ground we are aware that he is secluded from his surroundings. Leslie's journeys through the city are most often carried out enclosed in his car, speeding through the streets.

For Leslie's employee, on the other hand, there can be no escape or seclusion from the city. Danny Shields' perspective is distinctly ground-level:

> He made for the pend off Argyle Street. The entry was unfriendly, with the night wind blowing the gas in the single lamp to send swinging shadows up and down the whitewashed tunnel. In the yard he came upon a waiting taxicab, its driver asleep in the seat under the feeble glow of a bulb in the roof. There was a confusion of parked coal-carts

[43] George Blake, *The Shipbuilders* (London: Pan Books, 1972). All page references are from this edition.

> and ice-cream barrows before the heavy gate that led to Jess's cottage; and groping his way among them, his eye was caught and held by the glow of the oil-lamp gleaming through the window.
>
> (*The Shipbuilders* 171)

Danny's world is cold and unwelcoming. Shadows shift and thereby obscure and confuse. While Leslie can fly unhindered, at least temporarily, Danny must grope his way through a landscape that is uncertain and over which he exerts no control. What is notable in the above examples is that the account of Leslie's flight employs a great deal of metaphor, a mark that Leslie is able to impose his vision and judgement on what he sees. Danny's scene is rendered without metaphor. He is in the scene, but not the creator of it. In both cases, however, we must bear in mind that the omniscient third person narrator is, so to speak, looking down and arranging the characters' perspective. Burton Pike, considering how the city is portrayed in fiction, has expressed the idea succinctly:

> When a narrator looks at the city from above he is placing himself in an attitude of contemplation rather than involvement. The elevated observer is within the city but above it at the same time, removed from the daily life taking place on the streets and within buildings. He can look up at the sky and out at the horizon as well as down at the city itself.[44]

Kelman seeks to emphasise his belief in the characters as their own narrators by the use of a perspective which is almost exclusively ground level. The viewpoint becomes that of the character himself, rather than an elevated and external narrator.

In Kelman's short stories we frequently encounter the solitary man pacing the streets of the city. These characters are not in an elevated position but it is the case that they are 'in an attitude of contemplation'. However, this is not contemplation in the sense that Pike intends in the above quotation. The painful and obsessive nature of the typical Kelman character's deliberations do not lead to any unravelling of the chaos they experience. The recurrent

[44] Burton Pike, *The Image of the City in Modern Literature* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), p.34

aimlessness of their wandering is indicative of the inability of the characters to arrive at any resolution and is consistent with the notion of the absence of closure. They never arrive at a destination because they have none to aim for. One example is the story 'Greyhound for Breakfast' in the collection of the same name. The central character, Ronnie, has bought a greyhound and, frightened of the reaction of his wife Babs, he walks the streets with the dog preparing himself to face her. He constantly puts off returning home. Even his fatigue and discomfort cannot motivate him to face his wife who will ask the questions he is unwilling and unprepared to answer:

> Ronnie paused. He had been walking a wee while, as far as the town hall. He crossed the zebra crossing, making for Copland Road. His tea would be ready right at this minute and Babs would be wondering. But it was still too early; he was not prepared enough. And his fucking feet were beginning to sore. And if *he* felt like that what about the dog? A sit down would have been nice. (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 217)[45]

The impression we have here is of Ronnie's familiarity with the city. In fact it seems as if he has to pause and make an active effort to place himself because his surroundings are so familiar that while he is deep in thought he registers little of the scenery. When he is aware of the city around him it serves as a cue for memories of his past:

> He had arrived at the pier. It was derelict. He stood by the railing peering through the spikes. The ferryboat went from here to Partick. Old memories right enough! Ronnie smiled. Although they werent all good. Fuck sake. They werent all good at all. And then these other memories. And the smells. And the journey twice a day six days a week. These smells but of the river, and the rubbish lapping at the side of the steps down, and at low tide the steps all greasy and slippery, the moss and the rest of it. (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 216)

The sense impressions here: the smells, the sound of rubbish lapping in the water, the feel of slippery steps, place Ronnie very much as part of the scene. This is a depiction of a city in decay. This is not a flowing river with movement

[45] James Kelman, *Greyhound for Breakfast* (London: Picador, 1988). All subsequent references are to this edition.

and flux, but stagnant water. Like Ronnie's thoughts, and the thoughts of many Kelman characters, the lack of movement produces nothing except an uncertain footing and atrophy. These same aspects turn up in another story in the collection, 'Home for a couple of days' which features Eddie, who walks around his home town to avoid, for an unspecified reason, visiting his mother. His walking also provokes an attempt to recall his past, but rather less successfully than Ronnie above. The naming of the streets he passes along seems to reflect the process of his recalling of his old neighbourhood:

> He continued round the winding bend, down past the hospital and up Church Street, cutting in through Chancellor Street and along the lane. The padlock hung ajar on the bolt of the door of the local pub he used to frequent. Farther on the old primary school across the other side of the street. He could not remember any names of teachers or pupils at this moment. A funny feeling. It was as if he had lost his memory for one split second. (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 32)

Eddie, in spite of his long absence, is also familiar with the short cuts of the area, 'cutting in through Chancellor Street and along the lane'. However, this is also a city in decay, his old pub bolted up and no doubt smashed open by vandals. In both the above quotations, the free indirect style accentuates our viewpoint through the eyes of the characters, and we can share at first hand Eddie's 'funny feeling' at his memory loss.

Kelman can use this narrative perspective to alert us to deficiencies in the characters. 'Extra cup' in *Lean Tales* begins with the narrator, who has reported for work as a sweeperup, describing in meticulous detail being led by a clerk through the work site to his department:

> He led me out of the gatehouse, through the massive carpark and into a side entrance, along a corridor between offices then out, and across waste ground into another building where I followed him along the side of a vast machineroom into a long tunnel and out through rubber swing doors, onto more waste ground but now with rail tracks crossing here and there, and into another building via a short tunnel leading sharply down then up a concrete incline at the top of which we entered

> an ancient hoist with crisscross iron gates to go clanking downwards to a subfloor where the clerk questioned a youth on the whereabouts of a Mr Lambton, but received only a shrug in reply; on we went along a corridor, a deep thumping sound coming to the right of us and men occasionally appearing out of doorways and entering others, and we followed one of them outside and across more waste ground, bypassing one building and into another where we found Mr Lambton sitting on an upturned crate behind a big machine. (*Lean Tales* 43)[46]

The excessive detail of this account may be an attempt to stress the warren-like nature of the factory, but this could be done in a much more succinct and less tedious way. The paucity of punctuation serves to emphasise the seemingly endless path they take. Such disproportionate prominence is given to this delineation of his route by the narrator that we begin to suspect very quickly that his perspective may be a distorted one, and this is confirmed at the conclusion of the story when he quits the job on his first day because of the coolness of his workmates. Their slightly offhand attitude towards him does not merit such an extreme reaction from him. This is a man whose perspective on life is skewed. Like the narrator of 'the same is here again' from *Lean Tales*, (discussed in more detail in Section 5), whose viewpoint is literally ground level (i.e. head against the ground) minute things have taken on undue prominence in his mind. Hence his reaction to the place he travels through.

In two instances Kelman does use a narrator who at a point in the story raises himself to a high vantage point, but the manner in which Kelman uses this perspective is transformed to remain consistent with the themes and tone of the author's work. The characters do so to separate themselves from people around them and to allow them to try to make sense of their world. One example is 'Joe laughed' from *The Good Times* and the other is 'Not not while the giro' in the collection of the same name. In 'Joe laughed' the young narrator leaves his companions and enters a derelict factory building. He climbs higher and higher in the building until he reaches a small room at the top from which he can gain access to the roof. He is dispirited and his solitary wander through the

[46] James Kelman, *Lean Tales* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985). All subsequent references are to this edition.

factory seems to be a deliberate attempt to distance himself, literally and figuratively, from the other boys. They become disembodied voices in the distance. Disembodied sounds crop up on a recurrent basis in Kelman's work, as in, for example, 'Home for a couple of days' or 'Forgetting to mention Allende'. They serve to emphasise uncertainty, separation, and isolation. In 'Joe laughed', the narrator has to struggle to climb up to a window to get a better view. However, when he gets up to the window he has only a partial view of the roof, and nothing more:

> I went up on my tiptoes to see out but the window was high and I couldny see the pitch. [...] The way the roof was angled the view was way ower and I couldnay see out properly at all, no unless I could stretch up higher. [...] I heaved and got it open, but then it stuck halfway, less, it jammed. But I could hear a couple of the boys shouting. It sounded far away, like the pitch was right away ower the other side of the docks. I dived up my arms through the gap, then my head and shoulders. I got my elbows wedged ower the sill to take my weight. I waited, getting my breath. The roof was about five feet below. I got a shiver, that bit of dizziness ye get, my head gon that roomy way, I had to shut my eyes a wee minute. (*The Good Times* 5-6)

Rather than Pratt's clear and 'deictically ordered' scene below, his struggle actually ends in no sight at all when he closes his eyes to stop the scene revolving in his head. He cannot even position himself to take advantage of the high outlook: the window jams and he can get only his head through, wedging himself in. The reader is not convinced by his later assertion that 'Once I was at the top of the roof I would be able to see everything' (*The Good Times* 7). The boy has a desire to see everything clearly by taking a detached and superior perspective, but given his subsequent description of the danger involved and his uncertainty and apparent failure of courage, it seems unlikely he will follow through with success. Kelman, typically, leaves the matter unresolved in the final sentence: 'I wasnay sure what I was gony do, no from now on, I maybe no even do nothing, it would just depend.' (*The Good Times* 9). In the other example of the elevated perspective the narrator of 'Not

not while the giro' uses the raised viewpoint, but he is aware of the limits to his vision:

> Often I sit by the window in order to sort myself out - a group therapy within, and I am content with the behaviourist approach, none of that pie-in-the-sky metaphysics here if you don't mind. [...] Choosing this window for instance only reinforces the point. I am way on top, high above the street. And though the outlook is unopen considerable activity takes place directly below. (*Not Not While the Giro* 196-7)[47]

This narrator is fully conscious of his partial view. He does not seek to reorder what he sees but to analyse it in order to reorder himself. How characteristic of a Kelman character that he should do this inside his own head, group therapy with a group of one.

It is a feature of the stories that, whatever the character's perspective, there always seems to be some barrier to an uninterrupted view. So many of the wanderers in the city do so at night when darkness and shadows obscure their view. Even when darkness would seem to be an advantage it turns out to have the opposite effect. In the story 'Unlucky' from *The Burn* three men set out to rob a factory at night, when the lack of light should protect them from detection. The end result, however, is that the darkness increases their uncertainty, and the indefinite origin and indeterminate nature of various sounds fuel their fear. The noises they themselves make during the break-in are amplified, and potential witnesses to their wrongdoing are imagined in the darkness:

> Ray led the way, Lecky continuing on to his position at the corner of the main road. When he reached it and looked back the other two were out of sight. From somewhere he could hear a vague whining sound like the engine of a bus revving and straining in too low a gear, then it had died into silence.
>
> A clank. Coming from the shop doorway. Another clank then a crash. Really fucking loud. Lecky stepped back against the wall, squinting across at the windows of the nightshift building. The faces looking! But

[47] James Kelman, *Not Not While the Giro* (London: Minerva, 1989). All subsequent references are to this edition.

there werent any. Nobody was there at all. Thank fuck for that.

(*The Burn* 134)

It is mildly comic that the lookout, Lecky, has to squint, evidence of his incomplete view, and is apparently the most nervous of the three in the dark.

This incompleteness of view is in one sense a result of existing in an urban environment, the physical effect of being shut in by buildings, but the correspondence with the narrow, solipsistic nature of Kelman's protagonists, bound up in their own thoughts and obsessions is unmistakable. That no horizon is visible ties in with the absence of aspiration and the limited vistas of the characters. The idea of being enclosed in restrictive spaces manifests itself even when a story is not set in an urban environment. 'The Bevel' sees a group of men at work in the countryside, but for most of the time they are contained within a claustrophobic and rigid area. The story opens with the three workers inside what is literally a steel box, the caravan they use for accommodation. From these clammy and cramped surroundings they start work in another metal box:

> The chlorine tank we were working on stood at the very rear of the factory, not too far from the lochside. Its lining was being renewed. We had to strip away the old stuff to prepare the way. The tank was about 40 feet high and about 18 in diameter. On top was a small outlet through which the scaffolders had passed down their equipment; a narrow walkway separated it from a factory outbuilding. There was also a very small tunnel at the foot which us three had to use; it was quite a tight fit, especially for Sammy. (*Not Not While the Giro* 40-41)

It is true that Kelman wants to stress the physical discomfort and danger experienced on a daily basis by workers, and the story does deal with hierarchies in the workplace and shabby treatment by the bosses. On another level the restricted viewpoint of the workers means they can never escape from what is a type of prison. In this instance it is a prison of class, but in other stories such small spaces as rooms in tenements and lodging houses or hostels can represent a prison of the mind and spirit.

Kelman displays not only an awareness of how characters move around

locations but also how they occupy locations and how they position themselves in relation to other people. To deal with what would seem initially to be such an unpromising subject for a story requires skill and boldness. Scottish fiction writer Alan Warner has noted this ability, remarking that Kelman has a

> beautiful ability to tell a story in which nothing happens - that fantastic one in *Greyhound for Breakfast*, 'Even in communal pitches,' where the guy just shifts position at a party where he can't get settled but it comes across as this huge, reverberating life changing, existential statement - it's so good. I don't think I'm a good enough writer to write a story like that.[48]

The story to which Warner refers is one of several where this idea is explored. 'Keep moving and no questions' from *Not Not While the Giro* is another good example. 'Even in communal pitches' sets out its theme at the outset:

> I had arrived at the following conclusion: even in communal pitches people will claim their portion of space; he who sits in the left-hand corner of one room will expect to obtain the equivalent corner in every room. This is something I cannot go but I felt obliged to conform to standard practice. It was a kind of community I was living in. (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 181)

This is consistent with the depiction of lack of community discussed earlier. Ostensibly part of a community, a person's first aim is in fact to separate themselves from those around them. Choosing a particular space is an attempt at self-definition, identifying oneself by the space one occupies. The narrator, however, has problems finding and hanging on to a suitable space. He distances himself from the party's activities in his attempt:

> I had taken some of the drink but without overdoing it, I was more concerned with retaining the portion of space.
>
> (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 182)

When he moves into another room he is uncertain and still separating himself from others:

> I waited a couple of seconds, not looking at anybody, then strode to the

[48] Alan Warner, 'Interview between Sophie Dale and Alan Warner', *Edinburgh Review*, 103 (2000), pp.126-7

> staircase and went on up to the next landing. There were scuffling noises behind but I didn't look back. I didn't mind at all if people were following me; I just didn't want to give the impression I knew where the fuck I was going, cause I didn't, I was just bashing on, hoping for the best. (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 183)

The lack of direction and the 'bashing on' regardless are familiar traits of the Kelman character. Eventually he finds a space to occupy in the bathroom, particularly suitable as he can lock others out:

> When I closed and snibbed the door I could hear the sounds of a couple of folk outside on the landing, as if they had been following me and had now realized it was a wild goose chase. Obviously I was a bit sorry for whoever it was but in a sense this was it about claiming your portion of space and I was only fitting in with the conventional wisdom of the place. (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 183-4)

The repeated assurances that what he is doing is just the 'standard practice' and 'following the conventional wisdom' may be ironic. We cannot be sure if others feel the same way or if, as is more likely, this behaviour is peculiar to the narrator.

A similar, but perhaps better example than the one identified by Warner is 'Keep moving and no questions'. The narrator paces the dark, wet streets around Euston Station in London; once again we find the rootless wanderer in a Kelman short story. The title would seem to indicate that constant movement is important to avoid confronting difficult questions about life. In order to escape the rain and to take a break from walking he enters a folk club where he picks up a girl with whom he leaves the club. She seems to be his female counterpart because she also carries a bag with her belongings and makes no disclosure about any destination. However, at the end of the story she has a place to stay while he is left in the street with nowhere to go. The interesting thing is the narrator's sensitivity to people's position in relation to himself and others, as well as the poses they strike. He constantly makes reference to the manoeuvring of those around him. He describes his first encounter with the girl and the attempt of another man to pick her up thus:

> I sat down in a space next to the back wall and after a moment closed my eyelids. When I opened them again the space to my right had increased to around five yards and a girl was kneeling on the floor with her arms folded. She was alone - but in this direct fashion. Her head stiffly positioned, the neck exactly angled. Only her shoulders twitched. The position must have been uncomfortable. [...] I closed my eyelids. Footsteps. It was a man making towards her, his manner of moving was only to her though he walked loosely as he threaded the way between people. And now the girl's shoulders were not even twitching. She had edged her feet from her shoes. Her toes seemed to be maintaining a sort of plumb point - and her arms! - folded in this direct fashion. Jesus.
>
> He paused a fraction when he arrived, then dropped to his knees, his hands placed on the floor to balance, fingertips pointing on to the side of her limbs he was facing her. (*Not Not While the Giro* 147)

This precision about space exhibits yet another attempt to impose some order, charting things accurately to achieve some understanding, but, as with language, the attempt is futile. The narrator gives up:

> Ach. Fuck it. What a carry on. I don't know...can never really get it all connecting in an exact manner. (*Not Not While the Giro* 149)

There is the uncomfortable realisation that precision, relating every detail, may be evidence of obsessive behaviour and lack of perspective, especially when no sense can be made of the information.

The fusion of the two apparently irreconcilable qualities of precision and obliqueness is particularly evident in Kelman's series of extremely brief stories in which narrative form is paramount. If one were to identify a major change in Kelman's work over the years then it would be the emergence in the short story collections of the 1980's of a substantial number of very short pieces, some less than a hundred words in length. There is a marked intensity of meaning in these, noticeable even in a writer whose work is characterised by its intensity. Finding a suitable label for these pieces has proved difficult. They have been called 'sketches', 'tableaux', or 'minimalist' by critics and reviewers. Mike Marqusee has even referred to them as 'page-long narrative

spasms' with the suggestion that Kelman is somehow unable to control their form and duration.[49] More positively, another reviewer Nicholas Jenkins has noted their cumulative effect, that these stories are

> just sketches or jottings, but in a world where life itself is seen as so chronically inconclusive, some narratives are allowed to remain stunted or unresolved. [...] Out of such randomness, though, the sequence builds to a powerfully sustained description of modern urban life.[50]

There is a sense that Kelman is trying something different but no consensus as to precisely what. It has already been noted that the term 'avant-garde' is misleading in respect of Kelman, and it may be misleading also to describe these very short pieces as 'experimental' as this gives the impression that Kelman is doing something which has not been done before by other writers. Kelman could be said to be experimental in terms of his own writing in the sense that he is exploring new areas for him personally. Dilys Rose, in reviewing *Greyhound for Breakfast* tentatively suggested the use of 'prose poem' for some of the very short pieces[51], as does Arnold Weinstein in reviewing the same volume[52], but neither develop the comparison. In fact, there is evidence that Kelman was in this period exposed to French and Japanese prose poetry. His first collection *An Old Pub Near the Angel* lacks any examples of such pieces but the publication of Dominic Keene's anthology of Japanese (and including examples from French) prose poetry in 1980, which Kelman reviewed a year later,[53] seems to have inspired Kelman to expand his range in subsequent collections. As has been observed above in respect of influences from philosophy, Kelman takes only certain aspects of such influences and uses them as a launching pad for his own creation. These shorter pieces also point to Kelman's awareness that a short story collection can benefit from the considered placing of short pieces amongst longer ones to avoid the monotony of one similarly structured story following on from

[49] Mike Marqusee, 'Giro Culture', *Books*, 2 (May, 1987), p.6
[50] Nicholas Jenkins, 'Scotland's Burning, Look Yonder', *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, 10 April 1988, p.11
[51] Dilys Rose, Review of *A Chancer* and *Greyhound for Breakfast*. *Chapman*, 49 (1987), p.84
[52] Arnold Weinstein, 'Wee Prisons', *The New York Times Book Review*, 20 March 1988, p.19
[53] 'No Fixed Realities?', *Cencrastus*, 7 (Winter 1981-2), p.41

another. The idea of a collection of short stories as a unit, rather than a random sampling, is one that Henry James was conscious of. Valerie Shaw has remarked on James' stress on the possibilities of diversity in a short story collection, and quotes a letter to Robert Louis Stevenson on the matter:

> I want to leave a multitude of pictures of my time, projecting my small circular frame upon as many different spots as possible.[54]

This has most relevance for diversity of content. Perhaps Kelman's awareness of the consistency of theme and voice in his stories motivated him to diversify in terms of narrative structure at least.

It may be initially surprising that Kelman could be subject to the influence of Japanese literature in any way, but closer examination reveals some common concerns. Japanese writers at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century were very much influenced by French prose poetry and the Modernist impulse of Mallarmé and Baudelaire among others. Strict conventions of form and content in Japanese poetry and the requirement to use either Classical Japanese, (a language as remote from modern Japanese as Anglo-Saxon is from modern English), or a foreign language, Chinese, as the medium of expression inevitably caused great dissatisfaction amongst Japanese writers when their country opened itself up to Western influences. By the First World War movements had sprung up to use not only modern formal Japanese, but also colloquial language to exploit the possibilities of prose. For example, *Minshuha*, the 'Democratic School' of literature established itself around this time. The terms colloquial and democratic immediately establish a link with Kelman, and Kelman himself identifies common ground with his own writing in his review. Discussing one piece by Tatsuji Miyoshi,[55] 'Garden' Kelman remarks on the presence of the existential voice and defines his understanding of it:

> For those familiar with the existential tradition in literature the 'I voice' must strike a chord; typically it is a voice at odds with society, often hysterical, often bordering on actual insanity (Hogg, Gogol,

[54] Shaw, *The Short Story*, p.12

[55] Although both Keene and Kelman follow the Japanese convention of putting the family name before the given name, for consistency this is reversed here.

Hamsun, Dostoievski and so on).[56]

In this particular case the 'I voice' considers that its actions may be perceived as abnormal 'by a form of authority: in so doing it has assumed the role of outsider.'[57] This encapsulates the voice of the typical Kelman character and the parallel is self-evident. A direct influence can be seen, however, in two aspects of the form of many of the prose poems: the striving for a climactic effect achieved in a very short space and the use of punctuation. Let us look at these in turn.

The first of these is consistent with Poe's demand for a single effect in a short story, and can therefore be considered quite conventional. In the context of Kelman's work in general, however, this is a departure. We have already noted the marked uncertainty and inconclusiveness in the bulk of his writing, so it is rather surprising to come across stories where there is a definite conclusion. Keene has asserted:

> [T]he common law of the medium [i.e. prose poetry] is that it should be narrative in its structure and move toward an ending, achieving its final meaning in its final lines.[58]

It is worth examining in detail some examples of Kelman's attempts to 'move toward an ending'. The challenge is to achieve this in a highly compact form which bears more relation to poetry in its intent. As we shall see, there is mixed success in this regard.

'Busted Scotch' in the collection *Lean Tales* perfectly satisfies Poe's demand for the single effect in a short story. The intended effect in this case is anti-climax, which the author executes well. The dissatisfaction which character and reader share at the conclusion is perhaps more consistent with the tone of the rest of Kelman's work. Anti-climax requires that there should be a gradual increase in expectation in the reader, and that the expectation not be met. In this example, a first person narrative, the character's impatience for a card game to start is stated directly in the opening sentence: 'I had been looking forward to this Friday night for a while' (*Lean Tales* 13) and this is reinforced

[56] 'No Fixed Realities', p.41
[57] Ibid.
[58] Dennis Keene, ed. and trans., *The Modern Japanese Prose Poem: An Anthology of Six Poets* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), p.34

by his long preamble to the game itself as he is forced to sit through the cabaret in a working men's club, described in tedious detail. He is so detached from what is happening around him that he is not even affected by a 'Scotch' Harry Lauder-type entertainer. Such entertainers usually provoke extreme reactions in Scots: severe derision or passionate admiration. But the narrator seems to observe the scene as an outsider; he is here for another, more important reason, to play brag. That he feels something important is about to happen is pointed to by the fact that the narrator refrains from drinking, presumably to keep a clear head in the casino later, but it serves only to emphasise his separateness from the crowd, whose drunkenness allows them to endure the performers and get some enjoyment through group chants. When the gambling finally starts, his isolation is underlined by the fact that he is the only gambler in the room. He has not come to the club for social reasons, but to gamble, and this singularity of purpose raises our expectations of something significant about to occur. The narrator's impatience is evoked by his unwillingness to engage in small talk with the card dealer, her attempts at conversation being met with curt replies or silent gestures from the narrator:

> O, you're scotch. One of your countrymen was on stage tonight.
>
> That a fact.
>
> She nodded as she prepared to deal. She said, How much are you wanting to bet.
>
> I shrugged. I pointed to the wages lying there on the edge of the baize. (*Lean Tales* 14)

Once again, the absence of inquits, apart from one 'she said', speeds the story along to its conclusion. He bets his entire week's wages on a game of blackjack, not even the game he was waiting impatiently for, and it is played out in two words, 'Twist. Bust...' In a matter of seconds he has lost everything and his evening is over. We are not privy to why he has acted so recklessly, neither are we made aware of the consequences of his actions, although the three dots at the end of the story would seem to give some indication of his silent, shocked reaction.

Expectations defied, this time for comic effect, is the essential feature of

'Cute Chick!' from *Greyhound for Breakfast*. Less than a hundred words in length, it tells of a 'talkative old lady with a polite English accent' whose presence in a betting shop inevitably heralds the defeat of a favourite in a horse race. She, of course, always seemed to have backed the winning outsider. The humour derives from two factors. When she gives her nom-de-plume, i.e. the name she writes on her betting slip, it is Cute Chick! It is clear that this name is at odds with the actuality: the rather dated 'chick' is a word that usually applies to a young woman, and its informality does not match an old lady with a polite English accent; neither does 'cute' seem fitting for an old lady, especially when the other gamblers dread her presence, signifying as it does most of them losing the money they have laid on the favourite. Herein lies the second humorous aspect. When she calls out her nom-de-plume (and the fact that she does it 'loudly and clearly' would seem to be even more galling for the other betting shop customers) 'It made the punters' blood run cold.' The overstatement here transforms a mere irritant into something so horrific it chills the blood, but the ultimate effect of the overstatement is comic as readers recognise its inappropriacy in the minor context of someone winning a bet on the horses.

Horror is the focus of 'Acid' (*Not Not While the Giro*), but the intention is certainly not comic. Once again we have an attempt to work up to a climax, this time shocking. Kelman has included this piece in his collection *Busted Scotch* and has released a recording of himself reading it. It is therefore a safe assumption that he thinks it is one of his best short stories. In addition Alasdair Gray included the story in its entirety in his novel *Lanark* and suggests playfully that he has plagiarised ideas and characters from it.[59] The story is an account, in just over a hundred words, of the death of a young man who has fallen into a vat of acid at his workplace. Understatement is the narrative technique most apparent here. A bare unemotional account by a third person narrator can be more effective than a subjective one to heighten the horror. It is perhaps easier for readers to imagine themselves as observers at such a dreadful event than it is to place themselves as the victim. Moreover, it is the

[59] Alasdair Gray, *Lanark* (London: Panther Books,1984), p.491

shock of the witnesses to the accident which is central. To speed up the painful death of the young man who has fallen into the vat an older man approaches and ducks him under the acid with a pole. The shock is even greater when we are told that the older man is the victim's father:

> Except for one old fellow the large body of men was so horrified that for a time not one of them could move. In an instant this old fellow who was also the young man's father had clambered up and along the gangway carrying a big pole. Sorry Hughie, he said. And then ducked the man below the surface. Obviously the old fellow had had to do this because only the head and shoulders - in fact, that which had been seen above the acid was all that remained of the young man.
>
> (*Not Not While The Giro* 115)

Unfortunately, even though it may seem presumptuous to go against such accomplished writers as Gray, and Kelman himself, there are several weaknesses here which make this story unconvincing. Aside from the fact that variations of this tale circulated in the sixties as what is now referred to as an 'urban myth', rendering it ineffective through over-familiarity, the final impression is counter to that desired. The image of only the young man's head and shoulders remaining has a cartoonish quality. Likewise the casual 'Sorry Hughie', designed implicitly to convey the father's holding in of his own shock to stop his son's suffering, becomes ludicrous as a result of the mismatch of form and content, as in 'Cute Chick!'. It may be that the visibility of the writer's technique makes it seem too contrived to be successful. William Carlos Williams has said of the short story:

> The shock is necessary. Necessary to make them [the readers] stop, look, listen - in other words, read and say 1) how awful, and 2) how fascinating. What a wonderful writer![60]

Perhaps there is an element here of trying to show off the writer's technique rather than an authentic portrayal. Kelman *can* create horror most effectively. Note, for example, 'Wee horrors' in the same collection as 'Acid'. The descriptions of the horrific living conditions in a run down block of flats

[60] Williams, *Selected Essays*, p.301

and the grotesquerie of a down-and-outs' dinner party with the local children, with its concomitant sense of menace, all serve to provoke a deep disgust in the reader. Could it be that this story is more effective because it is based on a social reality and employs the fundamental fear of a parent that his children will come to harm? Gerald Mangan has said of 'Wee horrors' that it 'turns up the underside of a half-demolished city like the insect life under a stone.'[61] Horror is more effective when it is based on actuality, or at least potential actuality. 'Acid' is a superficial piece because its *raison d'etre* is not the true horror based on human experience but nothing more than an attempt to manipulate the reader.

Regarding the use of punctuation, it can be suggested that the poetry in Keene's anthology alerted Kelman to the possibilities of manipulating punctuation to his own ends. In his first collection, *An Old Pub Near the Angel,* use of punctuation is quite conventional. It seems as if Kelman had not yet recognised that innovation in the mechanics of writing could reinforce other innovations in language and content. In his review of Keene's anthology Kelman quotes in its entirety a prose poem by Minoru Yoshioka and notes the complete absence of punctuation (although there are in fact items of punctuation such as brackets and capital letters). It would certainly be too much to claim that Kelman had not come across such a feature before. Even if, as he claims, he has not read Lewis Grassic Gibbon, someone with an interest in American literature is unlikely not to be at least aware of e. e. cummings, for example, but it may be that a common feature of modern poetry applied to prose struck him as innovative. What could be more anti-authoritarian than the rejection of conventions of punctuation and typography? It is interesting that African-American writers of the 1960's and 70's, a period of great self-assertion for oppressed minorities, had no hesitation in viewing such conventions as imposed and therefore indicative of an unequal power relationship. Such writers as Sonia Sanchez or LeRoi Jones creatively exploited the mechanics of English to establish their right to self-determination in language and, by extension, politically.

[61] Gerald Mangan, 'The Short Fantastic', *Times Literary Supplement*, 30 December 1983, p.1462

An example of a story which uses punctuation, or its absence, for effect is 'of the spirit' in *Greyhound for Breakfast*. For just over a page the first person narrator relates his physical ailments. The only pause is provided by a single comma before the final phrase 'that physicality'. The unanticipated comma ensures that the final phrase is granted unusual significance. The brief summing up of the story contradicts the title, for no mention is made of spiritual matters. The absence of punctuation leaves the reader with the impression of someone 'hysterical...bordering on actual insanity' which Kelman sees as a characteristic of the existential voice. Lack of mental control is embodied in the form as well as the content which is expressed directly by the narrator: 'I'm going daft', 'my head's packed it in', 'with my head all screwed up'. (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 14) The effect is one that could only be really possible in a short manic burst like this. The intensity invokes discomfort in the reader very quickly, perhaps exacerbated by the absence of the familiar signposts of conventional punctuation.

It can be seen that Kelman's exploitation of narrative technique is complex, but this complexity is necessary to express adequately a difficult and confused reality. Kelman's manipulation of language is equally challenging, and it is this component of narrative which will be considered in the next section.

3

Language

Issues of language are central to Kelman's work. Once more this places him simultaneously within both the realist and the Modernist traditions. Politics and issues of class and individual power provoke Kelman to examine 'appropriate' forms of language in literature. Again this is a point of contact with the writers of the Scots Renaissance and the language debates of Modernism. For Kelman a faithful reproduction of how people actually speak is fundamental. This includes use of what can be termed 'taboo' language. The creative manipulation of language can be seen, however, when Kelman exploits available language resources, by the juxtaposition of registers, for example, to make wider points about the function of language itself and its breakdown as a tool of communication.

Scottish literature has been dominated by the issue of language. This mirrors the issue of language status in society at large and the perceived social values imposed on various regional and class dialects, as well as the added factor of national identity. The question of what constitutes an appropriate language for intellectual and artistic matters is not exclusive to Scotland; another example is the opposition to the use of working class Québécois by Montreal writer Michel Tremblay, or the situation of writers in present day India. Nor is the consideration only a contemporary one. The use of Latin in the Middle Ages for prose rather than the vernacular seemed natural for George Buchanan or Hector Boece, and the desire of the *Literati* of the Enlightenment to eradicate Scotticisms from their work reflected an uncertainty amongst Scottish intellectuals as to the status of the Scots language socially, politically, and geographically. More recently, in the 1920's and 1930's especially, the conflicting views of Edwin Muir and Hugh MacDiarmid regarding the role and potential of Scots was a pivotal concern. Muir saw Scots as a dying medium, and favoured English, while recognising that this might provoke a 'dissociation of sensibility' with feelings perceived in the former language and rational thought in the latter:

> The Scottish consciousness is divided. For reduced to its simplest terms, this linguistic division means that Scotsmen feel in one language and think in another; that their emotions turn to the Scottish tongue with all its associations of local sentiment, and their minds to a standard English which for them is almost bare of associations other than those of the classroom.[1]

This conflicted with the ideas of MacDiarmid. Although he had initially rejected Scots, largely because of its association with the kailyard, in the early 1920's he developed the Border Scots he was familiar with by using it as a foundation for a literary 'synthetic Scots' which drew synchronically and diachronically on Scots from all ages and spheres of use. This places MacDiarmid very firmly within the Modernist context. The desire to reshape language and exploit the possibilities thereby created was a feature of such writers as Pound and Joyce. Robert Crawford, in his important work *Devolving English Literature,* has noted the provincial aspect of Modernism. He asserts that Pound and MacDiarmid

> sought to find strength in native as well as foreign models, to transfer the richness of international culture into the culture of their homeland, and to form a vast and eclectic vision.[2]

This parallels comments made by William Carlos Williams, whom Kelman often cites:

> One has to learn what the meaning of the local is, for universal purposes. The local is the only thing that is universal.[3]

In a previous essay on Joyce, Williams had expanded on this idea:

> And in proportion as a man has bestirred himself to become awake to his own locality he will perceive more and more of what is disclosed and find himself in a position to make the necessary translations. [.....] But he who does not know his own world, in whatever confused form it may be, must either stupidly fail to learn from foreign work or stupidly swallow it without knowing how to judge of its essential value.

---

[1] Edwin Muir, *Selected Prose* ed. by George Mackay Brown (London: John Murray, 1987), p.21
[2] Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, p.247
[3] Williams, 'Kenneth Burke' in *Selected Essays,* p.132

> Descending each his own branch man and man reach finally a common trunk of understanding.[4]

Language is only one element here, but it is of central importance in working towards the 'common trunk of understanding'. Making the local and particular universal is a concern of Kelman's also, but he would probably disagree with MacDiarmid's view, expressed in a letter to J.K. Annand, that literature moves away from the demotic and evolves higher forms of literary expression:

> I know no literature of any value that uses the language in which it is written, as that language is used by the man in the street.[5]

Literary use would seem to imply an inherent transformation which sets it apart from other uses of language. The essential point is, however, that linguistic experimentation was at the heart of Modernism. MacDiarmid himself returned to English, but a form which drew eclectically on many sources and could be described as a 'synthetic' English. Kelman's concern with language mirrors this.

For Kelman, however, authentic representation of how people actually speak is important. A presentation of reality demands that people's speech (and by extension thought) should be authentically reproduced. Kelman has noted the difficulty for writers such as himself to do this and envies American writers their comparative freedom in the language they can use:

> They don't have to fight their way through this big paper bag of English Literature of How Do You Talk. We actually have to discover how to talk before we're allowed to write about subjects, and then we think it's surprising that we can't write about certain subjects because we don't have the right voice![6]

By promoting the use of synthetic Scots, MacDiarmid can be included in the above criticism of prescriptive use of language. Although he was seeking to challenge the hegemony of Standard English he was at the same time hoping to establish his own beliefs for others to follow. Power is the ability to select what type of language is acceptable and what is not. There are no inherent values in

[4] William's, 'Comment' in *Selected Essays*, p.28
[5] J.K. Annand, 'MacDiarmid at Broughton' in P.H. Scott and A.C. Davis, eds., *The Age of MacDiarmid* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing,1980), p.26
[6] McLean, 'James Kelman Interviewed', p.72

language, only those that are imposed by the politically or socially powerful in society. The dominant ideology is negative about Glasgow speech. This has the paradoxical effect of on the one hand creating insecurity amongst speakers of Glasgow working class dialect but at the same time generating solidarity in the same group. Ronald Macaulay has noted the discomfort felt by working class speakers in certain contexts.[7] Discomfort in speaking Standard English, and the inability to keep it up for long periods gives rise to the perception among school teachers or employers, for example, that working class Glaswegians lack fluency. This gives rise to what the black American polymath W.E.B. DuBois called 'double consciousness',[8] that is, people perceiving themselves through the eyes of their oppressor. All the negative images white people may have about black people are taken on as true by black people themselves. It is only relatively recently that it has been recognised that under-achievement in schools does not happen because working class speech is underdeveloped or inferior, but because the generally middle class teachers may not have the linguistics skills to breach the communication gap which occurs when middle class speech is confronted with working class speech. Thus, in the context of literature, Kelman's use of working class speech can be deemed unsuitable because it is perceived as deficient or debased in the linguistic dimension, or classified as ugly sounding.[9]

On the other hand, Caroline Macafee has noted the marked feature in Glasgow of working class solidarity in negatively evaluating middle class culture, including language.[10] The demographic make up of Glasgow is particularly weighted towards the working class. Compare this to Edinburgh where the middle class and upper class are numerically greater. This may account for the belief that Edinburgh people are cold and aloof, while Glasgow

---

[7] Ronald Macaulay, *Language, Social Class, and Education: A Glasgow Study* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press,1977) p.100

[8] W.E.B. DuBois, 'The Souls of Black Folk', in Abraham Chapman, ed., *Black Voices* (New York: Mentor, 1968), p.496

[9] See Howard Giles, Richard Bourhis and Ann Davies, 'Prestige Speech Styles: The Imposed Norm and Inherent Value Hypotheses' in William C. McCormack and Stephen Wurm, eds., *Language and Society: Anthropological Issues* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), pp.589-596. This gives a powerful dismissal of the perceived inherent aesthetic values in prestige speech styles.

[10] Caroline Macafee, *Glasgow* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1983), p.25

people are warm and outgoing, value judgements based primarily on perceptions of language. Macafee has also observed that working class speakers in Glasgow are less likely to be accommodating in their code-switching, that is moving from one type of language to another to adjust to any different linguistic norm in the interlocutor.[11] Clearly there is an assertion of power here, to impose your values on another person and to expect their compliance. Kelman's strategy in presentation of language epitomises this view. Geoff Gilbert has mentioned linguist J.L. Austin's 'speech act theory', one aspect of which is that language can only have force when it is invested with authority.[12] The notion of who has the right to grant that authority is subverted by Kelman in the assumptions he makes regarding use of working class language in literature.

It is important to bear in mind that represented in Kelman's work is a range of voices across the linguistic continuum. It is axiomatic that different individuals speak differently, moreover adjusting their language according to the situation. One can find, for example, standard English in the monologue 'Margaret's away somewhere' (*The Burn*). Kelman may have been exacting some revenge on the English literary establishment when he uses Standard English for a speaker who is characterised by coldness of personality, coupled with malice in the casual dismissal of a neighbour who has disappeared. One can find, also, the voices of Londoners, Irish, Manchester, Portuguese casual workers, and others scattered through Kelman's stories, although these characters are generally in the background.

Nevertheless, the voice most frequently found in Kelman is that of the Glasgow working class, and his adroitness in reproducing it is testimony to his skill and his roots. From the outset Kelman challenged the problem of how best to recreate such language. One of his earliest stories 'Nice to be Nice' (*An Old Pub Near the Angel*) attempts to reproduce orthographically the actual sounds of a Glasgow working class speaker. Standard orthography gives no indication of accent. The word 'boat', for example, when written down ignores the

[11] Ibid., pp.18ff
[12] Cited in Rod Mengham, *An Introduction to Contemporary Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), p.222

phonetic realisation of it when spoken by different geographical and social groups. Kelman tried to overcome this, clearly influenced by Tom Leonard's attempts to do the same, by trying to get into print the actual sounds. The opening sentence has four examples: 'Strange thing wis it stertit oan a Wedinsday.' (*An Old Pub Near the Angel* 97)[13] 'wis', 'stertit', 'oan', and 'Wedinsday' are perfect renditions of how those words would be pronounced by such a man as the narrator of the piece. The problem here, however, is that, as Macafee states in her analysis of the piece, the effect is 'to confer on the reader the novel experience of being semi-literate',[14] although such a reversal of roles could be intentional. Reading is a type of decoding and if we meet with an unfamiliar code then it slows us down. In some contexts it could be an advantage to look in a fresh way at language, but there comes a point at which it is too much of a barrier for a true appreciation. Leonard has used this method for the most part in his poetry where decoding is the norm, but it may not be the best way for fiction. Leonard himself acknowledges the difficulty in the opening line to his poem 'Good Style': 'helluva hard tay read theez init'.[15] Although this technique turns up in some of his other stories, for example 'The Hon' (*The Burn*), Kelman has rejected it as a means of conveying the Glasgow working class voice. An interesting footnote is that Sam Selvon has followed a similar path:

> I feel that writing in phonetics jars the reader. I've heard many people say that reading different dialects with phonetic spelling is a bit irritating, having to analyze it all in your mind.[16]

Kelman's solution has been to include enough language indicators to leave an impression of Glasgow speech. Unconventional orthography remains, but just enough to create a consistent tone along with syntactical markers such as the deferred but ('He's clever but.') or lexical items such as 'hirple' or 'midden' from general Scots, or items more specific to Glasgow, such as 'gallus'.

---

[13] James Kelman, *An Old Pub Near the Angel* (Orono, Maine: Puckerbrush Press, 1996). All subsequent references are to this edition.

[14] Caroline Macafee, 'Glasgow Dialect in Literature', *Scottish Language*, 1 (Autumn 1982), pp.48-9

[15] Tom Leonard, *Intimate Voices*, p.14

[16] Sam Selvon interviewed by Reed Dasenbrock and Feroza Jussawalla, in Susheila Nasta and Anna Rutherford, *Tiger's Triumph: Celebrating Sam Selvon* (Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire: Dangaroo Press, 1995), p.116

This is not new; Hemingway, for example, knew that the odd Spanish word scattered around his dialogue would have his readers vocalising Standard English with a Spanish accent. Lewis Grassic Gibbon did the same with Scots in *A Scots Quair*. Gibbon summarises his technique as trying 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.[17]

This is not a replication of speech. It requires 'remodelling' and thus becomes a creative act. This reworking of language is characteristic of the Modernist impulse. Gibbon does it very successfully, managing, as Isobel Murray believes, to capture 'a ring and an intonation that is compelling and expressive.'[18] Kelman also does it with great skill, rendering it an essential component of the narration. Gibbon and Kelman have in common the belief that writing in a language which is not your own introduces a colonial element. Gibbon compared the Scottish writer writing in English with the Indian writer Rabindrath Tagore doing the same: 'It is as though the writer did not *write* himself, but *translated* himself.'[19] The imposition of Standard English denies a true representation of self.

Much attention has been paid to Kelman's use of 'swearing', a term he himself dismisses.[20] This aspect of his work has been largely responsible for his notoriety in the tabloid press, reaching a peak with the publication of *How late it was, how late*, but it was certainly a point of discussion before then; and the references to its use in the novels have as much validity for the short stories also. As is often the case with criticism of Kelman's writing in general, many critics fail to appreciate the complexity of his use of taboo language. It presents a prime example of how Kelman takes actuality as his foundation and transforms it through the creative process. It is a faithful representation of how people speak which raises serious questions about literature and cultural

[17] Lewis Grassic Gibbon, 'Literary Lights' in Lewis Grassic Gibbon & Hugh MacDiarmid, *Scottish Scene* (London: Jarrolds Publishers Limited,1934), p.205
[18] Isobel Murray, 'Novelists of the Renaissance' in Cairns Craig, ed., *The History of Scottish Literature, Vol.4: Twentieth Century* (Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Press, 1987), p.108
[19] Gibbon, 'Literary Lights' in *Scottish Scene*, p196
[20] McLean, 'James Kelman Interviewed', p.70

politics, but it also shows the exercise of literary modification.

Adverse comments on this aspect of Kelman's work have a tiresome predictability, even from serious critics. Michiko Kakutani's use of the words 'profane' and 'foul-mouthed' in relation to Kelman's characters, especially in relation to *How late it was, how late*, are clear evidence of her feelings on the matter.[21] The sense of prim outrage is reinforced when she quotes from Kelman's writing and substitutes 'fuck', in whatever form, by 'expletive deleted', a device which merely draws attention to the word she is offended by. She states that she does this to emphasise the extent of the use of 'such words'. This primness extends to advocates for Kelman, or at least to those who publish their reviews. It is ironic that in the United States, where there is greater freedom in the type of language which may be acceptable in a literary sense, censorship is still extensive regarding the use of taboo words in the media. In an otherwise perceptive and detailed piece, Gordon A. Craig has to resort to periphrasis to get around the constraints on printing four-letter words: 'the vocable that an older generation called the word that won the war'.[22] This prudishness is not exclusive to the United States, of course. Robin Robertson, Kelman's editor at the time of his winning the Booker Prize, has remarked that the outrage was 'a nadir of British criticism, counting the number of "fucks".'[23] Kelman himself has noted that this type of censorship can have an effect on the promotion of writers' work, and he relates it in the British context to class:

> If you write a story or a poem through the eyes of a man or woman whose daily use of language includes certain words which are conventionally regarded as 'taboo' then there is never any likelihood of your story or poem being used by the media - not only the Scotsman group but every other group, including the BBC and IBA. [...] It so happens that the voices being suppressed with the utmost consistency are those from that group of people herded under the somewhat

[21] Michiko Kakutani, 'Profane Wandering within the Idioms of Glasgow', *The New York Times*, 16 December 1994, p.B8
[22] Gordon A. Craig, 'Glesca Belongs to Me!', *The New York Review* 25 April 1991, p.14
[23] Quoted in Maya Jaggi 'Speaking in Tongues', p.27

> anachronistic label of 'the working class.'[24]

The above statement by Kelman raises the issue of the real and how use of language has political and aesthetic consequences. In conversation with Maya Jaggi, Kelman asks:

> How can I censor the people I want to write about? If you don't allow people into literature because they use 'bad language', you've suppressed their existence.[25]

The use of such language is an attempt to represent accurately how people actually speak. In his interview with Duncan McLean, Kelman makes no objection when McLean praises what seemed to him the correct proportion of four letter words in Kelman's work and observes that *The Busconductor Hines* was 'one of those rare times, when there was a realistic amount of swearing in a piece of literature.'[26] This seems to be given credence by a forensic voice investigator who felt strongly enough about accurate representation of speech to write to *The Times* asserting that Kelman may have been understating the actual incidence of 'fuck' in certain idiolects:

> Those who question the authenticity of the language in James Kelman's prizewinner [*How late it was, how late*] are not very well informed. As a forensic voice investigator, I frequently transcribe recordings of real 'low-life' conversation. A recent transcript of some 18,900 words of dialogue shows 502 occurrences of 'f--k' and 'f---ing.' Kelman must have toned it down a bit - only 4,000 in a whole book![27]

One argument mustered against swearing is that it represents some kind of impoverished language or linguistic deprivation. Drew Milne raises this possibility:

> It is always ambiguous whether his texts offer language as objective record, a redemption of the different linguistic resources of ordinary

---

[24] James Kelman, *Fighting for Survival: The Steel Industry in Scotland* (Glasgow: Clydeside Press, 1990), pp.5-6

[25] Maya Jaggi, 'Speaking in Tongues', p.30

[26] McLean, 'James Kelman Interviewed', pp.70-71

[27] 'Letter to the Editor', *The Times* 23 October, 1994, p.20. Quoted by Nicholas Williams, 'The Dialect of Authenticity: The Case of Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*' in Ton Hoenselaars and Marius Buning, eds., *English Literature and the Other Languages* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp.224

language, or a critique of such words as modes of inarticulacy.[28]

Logically, the notion of a critique of inarticulacy can be dismissed. Surely access to taboo words can only be an expansion of linguistic resources, an increase in vocabulary, and exposure to their variety and inventiveness of use can only support this. They are not used as substitutes but as an enrichment. Kelman does deal with inarticulacy in his work, but the inarticulacy does not necessarily reside in the use of taboo words *per se*; it resides in language generally.

The use of taboo language has a great deal to do with self-assertion and denial of imposed hierarchies. This is not a new phenomenon. Ashley Montagu has interpreted well the observation by a Victorian commentator that the poor regarded swearing as a worldly possession:

> Those who have been most frustrated in life can, by the magic omnipotence of words, achieve something of the power that in all other respects has been denied them. And it is for this selfsame reason that those who have consciously recognised the dangers to themselves inherent in the possession of such power have done everything they could to suppress it. Profanity is, by definition, a revolt against authority, the expression of contempt or disregard of things sacred; it is irreverent. Swearers, therefore, are subversive of existing institutions. Such men are dangerous, for they bring into contempt not alone the gods and the regions over which they preside, but also the very sanctions that hold the institutions of men together. Subverting these they would be capable of subverting anything. Such men cannot be tolerated. Hence the sorry history of punishments and repression that have so barbarously and ineffectually been instituted against them.[29]

This expresses very well the deeper political issues underlying language use. This is echoed by two more recent studies of expletives amongst working class women on poor housing schemes in the north of England. In both cases the

---

[28] Drew Milne, 'James Kelman: dialects of urbanity' in James A. Davies and Glyn Pursglove, eds., *Writing Region and Nation: Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on the Literature of Region and Nation* (Swansea: University of Wales, 1994), p.395

[29] Ashley Montagu, *The Anatomy of Swearing* (London: Rapp & Whiting, 1968), p.333, commenting on John Sharman, *A Cursory History of Swearing* (London, 1884) p.180

researchers came to the conclusion that the diverse functions of taboo words included showing overt disrespect for authority. This acted as a unifying factor in the community, a group showing solidarity by the use of a shared code, and excluding others who do not use the code.[30] This relates with the idea of 'code-switching' discussed above which considered the notion to what extent people amended their speech to match that of their addressee, and the power relationship implicit in that. In fact, one researcher came to the conclusion that, rather than inarticulacy, use of taboo words implied a high level of confidence.[31] It should be stated, however, that this confidence had its basis in the fact that the further down the social spectrum one goes, the less one has to lose by upsetting authority:

> The use of 'prestigious' standard English has no merit nor relevance for these women, it cannot provide any social advantage to them or increase any life chances for them. In fact, the standard norm would isolate them from their own tight-knit community.[32]

This helps to put in context Isobel Murray's discomfort when Kelman won the Booker Prize. She challenges Kelman's representation of working class speech:

> I begin to feel that he is saying all working class people, and certainly all working class men, cannot think or string a sentence together without profanity. I don't believe that's true.[33]

Aside from the implicit assumption that profanity is in itself a negative thing, this does not seem to take into account the fact that a choice has been made concerning the language to be used. There is self-determination in the usurping of imposed values on certain types of discourse. Kelman does this as a creative artist, questioning the types of language which are deemed acceptable for literature, but he is also reflecting a choice which is made in the real world by real people. This has real consequences, too, in the lives of the people who make that choice, and for Kelman in the censorship of the artist. More than

[30] Vivian de Klerk, 'How taboo are taboo words for girls?', *Language in Society*, Vol.21 No.2, June 1992, pp.277-289 and Susan E. Hughes, 'Expletives of lower working-class women', *Language in Society*, Vol.21 No.2 (June 1992), pp.291-303

[31] de Klerk, 'How taboo are taboo words for girls?', p.279

[32] Hughes, 'Expletives of lower working-class women', pp.300-1

[33] Quoted in Catherine Lockerbie, 'James Kelman wins Booker Prize', *The Scotsman*, 12 October 1994, p.1

one school library has removed Kelman's books from the shelves because of their supposed obscenity.[34]

The nature of Kelman's swearing and notions of obscenity require further examination. It is very rare in Kelman's writing to find taboo words used in their literal sense. Kelman himself comments on this:

> Another thing is you see, usually the use of those four letter words - I'll call them that - is a really middle class way of using literature because [...] you had this stupid carry on where you weren't allowed to use 'fuck' unless you were talking about the act of screwing, you know. Now, it was never ever used, I never ever heard it used that way in my life until I started hearing Kenneth Tynan talking on television about D.H. Lawrence. I'd never ever heard that. In my experience no one ever used the word 'fuck' in that way. but suddenly people would say 'I don't mind you using "fuck" as long as you use it properly' which is an absurd way to talk about language altogether. [...] But that became the way of talking about swear words, you know, which again was a real class thing - a real cultural thing.[35]

It seems unlikely that Kelman was unaware of the literal meaning of 'fuck'. It is more likely that he is using this claim to emphasise his main argument that a middle class cultural elite saw themselves as the arbiters of acceptability, and that this class thought it was their right to grant permission about language use. Sociologist Abraham Myerson succinctly comments on this attitude:

> The taboo of certain words is merely part of the caste stratification of society and should really be opposed by all believers in democracy.[36]

It is true, however, that the literal use of such words is statistically much less than their function to express emotions and attitudes, and also as what Lars Andersson and Peter Trudgill call 'style-givers'.[37] This latter type is particularly relevant to Kelman. It is defined as swearing which is not directed towards a person or situation, but swearing as a way of speaking in what can

[34] Reported in Elizabeth Buie, 'Author has a word with region over his books', *Glasgow Herald*, 12 September 1992) p.3
[35] McLean, 'James Kelman Interviewed', p.71
[36] Quoted in Montagu, *The Anatomy of Swearing*, p.225
[37] Lars Andersson and Peter Trudgill, *Bad Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p.54

often be described as a non-emphatic way, for example: 'The fucking bus is coming.' Some explanation can be offered as to why Kelman's characters infrequently employ taboo words in their literal sense. It is a feature of Kelman's characters that they seem to have little interest in sex. Given that most of them are young men, this would seem to be an area where realistic depiction is abandoned. The few casual encounters which do occur, for example in 'Renee' in *Greyhound for Breakfast*, do not give much detailed description. The effect of this is to turn sex for the characters into something passionless and incidental, perhaps because to emphasise it would be to risk involvement with other people and thereby potential inclusion in some community. The only instance where a character is shown as having a heightened interest in sex, albeit in a rather warped way, is in 'Pictures' from *The Burn*. In this case, however, the central character, although he uses four letter words liberally throughout, uses them very sparingly when describing a sexual encounter as a boy with an adult male. The effect is to communicate his disgust and fear at the memory, as well as the violence of the act. The words 'wank' and 'come' (the latter is included as an anglo-saxon derived word with a sexual meaning) do not appear until the literal climax of the story and are all the more effective because of that:

> What the wonder was that nobody could hear either because of the rustling noises the way he had you pressed against the wall and then you having to do it to him, to wank him, him forcing your hand and it was like suffocating him forcing his chest against your face and then coming over you (*The Burn* 11-12)

In spite of the previous extensive use of 'fuck' and 'fucking', and a prior casual reference to men 'wanking' in cinemas, the shock of words used literally in relation to a real and troubling situation is marked.

Abusive use of taboo language is worthy of comment. It is a feature of the workplace when it is used in a non-insulting way, a kind of playful abuse which serves to bond working groups together and defuse tensions. Kelman replicates this well in, for example, 'The Bevel' in *Not Not While the Giro*, where an older man in the working group is regularly accused of being 'a

clatty auld bastard' and 'a clatty auld cunt' (p.39). Such humorous abuse is characteristic of working class environments. It is not commonly found in Kelman's stories with serious intent. There is a widely held perception that Kelman's characters are aggressive and macho, described, for example, by Andrew Noble of Strathclyde University in a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* as 'Kelman's line of macho Glaswegians'.[38] This is certainly not the case. This view rests on a misunderstanding of the nature of most of the swearing in Kelman. As most of the characters are unable or unwilling to communicate, whatever anger they have is turned in on themselves, not broadcast outwards to others. It is in this context that Kelman displays most creativity in the possible lexical and syntactic variations of taboo language.

The author himself recognises that there are instances of use which are not violent or derogatory. To illustrate this he tells the story of a schoolgirl who hits her friend and explains it to the teacher by saying, 'Please miss, she called me a fucking C.O.W.':

> Now the thing is that 'C.O.W.' is the swear, it's not 'fucking' that is the verbal violence, that is the swear word there. So when you grasp that point...the argument has somehow altered already so that the use of four letter words, eh - fuck, cunt, bastard, and shite - they're part of language, and they have to be treated in the same way that the study of language treats other words.[39]

It is well-known that Kelman takes great care with his writing to ensure that every word and punctuation mark has value:

> I just take great pains with each story so that every comma is my comma, every full stop's mine...just so that everything is as precise as it should be, that's my only aim.[40]

It follows, therefore, that every four letter word has been chosen and placed with care. Kelman confirms this when he states:

> I mean, with four letter words the same applies as with any words, and it's the same rule that any writer has which is: 'Don't repeat yourself

[38] Quoted in Allan Massie, 'Missing the point about a work of pure fiction', *The Scotsman* 17 October 1994, p.10.
[39] McLean, 'James Kelman Interviewed', p.71
[40] 'K is for culture: Interview with James Kelman,' *Scottish Trade Union Review*, p.24

> unless you can get away with it.' And if you're using the word 'fuck' which most people would three times in each sentence, you can only do that if you're going to do that very well, so that people don't notice; the same applies to the word 'and' or the word 'wall': you can't use the word 'wall' in successive sentences unless you want the second one to be very emphatic, you must have a reason for doing it. Well the same applies for four letter words as any other words.[41]

This is entirely consistent with Willy Maley's assertion in his article on the topic that:

> The swearing is integral to Kelman's power as a writer. It is neither a vulgar and superfluous supplement nor an offensive coating concealing shortcomings in narrative, dialogue, or characterisation.[42]

The rich stylistic intensity can be seen in the following example from 'By the Burn' where the central character recalls the death of a child:

> Aw dear, the wee fucking lassie. Aw dear man aw dear it was so fucking hard so fucking awful hard, awful hard so fucking awful hard. Oh where was the wife. He needed his fucking wife. He needed her. He needed her close. He needed her so fucking close he felt so fucking Christ man the sandpit, where the wee lassie and her two wee pals got killed. (*The Burn* 243)

The effect of the repetition is cumulative and produces a keening tone reflecting his loss of control at the memory. The second sentence in particular uses so few words and yet each one is placed for maximum effect to create a rhythm almost like someone rocking their body back and forth in sorrow. The subsequent sentences follow a similar pattern but in a variation which uses punctuation to break them up into a different rhythm. Finally another expletive 'Christ' is used to break the flow completely to indicate that he has stumbled across the location of the deaths. Brian Morton has declared that 'Swearing serves both as mental punctuation and as a way of insulating thoughts too painful or too tender to be exposed'[43]. This could be applicable to

[41] McLean, 'James Kelman Interviewed', p.71

[42] Willy Maley, 'Swearing Blind: Kelman and the Curse of the Working Classes', *Edinburgh Review*, 95 (Spring 1996), p.108

[43] Brian Morton, 'Greater Expectations', *New Statesman & Society*, 17 February 1989, p.38

the above quotation, but equally swearing could be used as a technique to enable the process of exposure. Whichever is correct, it must be borne in mind that this is a display of Kelman's skill, not the characters themselves consciously using language to shut out thoughts or emotions. Kelman starts with the rhythms and power of everyday speech and transforms them through art to create something which transcends simple fidelity to real life.

As the above discussion suggests, language is more than syntax and lexis. The way these are put to use has to be taken into consideration, and this is where register becomes an issue. Kelman's use of register is consistent with the idea of the failure of language, its misuse and its acting as a barrier to communication. It is certainly true, however, that register is exploited by Kelman particularly well to set the atmosphere of certain environments. Given the prominence of betting in his work, notably in *A Chancer*, it is essential that he portrays this world convincingly. In this context several interesting points are raised in 'In a betting shop to the rear of Shaftesbury Avenue' from *Lean Tales* which only once briefly leaves the bookmaker's shop in which it is set. The language of betting is naturally incorporated into the text. There are numerous references to 'non-runners', 'the Extel speaker', 'betting show', 'Warrior Chief's the only danger', 'marking the prices' and various other terms which would be familiar to the punters of the early 1980's. The jargon identifies not only the location but places it in time as well, because the betting shop of today has changed out of all recognition, including the terminology. The essential feature of jargon is that it binds together a group of people with a similar interest and excludes others. This happens in 'In a betting shop...' when the whole shop turns to listen to a sound commentary over the speaker which would be incomprehensible to the casual listener. Kelman uses upper case to separate it even more from normal speech:

> OFF BRIGHTON: THEY'RE OFF BRIGHTON: RUNNING 2.17: AND ON THE OFF THEY BET FOUR TO NINE NUMBER THREE, FIVE TO TWO BAR...
>
> (*Lean Tales* 35)

Shared language would seem to imply community, but the core of the story is the comic and yet sad inability of the first person narrator to read the signals

of rejection from someone he meets in the betting shop. Jargon can act as a way of avoiding real communication. It imparts factual information but is only relevant to the short term situation in the bookie's. People in betting shops are interested in and only discuss one thing - that day's gambling, and even then most are reluctant to personalise that and discuss how successful or not they have been. All references are to externals. In fact, the above excerpt interrupts the narrator just as he is about to say something about his life, 'I'll tell you...' There is a breach in communication. Register here is used as a narrative device, a means to an end, the language of gambling serving to create the atmosphere of that *milieu* and depicting the merely superficial bonding of that community.

In *Greyhound for Breakfast* the protagonist of 'Foreign language users' is an example of someone who is excluded by an unfamiliar register, albeit it in a comic fashion. Having lost all his money in a casino his view is reported by the narrator:

> And yet these damn foreign language users had taken his money by devices one could scarcely describe as being other than less than fair, not to put too fine a point on things. (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 57)

It is strictly speaking correct to identify casino staff as 'foreign language users' because the language of casino gambling is French, but it is humorous because most people would first of all identify such expressions as 'croupier' or 'roulette' as primarily the register of casino betting. His failure to identify it thus marks him as a ludicrous outsider.

In some cases the register of the story becomes the central focus, rather than just a tool. 'Roofsliding' from *Not Not While the Giro* is one example where the apparent incompatibility of the register and the content, or at least the unexpected coupling of the two, is the whole point of the story. Written in the style of an academic paper, it describes the activity of the title. Included are the latinate language, the impersonal tone, and the academic footnote:

> When the men, sometimes designated *roofsliders*, have assembled along the peak they will lower themselves to a sitting posture on the jointure, the legs being outstretched flatly upon the sloped roof. They face to the

front of the building. *Roofsliding* will now commence.

(*Not Not While the Giro* 180)

The initial impact of hearing this group of Glaswegians described in the language of an anthropological survey is humorous, but closer investigation reveals a more sinister design. One realises that Kelman is making the serious point that the distancing of writer and subject reflects the distancing of the Glaswegians of the 'City Slums', as the footnote would have it, from the, in all probability, middle-class academic. The distance is not one of geography but social class. The use of italics is reminiscent of Hogg's narrator in *Confessions of a Justified Sinner.* Ostensibly the objective man of science, he betrayed his attitude to, amongst other things, ordinary people and their language by his use of italics for Scots words. The academic register is used in an unintentionally self-revelatory way as a distancing device, rather than for elucidation. The only reservation is that Kelman does this with less subtlety than Hogg, although the short story form may demand that the same effect be achieved more quickly, and that some subtlety be lost in the process. Dominic Head has observed how Kafka used the parable form in his short story 'Before the Law' to overturn our notions of authority.[44] Lucidity and didacticism are conventionally associated with the parable, but the point of the story is the rejection of lucidity and didacticism, and this point is expressed in the parable form. Kelman is doing something similar. He undermines the authority of the academic form, generally associated with objectivity, accuracy and clarity, to express something which is baffling.

Another story in the same collection purports to be a page from what seems to be a historical study, reporting a family duel. 'The Melveille Twins, page 82' presents the same academic style, including a footnote explaining the Scots expression 'corrie-fistit'. As with 'Roofsliding' the explanatory tone is ultimately useless, as there are more questions raised by the excerpt than are answered. Language obfuscates that which it seeks to clarify, but the implications of class hierarchy are easily understood. Within the text itself there is a reference to one observer of the episode:

[44] Dominic Head, *The Modernist Short Story: A study in theory and practice* , (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.15

> Only one man remained. He seems to have been a servant of some sort but little is known of his history aside from the fact of his being fairly literate. (*Not Not While the Giro* 116)

That a servant is 'fairly literate' is deemed worth mentioning by the academic author, with a touch of surprise that someone from the serving classes is in any way able to read and write. He is anonymous and inspires little interest. The lower classes are forced out to the periphery of history.

As a partial counter example to the view that Kelman only uses register to represent a failure or distortion of language, 'Street-sweeper' in *The Burn*, the story of the firing of the street-sweeper Peter, is worth examining more closely. The narrative is a mixture of free indirect and free direct style, the latter usually heralding Peter's manipulation of various registers. This he does in a very creative and amusing way. Constantly being spied on by his supervisor eager for an excuse to fire him, Peter feels that everybody is watching him, even a cat in the street. The cat is transformed into a witness at his trial:

> He was seen by a cat your honour. There he was in a doorway, having skived off because he had heard about a forced entry to a newsagent shop and thought there might have been some goods lying available to pilfer.
>
> Objection!
>
> Overruled. (*The Burn* 75-6)

Here we have a defence lawyer, the prosecuting lawyer and the judge in one short passage. Aside from the language of the courts, 'your honour', 'objection' and so on, we have the the prosecution lawyer presenting the case that the defendant, Peter, was hanging around on the chance of stealing something. The abruptness of the judge's 'Overruled' seems to indicate that the case has been prejudged, and not in Peter's favour. Later, Peter imagines Parliament debating his job:

> Mister Speaker Mister Speaker, this side of the House would request that you advise us as to the appertaining set of circumstances of the aforementioned place and primary purpose of said chappie's sinecure

> so-called. Uproar. A Springburn street. Put on the Member for Glasgow North. The member for Glasgow north has fuckt off for a glass of claret. Well return him post-haste. (*The Burn* 77)

The mixture of the parliamentary language and the informal 'chappie', along with the inappropriacy of 'fuckt off for a glass of claret' alert us to Peter's understanding of register and his skill in deploying it. He does not just do this for his own amusement but resorts to it instinctively when he is in danger of being found out, this time using the language of religion. Consistent with a society where religion has ceased to operate as a moral centre, this religious language is a confused jumble:

> Nothing o christ why was he an atheist this of all times he felt like screaming a howsyrfather yr paternoster a quick hail mary yr king billy for christ sake. (*The Burn* 77)

This differs from the previous examples in that he is not manipulating language, but remembering it imperfectly. The jumble of half-remembered phrases alerts us to Peter's emotional state. His emotional disorder matches the disorder of words. As an atheist he dredges up the only religious sounding expressions he can, 'Our Father' becoming 'howsyrfather', the Latin of the Catholic church, and the Virgin Mary being equated with the anti-Catholic King Billy, followed by Christ's name being used as an expletive. This is creative on Kelman's part, rather than the character's, because what is being highlighted here is Peter's ignorance. This warns us that Peter's use of register is not put forward by Kelman as a wholly positive thing. Kelman is making a political point also. Peter's ability is undeveloped, but what potential he has is wasted in the street sweeping job. He is singled out because of his leading a strike, presumably indicative that he is a man of some ability. This ability has made him worse off, however, perceived as a threat by the management. Moreover, there can be few jobs more isolating than that of a street-sweeper. Any verbal or imaginative skills he has can only display themselves inside his head, and like many Kelman characters this withdrawal into the mind becomes a type of torture. It seems as if Peter has no control over the intrusion of various registers. On numerous occasions expressions and

snatches of songs break into his line of thought, as when he sees the cat in the street. He switches suddenly from one apparently ordered sequence of ideas to a half recalled nonsense song:

> She wouldni think it was possible but, it's true, she thought it was all over as far as the problematics were concerned. Pussycats pussycats, I tought I saw. (*The Burn* 77)

Like so many of Kelman's characters, (and, indeed, like MacDiarmid's Drunk Man in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*), Peter is not in control of his thoughts and we are acutely aware of his impotence. We must bear in mind, however, that it takes a great deal of artistic control to render this effectively.

It is not only internally, in the form of thought, that language fails. In Kelman's fiction language's primary function of communication is not satisfied when people interact. Kelman is a master of creating dialogue which evades disclosure of information and conceals true emotions. 'A walk in the park' from *The Burn* is a good example of two people having a long conversation which leads nowhere. The absence of inquits, indicating the withdrawal of the narrator, is very easy to achieve, given that there are only two speakers. It allows us to overhear the conversation and be admitted to their intimacy.

A young couple meet but lack of funds forces them to stay in the park. The man asks which way the woman wants to walk:

> Will we go the long way round, he asked.
>
> What?
>
> Will we go the long way round?
>
> I don't care.
>
> D'you just want to go the short way?
>
> I'm no bothering. Then she added: I thought I smelt smoke on your breath?
>
> Ha, I wish to God you had! That'd mean I was a cheery smoker, a cheery dier of cancer!
>
> Have you been smoking then?
>
> Naw

Honestly?

Well I've had a couple.

Ah.

A couple.

D'you mean two?

Aye

Honestly?

You and your bloody honestly!

D'you mean two?

I said yes didn't I?

That's all?

That's all.

Good... (*The Burn* 20-21)

This recalls Pinter in its portrayal of non-communication. That such a lengthy conversation, and the story is almost wholly dialogue, can say so little displays Kelman's ear for the banalities and evasions of everyday conversation. Questions are met with other questions, for example a 'what?' when the original question was perfectly understandable, or questions are repeated and then rephrased in an attempt to get a straight answer. The end result of this is a non-committal 'I don't care' or 'I'm no bothering'. The answers do not relate to the preceding questions: an attempt to find out which route to take is followed by the non sequitur 'I thought I smelt smoke on your breath?'. A statement is transformed into a question, as if there can be no certainty about anything. Even words have lost a definite meaning. The plain and unambiguous 'a couple' is subject to a process of verification that it means 'two'. No ('naw') becomes yes and everything is ironically framed by the word 'honestly' when their speech is characterised by the lack of honesty. And yet the conclusion of the story seems to assert an understanding between the two, but this is an understanding which does not rely on words. Indeed, as we have seen, words are an obstacle to understanding. The woman seems to instinctively sense that something is wrong with him, even when he does not give it voice:

What's up? she had touched him on the elbow.

Och... He smiled for a moment, then gazed into her face; she was just so bloody beautiful. She was. And he was just fucking...hopeless. He couldn't bloody cope, with life. The expression on her face had been serious; she relaxed now and smiled for a moment, she gripped his hand tightly, put her other arm round his waist and spoke his name, but he shook his head in answer.

Don't worry. She whispered. Things aren't as bad as that.

Och I know I know.

Well then.

Eh. Eh.

She was staring straight into his eyes. (*The Burn* 24)

Gestures, a smile, a touch on the elbow, an arm around the waist, become more important as a gauge of true feeling, and the indirectness of the dialogue has become a direct and non-evasive stare straight into his eyes.

'The Comfort' (*The Good Times*) is superficially similar to 'A walk in the park' in its use of dialogue, but there are points where it diverges. The story concerns two friends discussing one of the men being unfaithful to his wife. There is evasion here too, but it is Chic, the unfaithful one, who is evasive because it is an uncomfortable topic for him, and his friend Tommy, the narrator, is cautious because he values the friendship:

Who played that?

He was talking about a song on the jukebox. I didnay answer him. I didnay even know apart from it was something out the charts. If I had known I wouldnay have telt him. Look, I said, ye've fuckt Linda about before.

Chic stared at me.

Well ye have.

Have I?

Fuck you.

Tommy ye know nothing. And when it comes to women ye know even less. Fucking merried for fucking ten minutes and ye've got the cheek to talk to me!

> What?
>
> What, aye, what.
>
> So it's us that's fighting?
>
> Are we?
>
> It's in your fucking hands innit. (*The Good Times* 213)

Chic avoids the important topic by asking about the song on the jukebox, to which there is no reply. Tommy will not be diverted, but his observation about Chic's prior behaviour is met only with a stare. Once again we have the repetition of questions, the request for clarification of things which are quite simple to understand. There is avoidance here, an evasion of the truth, but there is also the pretend lack of understanding of language and indirectness to provoke the other's anger. Language is used as a weapon. The outward form is similar to 'A walk in the park' but the underlying motivation is slightly different. And yet the end of the story is almost identical:

> I'm no that bad, I said and when I looked up at him I saw the worry on his face, it was so fucking horrible, I just wanted to pat him, pat him on the shoulder and I felt this hole in my belly, looking at him again, like his head was gony turn out to be a skull. Chic, I said, fuck sake man. (*The Good Times* 215)

Once again there is the instinctive understanding and compassion of one human being for another, sensing another's suffering on a wordless level. This time the desire for physical contact is not converted into action, perhaps because it would seem inappropriate between two male friends, but translated into the inadequate 'fuck sake man'.

4

Community and Place

Implicit within the term 'community' is a feeling of being rooted in a particular place with a particular group of people. Community requires common interest, shared values and responsibilities; it is not just a group of people who happen to be together in the same location. The setting for most of Kelman's fiction is the city, a large congregation of people, but there is no sense that there is a community which could assuage the philosophical sense of being alone, or provide a support system for political action. The writers of the Scottish Renaissance were for the most part rural in their preoccupations. This is consistent with their search for a core or essence which would define Scotland as a nation. Thus we have Edwin Muir, in his 1932 novel *Poor Tom,* presenting the move from the countryside to Glasgow as a shift into some hellish prison. There are numerous references to being enclosed: 'Like a prison, these neat streets and numbered houses and genteel railings'; 'the constriction of the rows of railed houses'.[1] These railings do not just allude to prison bars, but also serve as a means to separate people from each other, a means to keep others out as well as hold people in. Tom's excessive drinking can in part be attributed to a desire to knock down such barriers and return to the countryside:

> For on the farm he had at least felt the horizon round him wherever he went; but here his sight was bounded by arbitrary walls, and if he got drunk oftener than he should it was partly because then the houses lost their stability.[2]

This breakdown of community in the shift from country to city is to be found also in Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *A Scots Quair.* More contemporary writers such as William McIlvanney do not have nostalgia for a rural past but look back to an idealised working class community which has been lost. This is dealt with to an extent by Jeff Torrington in his novel *Swing hammer swing,* where the

[1] Edwin Muir, *Poor Tom* (Edinburgh: Paul Harris Publishing, 1982), p.11 & p.12
[2] Ibid., p.20

destruction of communities is physically represented by the demolition of the old decaying tenements, the inhabitants being removed to the housing schemes which skirt the city. This is an image which comes up in Robin Jenkins' *Just Duffy* where derelict tenements form a backdrop to murder. George Friel's disaffected schoolteacher in *Mr Alfred M.A.* is a victim of the breakdown of community, apparent in the run-down and hopeless housing scheme where he ends up teaching. His consciousness of the breakdown, and his despair at the unwelcome changes, reinforce his bleak loneliness and inability to relate to people and events around him. It is therefore apparent that Kelman is one of many writers who have dealt with the issue.

Isolation is the defining factor for most Kelman protagonists, even when in the presence of others. It has already been noted how language, a primary signifier of community, fails to effect communication, itself a cognate of the word 'community'. There is no sense of a reasoned and deliberate withdrawal from the community to follow Kierkegaard's dictate that one must withdraw from the external to, as Raili Elovaara puts it in his study of Samuel Beckett, 'give man's spiritual needs their due'.[3] It is rooted more in the personal failings of the characters or the state of society as a whole.

The notion of community must also incorporate the most basic form of relationship, the one between men and women. Kelman's portrayal of women has been subject to some comment, largely to the effect that women are either absent or relegated to the background in his fiction. This is true to an extent, but Kelman's work is usually too complex to yield to such generalisations, and may be explained in part as an inevitable consequence of a narrative style which centres on the consciousness of one individual. Furthermore, when the short story collections are looked at chronologically there is some development in the representation of women and men/women relationships. What is apparent once more is Kelman's launching point of the real, which is then translated into something different. Credible accounts of attitudes which may be encountered in life are reshaped through the consciousness of the central characters to pronounce emphatically the psychological and philosophical

[3] Raili Elovaara, *The Problem of Identity in Samuel Beckett's Prose: An Approach from Philosophies of Existence*, (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1976), p.33

isolation of contemporary society.

When Kelman deals with the most basic community of all, the family, he does this most effectively through the eyes of young people. As this group of characters become more aware of the disappointments of life, their detachment grows. The process of increasing consciousness and lost innocence brings with them only separation and eventually the existential despair which overcomes all Kelman's characters.

The breakdown of community has the further effect that political action becomes impossible. The fragmentation of urban communities is a feature of the post-industrial city, but unfortunately the return to a preindustrial age, centred in the countryside, is not offered as an alternative. This creates a situation where the Kelman character has no sense of belonging, no feeling of home, in any environment.

The story 'Getting Outside' from *Greyhound for Breakfast* is a good example of a typical Kelman character's attitude to those around him. The general effect of the story is of someone who is desperate to get out of the house but sees it as a type of escape, a struggle to avoid other human beings in the process, reflected in the title itself. It is a question of 'getting' outside, not the more neutral 'going' outside. The first person narrator establishes his attitude at the very beginning of the piece:

> I'll tell you something: when I stepped outside that door I was alone, and I mean alone. And it was exactly what I had wanted, almost as if I'd been demanding it. (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 201)

The initial sentence is interesting. It is a useful narrative device for starting off the story, but it requires someone to be addressed, and this would imply that the narrator has contact with someone to whom he is close enough to relate the events and his feelings about them. This notwithstanding, the narrator soon reveals a Kafka-like sense of menace, his heightened senses detecting the watching neighbours: 'I was being watched. [...] And I could almost hear them drawing the curtains aside to stare out.' (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 201) When 'they' do come out and make apparently friendly conversation with the narrator, we have the evasiveness and non-communication already noted in

Kelman's dialogue:

> Where you off to?
>
> Eh - nowhere in particular.
>
> Can we come with you?
>
> You?
>
> Well we feel like a breath of fresh air.
>
> ...So I just, what I did for a minute, I just stared down at my shoes and then I said, I don't know how long I'll be away for.
>
> (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 202)

Aside from the literal non-communication of silence and the lack of eye contact there is the avoidance of answering questions and pretending not to understand. In fact the ending of the story is inconclusive as we do not know if the narrator escaped or returned to his house. We leave the scene with everyone standing motionless in the street, the narrator like a cornered criminal.

The temporary nature of relationships when other people are encountered is indicative of the impossibility of creating community. Unemployment creates distance from the community, but even where work is available its casual nature can create at best a transient community which cannot survive long. Seasonal workers in agriculture or holiday camps (see, for example, 'Zuzzed' in *Not Not While the Giro* or 'O jesus, here come the dwarfs' in *Lean Tales*) can expect no real bond with those they briefly encounter. Those who come together in betting shops or casinos, which feature so often, do not come for contact with other people but to gamble and compete with others. Kelman's characters are seldom married, or even in a relationship with a member of the opposite sex, except for short encounters for sex, as in 'Renee' (*Greyhound for Breakfast*) which turns into a humiliation for the girl involved when they are observed and jeered at by fellow workers. In fact, the incident is the cue for the male narrator to gather his belongings together and move on rather than engage with the community any further. In 'Pictures' (*The Burn*) a sexually frustrated and lonely cinemagoer observes and wonders about a girl sitting alone and crying. The obsessive nature of his thoughts is presented in the free

indirect style, which allows the reader to follow the shifts in his mood as his thoughts seem to control him, rather than vice versa. Although he does actually make contact and buys the girl a cup of coffee, it ends there. He is incapable of communicating with her and resolving the questions he has about her because he cannot empty his mind of the squalid encounters he himself has had in the past, notably being sexually abused as a child by an adult in a public toilet. He projects onto her his own sense of being a victim:

> That was probably how she had been greeting, the woman, because of the fucking victims, she was a victim, and that's who it was happening to, the fucking victims. (*The Burn* 12)

His thoughts provoke him to fury and he storms out of the cinema, leaving behind the girl and an old lady. The image of solitary individuals scattered around the cinema, obscured from each other in the darkness and unable to communicate is a potent illustration of people brought together, but without a community being formed even for a short time.

'Pictures' is a good example of how the locking of characters into their own consciousness may deny the possibility of a relationship being formed. The distressed girl sitting in the cinema is almost completely a creation of the central character's mind. In fact, for the young man the world only exists as a creation of his own consciousness. He ponders the end of the world: 'the destruction of himself meant the destruction of the world anyway because with him not there his world wouldn't be either.' (*The Burn* 1) The only objective fact which is related at the outset is that the girl is crying. From this simple prompt the young man is led by his train of thought to shape and reshape the woman in his own mind. She does not exist as an entity independent of himself. She is corralled into his idea that because he himself was a victim then everyone else is too. His ostensible tenderness towards others is in fact self-pity. Jenny Turner, in an otherwise perceptive review of *The Burn,* mistakenly asserts that the collection was an advance for Kelman because he was now able to write about women 'as entities in and of themselves.'[4] The passage she quotes as an example of 'affectionate observation' is in fact quite the opposite:

[4] Jenny Turner, 'Scottish Men and Scottish Women', *London Review of Books,* Vol.13 No.12 (1991), p.20

> But they obviously didnt know this lassie who was a warrior, a fucking warrior. She quite liked wearing short mini-skirts but only to suit herself. If she wanted to wear them she would wear them, but it was only for her own pleasure, she would please herself. (*The Burn* 3)

Turner has clearly failed to notice the sexually obsessive nature of the main character, confirmed by this description of a former girlfriend which focuses on her mini-skirt. The passage is ironic in that it seems to be about an empowered woman but in fact is just a preamble to a further description of her actual role as a sex object for the patrons of the cinema where she worked. She is characterised, like the crying young woman, as a victim, and this brings to mind his role as victim in their relationship when she suddenly moves to another city without telling him. His thoughts on this could serve as a summary of the idea of community for Kelman's characters:

> So he never heard of her again. It was funny the way you lost track of folk, folk you thought you would know for life; suddenly they just werent there and you were on your ownsome. This seemed to happen to him a lot. (*The Burn* 4)

It is certainly the case that women feature more in *The Burn* than in previous collections, but the male protagonists are still incapable of experiencing true interaction with them. 'Lassies are trained that way' deals with a situation where a middle-aged man sitting alone in a busy pub attempts to engage in conversation a young woman standing by herself at the bar. The young woman concerned is the focus of the central character's consciousness but, as with the woman in 'Pictures', she is something observed and not actively involved. The man at the bar muses on the nature of male/female relationships both internally and in remarks addressed to the girl, but we can put no faith in his conclusions because he is not even sensitive enough to notice that he is making the girl feel uncomfortable and that the attentions he is paying her are unwelcome. At one point he even tries to start a conversation about women's periods, a topic unarguably inappropriate in its intimacy. It comes as no surprise to find out early on in the story that although he has been married he now lives alone:

> He used to be a married man with a family of his own! Which simply means, to cut the crap, that him and his wife dont see eye-to-eye anymore. If they ever did. She doesnt live with him. And he doesnt live with her. (*The Burn* 144)

Their separation is emphasised at the end by the use of two sentences where one could be used, as if husband and wife could not even co-exist in the same sentence. His insensitivity is underscored by our ironic appreciation that the more he talks about men and women being drawn together the more the girl draws away from him:

> There's barriers between us, the sexes. But what you cannot deny is that we're drawn to one another. We are: we're drawn to one another. There's bonds of affection. And solidarity as well, you get solidarity between us - definitely ... That's what I think anyhow - course I'm older than you ... When you get to my age you seem to see things that wee bit clearer. (*The Burn* 152)

This is said just at the point where the girl moves off to be with some friends who have just come into the bar. His reliability can be called into question, especially as his previous relationships, including with others in the pub (he is, after all, drinking by himself) seem to have broken down. It should be pointed out, however, that this man's behaviour is insensitive, and exasperating for the girl involved, but there are no dark undertones as there are in 'Pictures'.

The Burn provides us with one of only two stories which are written from the viewpoint of a woman, 'Real Stories'. The other is 'A Sunday evening' in *Greyhound for Breakfast* which will be discussed in detail later. Kelman is therefore not absolutely correct when he asserts that:

> I intentionally work from the perspective of a male narrative voice, in other words, the voice that tells the stories that I write is a male voice.[5]

Both stories had been written when he made this statement which was put forward as a defence against accusations of being a 'macho male writer'. Kelman seems to consider that his intention absolves him of that fault:

[5] 'K is for culture', p.26

> In a sense, I'm being condemned for what I set out to do intentionally. Much of the criticism is prejudiced...it doesn't actually look at the work, it begins from a prejudice about the work.[6]

Kelman is not very helpful in this regard. Whenever he is asked about the macho accusations he usually responds with a list of women writers he admires, seeming to miss the point that the accusation may be about Kelman's presentation of the characters and not the author.[7] The increased concern with male/female relationships in *The Burn* could indicate that Kelman has been affected by criticism of the fact that in his earlier work women were either entirely absent or on the periphery. The female perspective of 'Real Stories' is nevertheless consistent with the theme of absence of community expressed in other stories where the viewpoint is male. The 'real stories' of the title are stories which the central character makes up in order to produce an alternative version of her life. The title also alerts us to the fact that there is another story: the story being told here. We cannot tell if the narrator within the story is male or female, but he or she is omniscient and relates events from both the husband and the wife's perspective. This multiplicity of story tellers complicates our response in terms of male/female attitudes. The central female character is unhappy with her present situation and in particular with her husband from whom she locks herself away:

> What happened is she stayed in her room and started telling wee stories to herself. She did. That's what she did. Wee stories about her girlhood with outcomes that were different from real life. Usually it was her that was the heroine whereas in real life she had never been the heroine, and none of her pals had ever been the heroine either. (*The Burn* 157)

To some extent her dissatisfaction seems to stem from marriage itself and the role she is forced to play within it. Given a choice she would choose to be with no-one:

> She could have worked in an office and had a career. That was what she should have done, if she had got the chance, a career-woman. She would have been better than him and she wouldn't have had only

[6] Ibid.

[7] See 'K is for culture' p.26 and Kirsty McNeill, 'Interview with James Kelman', pp.5-6

> terrible folk to know because she would have been different. And she wouldn't have been with him. She wouldn't have been with anybody maybe, maybe no anybody at all. She would have just kept her own door. She would have had it nice, she wouldn't have had him. Not him and not nobody. If she had wanted one she would have took one, it was easy, men looking at you, that was easy. but she just wouldn't want one, she wouldn't. (*The Burn* 161)

The desire for one's 'own door' implies independence, but it may also be that Kelman felt it necessary to use a female perspective to indicate that the desire for isolation and withdrawal from the community is not a uniquely male view but a universal one. *The Burn* is certainly distinguished by its fuller treatment of male/female relations. The most recent collection of short stories *The Good Times* is not so intense in its treatment but does not abandon the theme. 'Oh my darling', for example, also subjects men/women relationships to scrutiny and recognises the difficulty of truly knowing another person.

In his earlier collections Kelman focuses on the inadequacies or undeveloped nature of men's attitudes to women. For the most part women are excluded entirely, or present merely to serve food and drink. This may be a reflection of the pub/betting shop/billiard hall environments from which women were largely excluded until the late 1970's and which are the settings for so many of the stories. When women are presented more substantially there may be some implied criticism at their treatment by men. The attitudes of the characters may account for Kelman himself being labelled macho or sexist. It is not uncommon for views expressed by characters to be attributed mistakenly to the author, especially if there are no indications of narrative irony. This does not mean that Kelman does not share these attitudes, however, as it would not be unreasonable to suggest that a young man in the 1970's could have sentiments regarding women which would be unacceptable today. Such attitudes can be seen in the depiction of the two women characters in 'Wednesday' from *An Old Pub Near the Angel.* The two women apparently satisfy what for the central male character are the dual roles which allow women to be valued by men: the mother-servant and the whore. The young

male protagonist's perfect day is generated by a cleaning lady who clears up his vomit, gives him a shilling for the meter, goes out to the shops and buys groceries for him, which she then transforms into a delicious breakfast. She does this because, as she explains to him: 'You remind me of my son and my man [...] and my father and brothers.' (*An Old Pub Near the Angel* 45) This meets with the protagonist's approval: 'A great woman. Truly great.' (*An Old Pub Near the Angel* 46) His pleasure is compounded later in the day when he meets another resident of the building who is a prostitute. This is no drug-raddled unfortunate but an attractive young woman who has sex with him without payment because she likes him. This unlikely scenario alerts us to the fact that there may be an element of fantasy in the story, but it is the nature of the fantasy which is troubling. 'Wednesday' is not a particularly good example of Kelman's work. His first volume has the feel of a writer finding his way and who is a little inhibited, although some of the features of the author's style are present, including use of free indirect style. Neither is the central character believable or particularly interesting. This is not the case with 'Jim Dandy' from *Not Not While the Giro* which depicts a central character who is all too believable in his irresponsibility towards family obligations and infidelity to his wife. A first person account told in the present tense, there are many comic moments. It is a feature of the story that men and women have their own separate communities, or that is how it seems to the protagonist when he visits his wife in the maternity ward:

> Back at the hospital nothing is doing. The feeling that they were all enjoying the female banter before us crowd showed up. The looks from the staff. I am too sensitive. They arent really men haters.
>
> (*Not Not While the Giro* 108)

His awkwardness around women is comically highlighted when he takes leave of his wife by shaking her hand. It is not until he enters the pub and 'a cloistered male group' that he feels more comfortable. His sensitivity is brought into question when at a family party he has sex with a young relative while his wife is giving birth. This scene is described humorously, although it is tragic in its implications, with the sex punctuated by demands for cheese and

gammon sandwiches. What is significant is that the male feels he is being manipulated by the girl and forced into having sex. He is presented as a passive partner. These perceptions that men and women inhabit different worlds and that women control men are not uncommon and come up with some frequency in Kelman stories, albeit in a less emphatic way than in 'Jim Dandy'. 'The Best Man Advises' and 'Circumstances' from *An Old Pub Near the Angel*, or 'The house of an Old Woman' in *Not Not While the Giro* are other examples.

One interesting group of stories is that which deals with another sector of the community, children and adolescents. They include: 'Away in Airdrie' (*Not Not While the Giro*), 'Sunday papers', 'The wee boy that got killed' (*Greyhound for Breakfast*), 'Joe laughed' (*The Good Times*) and 'Fifty Pence' (*Greyhound for Breakfast*). These stories form a small but quite distinct group, and part of their success is due to the keen insight Kelman displays into the minds of young people, and his adept depiction of them. Unlike the children and teenagers in Robin Jenkins' novels who rarely swear and never really seem threatening, as in, for example, *Just Duffy* or *The Changeling*, Kelman's boys seem to be much more realistic and recognisable to contemporary readers. Their significance is in the demonstration of a progressive breakdown of the family community. As the central characters become older an increasing isolation manifests itself. The boys seem to confirm the notion that the developed consciousness acquired as children move into adulthood brings with it a sense of futility and despair; the more aware and analytical the characters are, the more they suffer. Kelman marks this by the different ways he deals with the narrative. In the first two stories above, 'Away in Airdrie' and 'Sunday papers', there is very little internal processing of external information because the central characters have not yet developed the ability to do so. Therefore the form must reflect that. The central characters in the next two stories, 'The wee boy that got killed' and 'Joe laughed', are older and have developed enough mentally and psychologically to support a form which focuses on the thoughts of the main characters. The last of the stories, 'Fifty pence', is a variation of this, and all are good examples of Kelman's moulding the narrative form to his needs.

Two stories which achieve their effect through bare description of events, rarely entering the consciousness of the central characters, are 'Away in Airdrie' (*Not Not While the Giro*) and 'Sunday papers' (*Greyhound for Breakfast*). Both deal with young boys. In neither of these stories are the characters pained by their own thought processes or by a sense of futility. Relationships may generate embarrassment or hurt, but also excitement, concern and tenderness. It may be that because of their youth the consciousness of the central characters is still evolving, and has yet to succumb to the overwhelming negativity characteristic of so many of Kelman's protagonists, a negativity rooted in a developed awareness coupled with bad experiences (or a perception of all experiences as bad). The youngsters in the above stories cannot yet articulate their emotions, only experience them. It is fitting, therefore, that the narrative voice is a third person one. The first person voice requires a greater self-awareness than is available to these boys.

'Away in Airdrie' is the story of a young boy Danny's trip to Airdrie with his uncle Archie to watch a football match. It is clear to the reader that Archie is not completely welcome in the household, evident because of the knowing looks and the conversational hesitancies relayed without comment from the narrator. Danny notices these things but does not understand them, although by the end of the story he seems to arrive independently at the tacit conclusion that his uncle is not wholly reliable. Kelman's skill with dialogue is apparent once more. Typically there are almost no inquits or conventional conversation-marking punctuation. Archie invites Danny's father to the game:

> ...You'll be coming to the match afterwards though eh?
>
> The father looked at him.
>
> The boys are through at Airdrie the day.
>
> Aw aye aye. The father nodded, then he shrugged. If you'd told me earlier Archie - by the time I'm finished work and that...
>
> Uncle Archie was smiling: Come on, long time since we went to a match the gether. And you're rare and handy for a train here as well. Aye I

> know that but eh; the father hesitated. He glanced at the other faces round the table. He said, Naw Archie. I'll have to be going to my work and that, the gaffer asked me in specially. (*Not Not While the Giro* 72)

Archie persists in trying to persuade his brother because he knows that he is easily swayed, as is demonstrated by his inability to make a direct refusal. He hesitates, he nods, he shrugs. His voice trails away into nothingness after using the vague 'and that...'. His sentences are not completed - he seems to be about to continue, but doesn't, 'I know that but eh.' He repeats 'aye' several times, avoiding an outright refusal by apparently agreeing with what his brother says, and delaying the moment of truth. His glance around the faces of the other family members is an unanswered appeal for help. Finally, he compounds his feebleness by deflecting the request onto his sons: 'Take the boys but. Danny - Danny'll go anywhere for a game.' (*Not Not While Giro* 73) As if to emphasise the father's weakness Danny's older brother rejects forcefully: 'Not me, replied Danny's brother. I've got to go up the town.' (*Not Not While the Giro* 73)) When Danny agrees enthusiastically, we are made aware that he lacks the knowledge of the others:

> Danny noticed his mother was looking across the table at his father while she rose to tidy away the breakfast stuff. He got up and went to collect his football gear from the room. (*Not Not While Giro* 73)

The narrator here makes no comment as to the meaning of the look: is it recrimination, anger, concern for her son, amusement? Danny makes no attempt to interpret it, he merely observes and then continues to act. His actions can betray his emotions, however, even if he does not articulate them. Later, when they arrive in Airdrie, his uncle becomes the centre of attention of the crowd of supporters they meet there. Danny becomes embarrassed when his uncle teases him, perhaps sensing that he is being used to entertain the crowd. Danny rebels instinctively through his actions:

> Hey Danny boy come here a minute! Uncle Archie reached out to grip him by the shoulder, taking him into the middle of the group. See this yin, he was saying: He'll be playing for Rangers in next to no time...The men stared down at him. Aye went on his uncle, scored two for the

school this morning. Man of the Match.

That a fact son? called a man.

Danny reddened.

You're joking! cried Uncle Archie. Bloody ref chalked another three off him for offside! Eh Danny?

Danny was trying to free himself from the grip, to get out of the group. (*Not Not While the Giro* 75)

Uncle Archie's ebullience is marked by the frequency of exclamation marks when he talks. He physically forces Danny into the group, but Danny tries to physically force himself out again when he becomes embarrassed at his uncle's outrageous claims for his football ability.

The child's perspective is skilfully set out by Kelman. He evokes well the atmosphere of the football ground. One senses that this experience will reverberate in Danny's life in the same way that the disembodied shouts echo round the empty stadium. The echo seems to emphasise Danny's isolation, his distance from others. In particular Kelman deftly portrays the unfamiliar environment of the pub where Archie ends up, more concerned for his own pleasure than the feelings or welfare of the boy. His uncle assures him that he will come away when his drink is finished but when Danny next looks he sees that the level of his drink is still the same, not realising that his uncle is simply buying more drinks to replace those he has drunk. That the boy is an outsider in this environment is accentuated by the fact that he can only glimpse the interior partially through a swinging door. Like his view, his understanding is incomplete. Nevertheless his impressions are many and are swiftly noted and absorbed:

> The door of the pub swung open as a man came out and passed by the close. Danny was at the door. A hot draught of blue air and smells of the drink, the whirr of the voices, reds and whites and blues and whites all laughing and swearing and chapping at dominoes.
>
> He walked to the chip shop. (*Not Not While the Giro* 77)

The tumble of sense impressions of the unfamiliar environment, conveyed by the repetition of 'and', is contrasted with the banality of the final simple

declarative sentence. The excitement of the pub and Danny's boredom waiting for his uncle are thus also contrasted. Once again Danny realises something instinctively, without analysis or articulation of it. In fact, it is only when Danny is bored that we enter his thought process and his concern is not the behaviour of his uncle but the fact that he would like a pair of wide trousers, the fashion of the day. He feels some anger but does not voice it, only signifies it by repeating in his mind his parents' words:

> He wished he could get a pair of wide trousers. The mother and father were against them. He was lucky to get wearing long trousers at all. The father was having to wear short trousers and he was in his last year at school, just about ready to start serving his time at the trade. Boys nowadays were going to regret it for the rest of their days because they were being forced into long trousers before they needed to. Wide trousers. He wasn't bothered if he couldn't get the ones with the pockets down the sideseams, the ordinary ones would do.
>
> (*Not Not While the Giro* 77)

His father, like many parents, has ignored the actual request and gone off on a tangent, berating the youth of today. Danny repeats the words because their irrelevance has ensured they stick in his mind, and they have had an emotional effect on him, but he makes no overt judgement of his father or articulation of his feelings. Similarly with his uncle, he has eventually understood on an instinctive level that his uncle is not really concerned about him and is being dishonest with him. He does not analyse, but follows this realisation with action. He decides to return home independently, but is astute enough to know not to tell his mother that he has been abandoned by his uncle. He accepts things as they are, with irritation, perhaps, but not rancour. That would require some analysis of the situation and judgement of the actions of his irresponsible uncle. This he is not yet able to do, but, like the train crashing on through the night at the conclusion of the story, he will cross enough of these bridges to arrive at that point. Danny has set out on the path of mental and psychological development towards adulthood.

Tommy, the 12 year old boy in 'Sunday papers', is similar to Danny in that

he undergoes a disappointing experience, but dissimilar in that he is not as far along the developmental process to assimilate his experiences. Taking over his brother's paper round, his initial enthusiasm does not dissolve in the face of his inability to do it quickly or properly. Like Danny he does not articulate any disappointment and does not assign blame for the unexpected shambles his round becomes. He only registers the physical sensations of the weight of the bag, the force needed to push a thick Sunday paper through a narrow letter box, his pockets weighed down by the massive amounts of loose change he has to collect from customers. Unlike Danny, however, he seems to submerge his disappointment totally. When asked towards the end of the story if he is looking for his own round he responds with a buoyant 'Aye!' and relates none of his difficulties to his parents at the conclusion. The reader is sympathetic to his struggle but, in contrast to Danny, we do not feel that he is able to recognise a problem and act on it, never mind subject it to scrutiny in his mind. On the other hand, his problems are practical ones, rather than, in Danny's case, the more complex ones of human relationships. The third person narrative would seem to be essential for the above two stories. An external, objective viewpoint is necessary to allow readers to interpret and articulate in their own mind the deeper meaning of the story. The children's consciousness is not yet developed enough to articulate this for themselves.

Two stories, 'The wee boy that got killed', in *Greyhound for Breakfast*, and 'Joe laughed', in *The Good Times*, demonstrate what happens when the young boys in 'Away in Airdrie' and 'Sunday papers' develop a consciousness capable of sustaining a focus on the internal. That the central characters are adolescents is established by the many references to the concerns and environment of teenagers. In 'The wee boy that got killed', Gary Chambers displays the uncertainties and insecurities of youth, especially in relation to girls, in another example of free indirect style:

> It was easier when you were a lassie - everything. You just had to stand there and just wait. But if you were a boy you had to go out, it was more difficult, you couldn't just stand there, even knowing how to start, if you were a boy, you had to start, what did you do did you just feel the tit?

> These things you never seem to find out properly, you're never totally sure if it's right, if the lassie's thinking you're an idiot.
>
> (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 146-7)

This is familiar ground: the rather obsessive nature of his thoughts, thoughts running out of control, as evidenced by the sequence of sentences merging into one long sentence. The concerns may be adolescent but it reveals a consciousness already weighed down by uncertainty and over-analysis. 'Joe laughed' is a first person account, also by an adolescent, testified to by his behaviour with his football companions, throwing stones and referring to himself as 'the best player out of the young team' (*The Good Times* 3). Already, however he can express his disillusion and nihilism:

> I felt like I had kicked my last ball. And I was fucking glad. I was never gony fucking kick another ball again in my whole fucking life and I was fucking glad, that was that, I had fucking finished with it, fucking football, I was finished. (*The Good Times* 6)

and at the story's conclusion, hanging from the roof of a derelict building, referring to the neighbours who call on him to climb into their houses to let them in when they had locked themselves out:

> I didnay care, that was how they called for me, well they could call for me all their life, that was how long they could call, that was from now on, cause I was finished with it; I wasnay sure what I was gony do, no from now on, I maybe no even do nothing, it would just depend.
>
> (*The Good Times* 9)

Both of these excerpts make reference to the future, but in a completely negative fashion. He finishes with things but not in order to start something else. It is shocking that the narrative voice is that of an adolescent. It demonstrates how quickly coming to consciousness can bring with it a sense of futility.

'Fifty Pence' in *Greyhound for Breakfast* is an example of Kelman's deft matching of form to the theme of the story. Like the above stories it is also about an adolescent, but the behaviour of the boy in this story would seem to indicate that while he is capable of understanding and thereby experiencing

emotional upset, he actively chooses not to articulate it. Things are understood, but not expressed by him or his grandmother, perhaps to spare themselves too much pain. There may be internal turmoil, but it is curbed and this is demonstrated formally. The essential point is the reining in of feeling and this must be accommodated in the narrative mode.

The story centres around a boy and his grandmother, together in a room on a winter's night waiting for something or someone. Constant references are made to time, and this serves to heighten the tension. Almost no words are exchanged between them, only some looks which seem weighted with the shared understanding of the situation and the tenderness they show each other:

> The old woman regarded him gravely for a moment. When he smiled back her forehead wrinkled in a taut kindly expression. Her gaze roamed upwards to the clock then her eyelids closed over.
> (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 27)

The tautness in her expression underlines the unexpressed tension. Various sounds emphasise the silence of the room: 'the gas-light flickered' (a visual as well as a sound impression); 'The rustle as he turned a page of the paper seemed to reverberate around the narrow, high-ceilinged kitchen.' (both *Greyhound for Breakfast* 27); when a new lump of coal is laid on the fire 'It crackled' (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 28). When the narrative reveals the boy's thoughts we can see the implied mutual understanding:

> There was nothing to keep him. His parents would be annoyed. [...] They would guess he was here. (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 27)

Kelman writes with great economy here, and communicates so much that is unspoken. This is the first inkling we have that the boy's staying on is futile. His parents would be angry because they could guess where he was and why. This is not the first time this has happened and they know that there is no point in his remaining with his grandmother. They are annoyed because he stays on nevertheless. The boy himself knows it is pointless but stays on, perhaps out of some urge to protect his grandmother. The build up in tension predicts something unpleasant about to happen.

When something does in fact happen it is unpleasant on an emotional level but not in the physically violent way the sense of menace would seem to have prepared us for. A drunken, shambling grandfather enters, more pitiable than dangerous. The details of his bald patch and lost bunnet, his inability to stand, his incomprehensible muttering and excessive concern about the small sum of ten shillings all combine to shape a pathetic figure. The grandfather ignores the boy. Both the grandmother and the boy try to conceal their anguish:

> The boy looked helplessly at her but she watched the man. The expression on her face gave nothing away. Her usual face. [...] When her gaze fell on him the boy tried to smile. He was aware that if he blinked, tears would appear in his eyes. He smiled at her.
>
> (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 28)

The emotions are recognised but held in check. External appearance conceals the internal emotion. The uncommenting objective third person narrator is ideal to reflect this, avoiding the jumble of thoughts and impressions that a wholly subjective account may require. The unstated is more important here. The process is one of gradual breaking down of links with others. Kelman is astute in his understanding of this particular community, young people, and their inevitable path to isolation from those around them.

Breakdown in community and the impossibility of shaping new communities has the consequence that political action becomes unthinkable. Kelman's personal involvement in politics has already been noted. He has expressed his views openly and directly in a variety of media: essays, reports of talks he has given, interviews, or accounts of action in which he was a participant. In his short stories, however, there is little evidence of organised political activity, and little political discussion.[8] When the latter does occur Kelman tends to be implicitly dismissive of the notions of working class solidarity and group action, or at least charts its absence. In this, Kelman's work contrasts with, for example, Robert Tressell's *The ragged trousered philanthropists*, the message of which was that working people had to band together to change the capitalist system, or, in a Scottish context, the idealised

[8] Note, however, his use of two political activists as the main characters in his drama *Hardie and Baird.*

view of community in William McIlvanney's *Docherty* where the working class 'a' move forward thegither, or nut at all'.[9] In drama Bill Bryden's *Willie Rough* is an overtly political depiction of working class courage in a shipyard on the Clyde. This idealisation of the working classes is one towards which writers such as Kelman seem antagonistic. Furthermore, political action almost inevitably involves group action, but for the isolated and confused Kelman character, this is not even a consideration. Unemployment forces individuals to find individual approaches just to survive. We have already seen how the typical Kelman character withdraws into himself, a condition which thwarts political activity which presupposes community involvement. Very early in his writing career Kelman explored the debasement and futility of conventional politics in his story 'New Business' in *An Old Pub Near the Angel.* This story is interesting in that it achieves its aim largely through displaying how language is debased, and is therefore consistent with the theme of how language can be used to separate people, rather than bringing them together, thereby negating its primary function of communication.

The story concerns a union meeting and the attempts of Dougie and Willie, probably students doing temporary work, to promote discussion and opposition to government legislation on industrial relations. The bulk of the piece is dialogue, and at this early stage Kelman is quite conventional in his use of reporting phrases. Kelman readers may find it irritating to have to read a succession of 'He said's or 'He repeated's, given their paucity in most of his writing, but in mitigation it can be pointed out that there are a great number of characters in the story, and it may be necessary to avoid confusion as to who is speaking.

At the very outset we are made aware of the two students' exclusion from the group. They arrive far too early for the meeting, unaware that the other members are still in the pub, clearly more concerned with having a few beers rather than attending to the serious business of fighting for their rights. When the crowd do arrive, they are immediately presented by Kelman in terms of their position in the hierarchy: Chairman, Acting Secretary, Shop Steward,

[9] William McIlvanney, *Docherty* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1975), p.277

members of the committee, and 'ordinary' union members. The point is clear, the hierarchical and class structure of society is reflected in the union itself, ironic given its role to fight for equality. The power structure is conspicuous also in the way the participants interact in the meeting. The Chairman's ostensible requests for agreement are in fact signals for the members to stop pursuing an issue. When it seems as if members are starting to become involved in a topic and embark on a line of thought at odds with the official view there is a swift curtailment. Communication is resisted. Here discussion by Tam, an ordinary member, of the menu in the works canteen is cut short:

> "Okay! Order!" called the Chairman. "We've done all this last month, Brother Smith and Gus says the manager's getting on to Head Office about it so we'll just have to wait and see the score. Okay?"
>
> Tam muttered something to his neighbour.
>
> "Okay?" repeated the Chairman.
>
> Tam shrugged.
>
> "Right," continued the Chairman. (*An Old Pub Near the Angel* 83)

This typical exchange illustrates the passive acceptance of the Chairman's authority, likewise his passivity in turn of just waiting to 'see the score' on the Head Office action. On many occasions in the story exchanges are 'muttered' or 'whispered', creating an atmosphere of conspiracy amongst the union officials or cowed compliance among the members. In both cases open communication is set aside. The distortion and misuse of language is apparent when the Chairman uses jargon to knock back requests for the meeting to address unwelcome topics, in this case, a pay rise:

> "How much we asking anyway?" called a man from the back.
>
> "Fifteen, Charlie," answered Brother Reilly.
>
> "That's New Business," interjected the Chairman.
>
> (*An Old Pub Near the Angel* 84)

The chairman here exerts his power by defining what constitutes 'New Business'. When Dougie and Willie eventually manage to broach the topic of the proposed Bill which will control the right to strike, and seem to overcome the eagerness for the body to adjourn once again to the pub, the Chairman uses

a similar tactic to regain control: "It's *ultra vires*!" (*An Old Pub Near the Angel* 87). Possession of this piece of language reasserts his authority. It is within his power to decide the agenda, but not the ordinary members. The conclusion of the story leaves the two students again alone, pondering the Chairman's invitation to go with them to the pub, ironically because the union members 'like a good argument' (*An Old Pub Near the Angel* 88). The words of the invitation, "Should come for a drink with us son" (and note the patronising 'son') is immediately followed up by a farewell, "OK then lads? See you tomorrow." Surface meaning is at odds with the sub-text.

Even when subject to unjust authority there is a passivity which prevents many of Kelman's characters in the short stories from taking steps to assert themselves. This aspect also appears early in his work. The first story in *An Old Pub Near the Angel* depicts a character, Jake Duncan, who loses his job, hence the title 'The Cards'. The story of this young bus conductor plainly points forward to *The Busconductor Hines*. The narrative is on the whole a rather conventional third person account with an omniscient narrator, but there is also use of the free indirect style to let us into Jake's consciousness. The anti-authoritarian streak in Kelman's writing is evident from the start. One might expect the firing of Jake to be the climax of the story, but in fact it is just the starting point, executed through a spoken exchange with Mr. Sanderson. Mr. Sanderson is clearly a low level manager, but is eager to exert whatever authority he has been granted. So often in Kelman it is the low level agents of the unseen 'Head Office' or 'upstairs' who enable those in charge to maintain their grip. Nevertheless, the power relationship is displayed through language. Jake is addressed by his surname alone, but he must address the manager formally as *Mr.* Sanderson. It subsequently becomes apparent also that Jake shows 'respect' by changing his normal mode of speech to Standard English, which mirrors Sanderson's language. The conversation is controlled by Sanderson who, as the 'superior' is free to reject, command, interrupt, and finally choose when to bring the conversation to a conclusion. Jake feels insulted and angry at the personal comments and the pettiness of the complaints against him, including the heinous offence of wearing a crew neck

sweater under his uniform. Nevertheless, it is not until he leaves the office that he reverts to his normal speech pattern and comments 'Little shite isn't he' to a secretary in the outside office. The reader is likely to feel frustration that Jake fails to assert himself at a time when he had nothing to lose. So entrenched is his subservience in the face of authority that he ineffectually squanders the opportunity by making his views known to someone who is not involved. As in 'New Business' the exercise of power is repeated one level down when, on the bus journey home, the bus driver Harry deliberately fails to pick up passengers, no doubt working people like himself tired after a day's work, and any objections are stared down by Sheila, a fierce bus conductress:

> 'You've got them all going now," she said, "listen to that babble."
>
> "Did you see the look on the faces at the bus stop?" asked Jake.
>
> "Serve them right," she said, and walked down to collect the fares. The chatter stopped dramatically.
>
> "They know Sheila too well," said Harry. "When she starts they know all about it." (*An Old Pub Near the Angel* 11)

The bus crew are dissatisfied and subject to unjust authority from the bus company and relieve their frustration at their impotence by punishing those over whom they have power in their present context. So much for the working class moving 'forward thegither' in McIlvanney's phrase. The conclusion of the story seems to show that such concerns are not part of Jake's make up. One senses that Jake is glad to withdraw into a world free of political concerns as he selects a book and sits down to read it. Nevertheless, by doing so he in turn demonstrates his power over his wife: she does not have the option to abandon her domestic responsibilities and draw a book from the shelf.

Kelman may not hold out much hope for worker solidarity, but he is skilful at depicting workers in the place of work. Not only does he deal with the power structures within the working community through subtle signals of language and behaviour, but he is very accurate in his portrayal of the speech mannerisms of working class men. Anyone who has worked in both middle class environments and factories and shop floors probably decries the lack of verbal interplay in the former. This is no shallow matter of people merely

'having a laugh' in the workplace. As we have noted above in the section dealing with Kelman's use of language, working class solidarity can be expressed through the shared and continued use of working class language. This is not simply a question of syntax and lexis. The use to which language is put is important also. Logically, one would expect that to express solidarity language would be encouraging or complimentary. In fact, the reverse is true. Many of the conversations in the workplace show a level of personal comment which would be a cause of great discord in another context. Take, for example, this piece of dialogue from one of Kelman's finest stories 'The Bevel' from the collection *Not Not While the Giro*. Three workers are sharing a small caravan in the north of Scotland on a job away from Glasgow. One of the workers, Chas, complains about the smell from an older workmate Sammy:

> Chas had pulled his jeans out from underneath his bunk and was dressing. He glanced at Sammy: Some smells coming from your side last night.
>
> Ah give us peace.
>
> Chas is right, I said, fucking ridiculous. I'm complaining to Joe about it.
>
> Ah shut up. Anyhow, when you get to my age it's all you're bloody good for.
>
> Chas grinned. (*Not Not While the Giro* 38)

The final 'Chas grinned' perfectly illustrates the function of such exchanges. Rather than creating conflict this type of communication defuses it. All three are frustrated by their inadequate accommodation and job conditions generally but are powerless to escape their lot. They must make the best of it but need to express their dissatisfaction somehow, so it is done through an almost ritual-like stream of invective. It is evidence also of an equality between them. When Sammy twice tells Chas to be quiet, 'Give us peace', 'Shut up', both have full knowledge that Sammy's statements are invested with no authority. If a manager were to issue such a command it would be done in the expectation that the subordinate would have to comply or risk the consequences. This ritual abuse is not exclusive to Scotland. African-Americans still employ the

'Dozens',[10] an escalating sequence of often humorous and sexual insults which psychologist John Dollard identified as a means to avoid violence in intolerable conditions.[11] African-American writers such as Langston Hughes or Sonia Sanchez have put this verbal creativity to great use in their work, and the parallel between the injustices suffered by Blacks in America and the class and regional prejudices endured by Kelman's characters is unmistakable, albeit more severe in the former.[12]

'The Bevel' is interesting because, although the story concludes with the three workers apparently winning their case to get proper equipment to deal with a potentially dangerous bevel on a tank they are working on, in fact it is not achieved by group action but rather by default. As with the above two stories 'New Business' and 'The Cards' there is the usual hierarchy. The first person narrator and Chas are at the bottom of the heap, probably because of age. The downtrodden Sammy is in charge of the two young men but has to defer to Joe and his superior Williams who visit the work site periodically to check up on their progress. Once again the power relationships are demonstrated through language. Here the narrator complains to Joe about the ignoring of safety regulations:

> Heh Joe, I said, the First-aid people said we were supposed to get a quarter of an hour break every half hour, because of the fumes, the chlorine and that.
>
> Is that right...Joe nodded. He was lighting a cigarette, then chipping the match into the loch.
>
> That's what they said.
>
> Aye it's kind of muggy...He gazed towards the head of the loch...He sniffed and glanced at his wristwatch, and glanced at Sammy. Fancy showing me your bevel? he said. (*Not Not While the Giro* 43-4)

In spite of the surface equality of the narrator addressing Joe by his first name, Joe's noncommittal response is aimed to deflect the complaint, forcing

[10] This term was current until the 1970's but may have been replaced by the more general term 'dissing'.

[11] Cited in Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes, Vol.2: 1941-67* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.317

[12] Although a comparison with the Scottish tradition of 'flyting' is tempting, its literary game aspect would seem to diminish its social significance in this context.

the narrator to attempt to continue the discussion, 'That's what they said'. Joe further uses his assumed superiority to ignore it completely by merely commenting on the weather, expressing his disdain by sniffing and looking at his watch. It is the boss whose time is important, not the worker, and he will decide how to allot that time. He turns his attention to Sammy whose tone throughout the story is deferential to his superiors. Suddenly the problem of the bevel has become 'your (i.e. Sammy's) bevel', as if Sammy were responsible for the problem rather than trying to solve it. In spite of the strength of their case the workers do not band together to express themselves forcefully. It is only when the boss Williams tries to demonstrate what he wants the workers to do, and is overcome by chlorine fumes and nearly kills himself through the collapse of his proposed construction to deal with the bevel, that he relents and promises the necessary safety equipment.

In the present context it is worth reflecting on Kelman's expressed admiration for the poets based in the 1950's at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, especially Charles Olson and Robert Creeley.[13] It is interesting that this group shared the belief that politics was a debased environment, or, as one of their number Louis Dudek termed it, 'the log jam of inherited stupidities',[14] and that art should 'hold its power aloof from political mendacity'.[15] Although politically active in their own lives, their writing does not deal with politics except by the setting out of implied alternatives. As Robert von Hallberg states:

> The Black Mountain writers successfully fabricated a sustaining and intellectual and literary milieu less as a specific critique of American society of the 1950's than as a gesture of dismissal.[16]

It is interesting that an artistic affinity should translate itself into a shared conviction about politics and the role of the writer. Alternatively, the affinity may have its origins in the shared convictions. William Carlos Williams, another important influence on Kelman[17] was politically engaged but

[13] McLean, 'James Kelman Interviewed', p.68

[14] Quoted in Robert von Hallberg, 'Poetry, Politics, and Intellectuals: Avant-Gardes' in Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Cambridge History of American Literature, Vol.8: Poetry and Criticism 1940-1995* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.96

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Kelman has credited Williams on several occasions, but see, for example, McLean, 'James Kelman Interviewed', p.68

advocated that the artist should strive for change in a less direct way:

> The whole Renaissance was a rule of so many tyrants. It was they who hired the masters to work for them. The great artists of the time did not stop to attack such men. [...] Instead they made masterpieces. And in their work lies a depth of understanding which must ultimately do away with all the tyrants and cruelty, all violence of which art is the antithesis.[18]

Indeed it is true that Williams, although active during the Depression of the thirties, makes almost no reference to political solutions to poverty or unemployment in his work. His democratic impulses revealed themselves more obliquely. Kelman would almost certainly not be happy with the 'ivory tower' position hinted at by Williams, and might baulk at Dudek's idea of an artist remaining 'aloof' (albeit aloof from mendacity), but the shared ground is remarkable. This excerpt from Williams' essay 'A Beginning on the Short Story' might almost have been written by Kelman himself. Discussing the poor working class characters of his stories, and why he chose to write about them he states:

> I lived among these people. I know them and saw the essential qualities (not stereotype), the carnage, the humor (an accident), the deformity, the basic tragedy of their lives - and the *importance* of it. You can't write about something unimportant to yourself. I was involved.
>
> That wasn't all. I saw how they were maligned by their institutions of church and state - and 'betters'. I saw how all that was acceptable to the ear about them maligned them. I saw how stereotype falsified them.
>
> Nobody was writing about them, anywhere, as they ought to be written about. There was no chance of writing anything acceptable, certainly not saleable about them.
>
> It was my duty to raise the level of consciousness, not to say, discussion, of them to a higher level, a higher plane. Really to tell.[19]

---

[18] William Carlos Williams, *A Recognisable Image: William Carlos Williams on Art and Artists* ed., Bram Dijkstra (New York: New Directions, 1978), p.19. Note that Williams put these words into the mouth of a supposed visitor to his house, but it is clear from the context that they are the views of Williams himself.

[19] Williams, *Selected Essays*, p.300

Williams may not have offered direct political solutions in his fiction, but his choosing to write about the poor and his motivation for doing so have political implications.

The concept of community inevitably involves the concept of place, and it is worthwhile looking at how Kelman approaches this. The non-urban environment does not offer an avenue of escape in Kelman as it does with so many writers. Scottish literature has considered often and at length the city/countryside opposition and has usually opted for the latter as offering redemption through closeness to the land and nature. As Margery McCulloch states with reference to the fiction of Neil Gunn:

> the Highland tradition appears as an opposing restorative vision to what Gunn sees as the nihilism and destructiveness of urban society.[20]

Kelman proffers a good dose of urban nihilism and destructiveness, but no restorative vision. There is no rural harmony to mitigate or nullify the chaos and alienation of the city. One problem is that the countryside portrayed by Kelman retains many of the features of the urban setting. In 'The bevel' for example, there is constant activity in the background with a helicopter, tourists, and motor boats on the loch. In 'Zuzzed', also from *Not Not While the Giro*, the narrator lies contented, not because of his closeness to nature, but rather through a stupor induced by drink and tobacco. Human activity surrounds him:

> By the grassy verge beneath the verandah of the local general store with the morning sun on my shoulders, the tin lying open at one side and the cider bottle uncorked on the other, and the cows lowing in the adjacent meadow, and the smoke rolled and being lighted and sucking in that first drag, keeping the thrapple shut to trap it there; with no bout of coughing, not a solitary splutter, the slight zuzz in the head. Instead of exhaling in the ordinary way I widened my lips and opened the throat without blowing so that the smoke just drifted right out and back in through the nostrils. [....] Time had passed. The lorry. It came into view, chugging along, the farmer at the wheel. I gestured at him

[20] Margery McCulloch, *The Novels of Neil M. Gunn: A Critical Study* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987), p.5

> with the bottle and the smoke, but as a greeting only. He returned it cheerily. The French on the back, the women there. I waved. Bon, I shouted. (*Not Not While the Giro* 122-3)

The narrator does not even breathe in the fresh air but breathes in again his own smoke exhalation and takes pleasure in that. He chooses not to lie in the meadow. Instead he lies on the grass next to the local shop, a crossover point between nature and human industry. There is little pleasure to be found outside the city, as can be demonstrated by the negative view expressed in 'The hitchhiker':

> Keeping to the grass verge at the side of the track I walked quickly along from the small group of caravans. The centre of the track was bogging. It was always bogging. Even during the short heatwave of the previous week it was bogging. Plastered in animal shit. Cows and sheep and hens, even a couple of skinny goats, they all trooped down here from the flearidden farm a couple of fields away. By the time I got to the road my boots and the bottoms of my jeans were in a hell of a mess. I headed along to the village. Village by Christ - half a dozen cottages and a general store cum post office and the bastards called it a village. Not even a boozer. You had to trek another couple of miles further on to a hotel if you wanted a pint. (*Not Not While the Giro* 167)

The narrator of this story has been transposed temporarily from an urban to a rural setting and like the narrator of 'The bevel' is living in a cramped caravan with other workers. For him, the countryside brings only discomfort and inconvenience. It is probably safe to assume that his life in the city is uncomfortable too, but in a way familiar to him. Nature does not offer an escape. As in 'The Burn' nature is seen only as an impediment. There are no pastoral sentiments here.

Lean Tales provides further examples of the miseries of the countryside and its occupants. Once again the narrators' perspectives are those of displaced city dwellers. In 'Where I was' there is initially a feeling of escape when the first person narrator quits the city:

> At least I am elsewhere. A wind like the soundtrack of a North Pole

> documentary rages underneath. I have absconded from my former abode leaving neither note nor arrears. I left arrears. I left no cash to discharge them. No explanations of any kind. Simply: I am somewhere else. No persons who knew me then or in fact at any time know of my whereabouts. (*Lean Tales* 38)

A guarded optimism is apparent in that the narrator seems to have a sense of a new beginning, cutting himself free of implicitly unpleasant people and places in his past. By the conclusion of the story, however, his exposure to the natural elements has worn down his mood to one of hopelessness:

> This day was bitter. Never warm inside the coat. That fucking wind went through me. Tried everything from walking sideways to hiding behind trees. All I could finally do was stride along punching my boots hard down on the road with my shoulders rigid, hunched up. This induced prolonged shivering but was the best I could manage. Every part of me cold, sick, cold. (*Lean Tales* 41-2)

His misery can in part be attributed to his lack of preparation for a journey in midwinter, a sign of his unfamiliarity with the demands of shielding oneself in exposed countryside. The ironically titled 'The City Slicker and The Barmaid' makes reference to the urban origins of the narrator, and in addition to his dismal account of the physical conditions of living on a farm he is scathingly dismissive of country people:

> The tightest bunch of bastards I have ever met. Never shared their grub or mugs of tea. Or their cash if you were skint. And they never offered you a cigarette. If you bought them a drink they thought you were off your head and also resented it because they felt obliged to buy you one back. In their opinion city folk were either thieves or simpletons. An amazing shower of crackpots the lot of them. (*Lean Tales* 105)

The mutual distrust and lack of respect does not lead us to expect any attempt at integration. Indeed, the narrator is ultimately physically excluded from the local pub, and is left pathetically staring in through the window from the outside. His exclusion provides the impetus for him to quit his farm job and move on.

On one of the few occasions when a Kelman character seems to exhibit some affinity with nature and an awareness of a tradition outside the narrow confines of self, the notion is undercut at a later point in the story. In 'My eldest', the narrator considers the scene as he stands by the ocean:

> This observing the sea; waves breaking, the little boat with its blue cockpit; the seabirds. These might be the elements. Life or death, shifting of water in the shallows, green, brown. It was impossible. Of course I knew things would co-exist. Their very presence, a relationship, the living. Also when ye returned a freedom. Knowing this eventually. This would cause despair. All it required was my head. I stared out from the shore.
>
> Maybe as well as that the wide expanse. That wide expanse and the sense too of history, the old graveyard was not in view but I knew precisely where it was, the clump of trees that led to it.
>
> (*The Good Times* 47)

This passage appears to take nature as a starting point for a meditation on life and death. Images of nature are presented without any negative slant and the scene could even be described as idyllic, a term one would not expect used in relation to Kelman, although the clump of trees leading to the graveyard have an ominous feel. There is a disturbing undertone. The absence of emotion, 'I didn't feel anything about them at all' (p.47), 'What did I feel like christ, was I dreaming?' (p.49) is unusual for a Kelman character. It is not clear what the intention of the narrator is. Could his proposed swim be an attempted suicide to end the despair he refers to? His children are made uneasy by his behaviour. If these factors have not already undercut the positive tone of the description, the whole scene is further brought back to mundane unpleasant reality by his wife who points out that if he swims 'Ye'll glow in the dark' (p.49), and the subsequent reference to a trident submarine alerts us to radioactive pollution. There is danger in the apparently attractive waters. Like the depictions of urban wastelands which proliferate throughout the short stories this non-urban scene has also been rendered a wasteland. Kelman characters carry their own wasteland around with them in their heads.

Consideration of place brings up questions of the place which is usually central to most people: home. The reluctance of so many Kelman protagonists to go home raises some interesting points about the nature of 'home' in Kelman's work. Hana Wirth-Nesher has observed that in the work of eighteenth and nineteenth century writers such as Trollope, Austen, and the Brontes the settings tended to be houses, 'with the house representing the continuity of tradition, family, social class, and conventional order.'[21] However, this is a principle which no longer applies:

> In the premodern novel considered from the perspective of setting 'home' is a private enclave, a refuge from the intensely public arena of urban life. In the modern urban novel, however, 'home' itself is problematized, no longer a haven, no longer clearly demarcated.[22]

In Kelman's stories, characters are often literally homeless ('the same is here again'), or sleeping in unauthorised places (the storeroom in 'Renee'), or living in various lodging houses from which one can be evicted summarily ('Ten guitars'), or renting run down tenement flats ('Nice to be nice'). 'Home' can represent danger as well as insecurity. One example is the shocking description of a tenement block's cellars from 'Wee horrors' in *Not Not While the Giro*:

> I've always hated dunnies - pitchblack and that smell of charred rubbish, the broken glass, these things your shoes nudge against. Terrible. Then if you're in one and pause a moment there's this silence forcing you to listen. Really bad. (*Not Not While the Giro* 175)

The nightmarish quality intensifies with the narrator, searching for his children, discovering a group of homeless people cooking meat for local youngsters in another part of the backcourt:

> The sound of feet scuffling. I turned a corner and got a hell of a shock - a woman standing in a doorway. Her face wasn't easy to see because of the light from behind her. Then a man appeared. He began nodding away with a daft smile on his face. I recognised them. Wineys. They had

[21] Hana Wirth-Nesher, *City Codes: Reading the Modern Urban Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.18
[22] Ibid., p.19

> been dossing about the area for a while. Even the face she had told a story, white with red blotches, eyes always seeming to water. She walked in this queer kind of stiff shuffle, her shoes flapping. [...] He was pointing out a row of raw lumps on the mantlepiece and then reaching for a knife with a thin blade. I shook my head, jesus christ right enough. I grabbed for my pair, yelling at the rest of the weans to get up that effing stair at once. (*Not Not While the Giro* 176)

The implication is that the narrator has saved the children from some horrific fate. The 'wineys' grim parody of domesticity, prefigured by the children's inclination to build dens amongst the rubble and rubbish of the backcourt, would seem to point to some fundamental human need for a refuge, a need which is never fully satisfied for Kelman's characters. When refuge is found it can only be temporary. In 'A notebook to do with America' in *Not Not While the Giro* there is a good depiction of this. A man visits the flat of a woman to retrieve a notebook which has some unspecified significance:

> When he came out of the pub the snow was still falling, he paused to fix the bunnet properly on his head and then crossed the large patch of waste ground to the building. It was the remnant of a tenement; much of the rest was lying around in disordered heaps. The close had been sealed off with a sheet of corrugated iron but the nails were removed from three of its sides and the man got in quite easily. He struck a match. The debris wasn't too bad. (*Not Not While the Giro* 158)

Refuge implies shelter and order. This is disorder and exposure. Kelman's characters do not have real homes, only the remnants of homes.

Where there is no safe refuge, then the distinction between public and private space evaporates. As Wirth-Nesher points out with reference to the modern novel:

> Most of the action in these fictional worlds takes place in spaces that fuse public and private, that are uneasily indeterminate [as private or public]: coffee houses, theaters, museums, pubs, restaurants, hotels, and shops.[23]

[23] Ibid., p.20

This is almost exactly what happens in Kelman. In his case we have a catalogue of betting shops, lodging houses, hostels, snack bars, pubs, and public parks. These are places where people are encountered, but not necessarily interacted with. Yoshinobu Hakutani has remarked that in African-American literature this fusing of public and private space has allowed black neighbourhoods to be represented by such writers as Gwendolyn Brooks and Toni Morrison as 'repositories for life sustaining community values'.[24] A sense of community is something which has broken down in Kelman. These public/private places only serve to emphasise the fact. The conflicting perceptions may be accounted for by the awareness that for many black Americans the city has historically been seen as a place of liberation from slavery which was centred in the rural South. African-American writing can include an opposing view. James Baldwin's novels, for example, use the city as a constant reminder of the exclusion of black people from the opportunities America presents to whites. There is a perpetual sense of an alternative life which blacks can view but are denied. For Kelman's characters there are no positive associations at all. The word 'neighbourhood' itself carries within it the sense of not just place, but people together in a place. It has connotations of activity and identifying positively with a specific area. All of these notions are entirely absent in Kelman.

Finally, it must be pointed out that Kelman's stories should not be discussed in terms of identifiable locations. Although it may be tempting to see Kelman's work as being located for the most part in Glasgow and therefore representative of a particular attitude or atmosphere found only in Glasgow, that would be wrong. Some books do indeed attempt this. Archie Hind's *Dear Green Place* is a fine portrait of a city which could not be set anywhere else without becoming a completely different novel. On the other hand, the opening sentence of the novel is 'In every city you find these neighbourhoods', and this has the effect of universalising the scene. However, in spite of the fact that there are many real place names in Kelman's stories, it soon becomes apparent that one could simply substitute other place names in

[24] 'Introduction', Yoshinobu Hakutani and Robert Butler, eds., *The City in African-American Literature* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995), p.11

other cities without altering the fundamental nature of the stories in any way. The intentional absence of description in Kelman's fiction means that a working class bar in Partick could easily be a bar in Gorgie, or Lochee, or Camden, or even New York or Hamburg. It is the *language* which establishes the settings for the most part in working class west central Scotland. In his essay 'The Importance of Glasgow in My Work'[25] it is clear that Glasgow is important for Kelman not as a physical location, but as a way of thinking in relation to class and language, a 'socio-cultural experience'.[26] Like Kafka's Prague, Kelman's Glasgow is recognisably Glasgow, but recognisably many other places too.

[25] 'The Importance of Glasgow in My Work' in *Some Recent Attacks : Essays Cultural & Political*, pp.78-84
[26] Ibid., p.80

5

The Philosophical Aspect

Kelman's foreword to *Busted Scotch*[1] asserts that one ingredient in the admixture which influenced his work was the European Existential tradition. It is essential, therefore, to understand what is meant by 'existential' and assess how it manifests itself in his writing. In doing so, however, it would be prudent to bear in mind the caveat that Kelman is a creative artist and not a philosopher. It is not his task merely to reiterate the ideas of philosophers. Although we can be sure of Kelman's interest in and knowledge of philosophy, given the fact of his having studied the subject formally as an undergraduate, and the many philosophical references scattered throughout his writing, his work is not a kind of puzzle or philosophical allegory. He may take the concepts or doctrines of others as a starting point from which to explore independently the state of mankind in fictional form. These concepts and doctrines, however, can be transformed through this process, not just repeated. Nevertheless, it will become apparent that Kelman's fiction does indeed exhibit a fundamentally existentialist viewpoint. This brings with it an examination of the nature of language and consciousness.

It rapidly becomes clear to anyone seeking a definition of 'existential' that no simple explanation will be found. This is frustrating and confusing for the layman who is likely to conclude that if no concise and consistent definition can be offered then existentialism must be a nonsense. The philosophers usually subsumed into the existential tradition seem to have such differing and contrary notions that one questions the existence of any tradition at all: Kierkegaard was a Christian, while Nietzsche was an atheist; Heidegger was a Nazi, while Sartre was a Marxist. Where, then, is the common ground? Perhaps there is some basic notion of the human condition that unites the above thinkers and from which shared beginning they may propose different strategies to face that condition, thus accounting for the divergent doctrines.

Not surprisingly, existentialism deals with the nature of human existence,

[1] 'Foreword - Letter to My Editor', p.9

At the core of existentialism is the apprehension that along with the notion of being, there is the opposing notion of non-being. Davis Dunbar McElroy has noted that this was first expressed by St. Thomas Aquinas who observed that a thing cannot be and not be simultaneously.[2] Awareness of this logical impossibility means that we become aware of the possibility of our own non-existence. McElroy further refines the argument:

> With every apprehension of being, man also apprehends the possibility or 'threat' of non-being. When individual consciousness becomes aware of the presence or existence of something other than itself, something which exists outside and independently of itself, it is also aware of the possibility that that thing may someday cease to exist. This threat of non-being is not confined to objects which are external to the individual consciousness. When such a consciousness becomes aware of its own existence as a being, it also becomes aware of its possibility of non-being.[3]

It is the consciousness of the being/non-being opposition, and therefore the consciousness of our negation, of ceasing to exist, which propels us into a state of anxiety. A natural accompaniment to this is the realisation that our beliefs and ideas can cease to exist too, and doubt and meaninglessness ensue. Erich Fromm, the psychoanalyst, has related this consciousness to Christian myth.[4] When Adam ate the fruit from the tree of knowledge he brought upon himself the curse of consciousness, consciousness of good and evil, as well as of his own death. This revolt against divine authority was an act of human freedom but was paid for with a new found consciousness which was no longer confined to an unreflecting awareness of nature. Consciousness, and the burdens it brings, is inescapable; to be human is to be conscious. David H. Hesla, in his study of Samuel Beckett, has noted Henri Bergson's demonstration that consciousness cannot be extinguished.[5] When we try to eliminate consciousness there will be a consciousness that witnesses the elimination of the first and so a new

[2] Davis Dunbar McElroy, *Existentialism and Modern Literature* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1963), p.3
[3] Ibid., p.5
[4] Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1947), p.40
[5] David H. Hesla, *The Shape of Chaos: an Interpretation of the Art of Samuel Beckett* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1971), p.58

consciousness is created. If we cannot rid ourselves of our consciousness then the task is to find a way of living under such conditions. For McElroy

> the only solution is to acknowledge his fundamental aloneness and solitude in a universe indifferent to his fate; he must recognise that there is no transcendent power which can solve his problem for him.[6]

This is the starting point from which the existential tradition in philosophy sets out. The 'transcendent power' is a reference to an all-powerful deity and it is clear that the loss of belief in God and the decline in religion as a centre for many people has contributed to a fragmentation in society.

The writers usually described as part of the existential tradition in literature all variously have at least an undercurrent of the above concepts: for example, Dostoevsky's protagonists tortured by their consciousness, Kafka's sense of threat, muted but ever present, or Beckett's exploration of nothingness. It is hoped that a close examination of Kelman's writing will discover how he imposes his own artistic vision on the necessity of attempting to solve the nature of human existence. The notion of consciousness is one that is especially important in Kelman's work. Beckett has observed of his own work:

> I'm working with impotence, ignorance. I don't think impotence has been exploited in the past...My little exploration is that whole zone of being that has always been set aside by artists as something unusable, - as something by definition incompatible with art.[7]

In other words, the task of transforming our inner struggle and failure to make sense of our non-existence into artistic form would seem to be a kind of dead-end. To create something from nothingness would seem impossible. Nevertheless, although one cannot end the confusion, the confusion can be described if a suitable form can be found, and this is what Kelman tries to do.

It is remarkable the extent to which Kelman's characters have abandoned any notion of religion as offering a solution to this confusion. They constantly go over things in their minds, but never consider God or the Church in any way. One can surmise that the rejection of religion is so complete, either in the

---

[6] McElroy, *Existentialism and Modern Literature*, p.14

[7] Interview with Israel Schenker, quoted in Susan D. Brienza *Samuel Beckett's New Worlds: Style in Metafiction* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), p.195

individual characters or the society which they inhabit, that there are not even the remnants of a debate on the existence of God. Neither is there any deliberation about the merits or otherwise of organised religion. Apart from such expletives as 'Jesus Christ' or 'God', there are no references to the deity. Only in the story 'Street-sweeper' in *The Burn*, discussed above, is there an implicit criticism of the Church, and this is by Kelman and not by one of the characters. When the frightened central character Peter questions the wisdom of being an atheist his thoughts become a garbled confusion of half-remembered religious phrases which make a nonsense of religious language. Kelman is making an indirect comment on how little impact religion makes on people's minds.

The withdrawal of Kelman's characters into themselves brings about a kind of paralysis or stasis. They seem bound in by their thoughts or indecision, unable to act or move on in their lives. Kafka's influence is apparent here, although for Kafka there was the precondition of impotence in the external world:

> One huddles into one's so-called private life, because one lacks the strength to master the world. One flies from the miraculous into one's own limited self.[8]

This is the failure of language on another level. Walter H. Sokel has noted that *Sprachkrise*, the crisis of faith in language, was a feature of German and Austrian letters at the end of the nineteenth century and in the early decades of the twentieth century. Kafka, throughout his letters and diaries, expresses

> a profound disillusionment with the possibilities of genuine communication through language. The nature of language as a tool of generalising and conceptual communication endangers the task of expressing essentially personal and intimate truths.[9]

Kafka's desire to achieve a true correspondence between his inner world and language, the medium of its expression, led him towards the end of his life to

[8] Gustav Janouch quoting Kafka in *Conversations With Kafka* (London: Quartet Books, 1985) p.41

[9] Walter H. Sokel, 'Kafka's Poetics of the Inner Self' in Reinhold Grimm, Peter Spycher and Richard A. Zipser, eds., *From Kafka and Dada to Brecht and Beyond* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), p.7

view writing as an activity that could only be successful if the barrier of the everyday self could be superseded, and the act of creation carried out in a visionary state. One cannot imagine Kelman advocating this latter point, but there is shared ground. The assumption is that thought manifests itself linguistically, language taking on the function of labelling the world and permitting the construction of some rational order out of chaos. The narrator of the story 'Some thoughts that morning' asserts:

> This is also strange, that I could use a word and not know what it means in its literal usage, but such a word may yet provide the most apt way of describing what it is I can feel, something that is beyond dispute, beyond the merely felt. A fact of subjective experience. [...] By this simple act of using language we take our own grip of the world.
> (*The Good Times* 185)

The last sentence above is ironic in that it is a feature of Kelman's characters that language fails them when they seek to rationalise things. The gap between the thought and the word comes up again in another story, 'I was asking a question too'. The narrator comments on his understanding of a book he has read:

> For all I knew the thing I grasped didn't exist anywhere except inside my own head. The thought that the writer was trying to communicate to me wasn't the thought I got when I read his actual words. But the words themselves were a translation because his original words, the language he wrote in, was not my language. So the thought communicated to me, where had it come from? It could be a mistaken thought. But a mistaken thought was also a thought and could not be anything other and was part of the whole baggage. (*The Good Times* 67)

The inadequacy of language to correspond truly with the inner reality can be seen again in the story 'O my darling'. The narrator cannot quite find the word to describe his feeling on entering a cafe with his wife:

> She was as uncomfortable as me. Uncomfortable is the wrong word. Ye were supposed to be uncomfortable. Ye knew that before ye went in. So ye wind up irritated because of that, because ye cannay find the right

> word. Maybe there isnay a word. They don't even have a fucking word for it. In other cultures they would have. There would be umpteen words, just for that experience. (*The Good Times* 84)

If language is inadequate, disorder and chaos can never be overcome, and the isolation of Kelman's characters becomes even more intense.

There is no finer example of the solipsistic nature of Kelman's work than 'A Sunday evening' (*Greyhound for Breakfast*). This rather brief story, only three pages in total, is a perfect embodiment of the notion that only one's self and the contents of its consciousness may be known. Kelman employs the free indirect style to great effect and there is a neatly executed switch at the mid-point of the piece from the consciousness of one character into another. A couple are spending a Sunday evening at home, going through their rituals of preparing tea and listening to a discussion programme on the radio. It opens with the wife observing her husband sitting by the fire:

> She was annoyed with him; she couldn't say exactly why she was annoyed with him but she was. She watched him as he leaned back on the couch, his head resting against its back, his legs stretching out towards the fireplace. (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 82)

and comes full circle by the end with her husband observing the wife sitting by the fire:

> She was a bit annoyed at him. She wouldn't smile therefore. Unless she was so far away that she would've forgotten all about it. He glanced at her briefly, she was staring at the fireplace.
>
> (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 85)

Both characters are familiar with the other's behaviour on the superficial level of domestic behaviour; he knows how her annoyance will manifest itself, for example, but both puzzle over their partner's true thoughts, aware that they can never truly be known by the other. As he often does, Kelman charts the minutiae of the banal procedures of our daily lives, in this case making tea and preparing sandwiches. Kelman has noted the connection between the concrete and the existential voice, claiming 'everyday particulars become of

the utmost importance'[10] but one wonders why the obvious has never been stated: characters spend so much time doing pedestrian tasks because it is only while doing the things we do automatically that we can think about other things. If an event or task is unfamiliar, complex, or exciting then our minds will focus on that event or task. It is the *sine qua non* for Kelman's stories that the characters become real through their consciousness and not through their actions. Hence so much description of the pedestrian:

> She buttered the bread and she sliced the cheese, but not uniformly, each slice being totally different from the one previous; thick ends and thin ends, and one slice so thin it became nothing at all. She juggled them onto the bread, trying to capture an even thickness on his. Lettuce in the bowl. But she left it there, and it would have needed a wash under the tap. When she had filled the teapot she returned to the window. (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 82)

Here we have the objective account by the narrator, interrupted by the reporting of her thoughts, 'Lettuce in the bowl...and it would have needed a wash under the tap.' She considers the silence of the top flat in which they live and why she favours different sounds in different seasons, but finally dismisses her ideas as inconsequential:

> [A]nd the silence of late summer evenings was best; during winter and late autumn she preferred noise. Why was that. But if it was anything it was nothing worth bothering about. (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 82)

Her yearning for something beyond the commonplace brings her back again to the same conclusion:

> There could be something, a sound perhaps, a thing of interest, thing of marked interest, something to give cause for thought. What thing could it be. A sound perhaps. She would know it, the sound, as soon as she heard it. But the thought would not be worth bothering about. (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 83)

There is a close focus on sound in this story, seeking to emphasise the silence by registering the small sounds which break into it: the refrigerator's hum

[10] Douglas Fraser, 'A one-man culture shock', *The Scotsman* 21 October 1989, p.9

cutting off, the radio being switched on in the next room, the boiling water. No words are exchanged between the two throughout. The shift from the wife's to the husband's viewpoint revolves around a sequence of gestures, tacitly understood by both parties and indicated in the excerpt by the insertion of square brackets:

> She glanced to see that he really was listening, and intently - staring at the fireplace, his look somehow quite lively, not a stare, just a look, looking directly to the fireplace to have his eyes open for the purpose of attention, concentration on the speakers; perhaps had he closed his eyes his attention would wander, he might doze off. [He was reaching for the plate, as though about to eat the sandwich but he paused and he glanced at her; he was drawing her attention to it, indicating it, the sandwich, that it was still there.] Why was it still there. What was the meaning of that. Why was she not eating her sandwich instead of just sipping her tea? (*Greyhound for Breakfast* 84)

The switch is adroitly achieved by Kelman through the objective account of the physical interaction between the couple, on one level indicative of their wordless intimacy and at the same time signalling their distance and lack of communication. The husband's point of view is heralded by unanswered questions about her behaviour, but he makes no attempt to voice his questions; they remain locked within their own consciousness. The two halves of the story are mirror images of each other.

'the same is here again' in *Lean Tales* shows that being locked into self-awareness can be a futile and destructive thing; too close a perspective distorts rather than clarifies. The 'speaker' of this interior monologue is a typical Kelman character: a down-and-out from Glasgow living rough in London, surviving on petty theft. The title refers to the incessant barrage of thoughts and impressions which torture him. He longs for respite from his overactive mind. His plea for peace, like his thoughts, is overwrought and repetitive:

> I have to clear my head. I need peace peace peace. No thoughts. Nothing. Nothing at all. (*Lean Tales* 20)

He closes his eyes and rubs them, hoping that it will rub away his agonised

state, but the same things endlessly present themselves:

> Here I am as expected. The shoulders drooping; they have been strained recently. Arms hanging, and the fingers. Here: and rubbing my eyes to open them on the same again. Here, the same is here again. What else. (*Lean Tales* 20)

The expression 'the same again' is interesting. 'again' can be both the adverb of time and operate as a noun; again becomes a thing, a state of being. In other words, the nature of our existence is just a constant repetition of what has come before. The narrator is weary, 'shoulders drooping', 'arms hanging', 'strained', and is aware of the impossibility of change, 'Here I am as expected...What else.' This is true for many Kelman characters, but this particular narrator's state is exacerbated by his hypersensitivity to the physical world. His senses are heightened to a painful degree. He finds himself lying on the ground and the tiny details there are grotesquely magnified by his peculiar perspective to create a world where the minute and the usually unnoticed loom large. Grass is no longer grass, but a collection of individual blades:

> This grass grows in a rough patch and cannot have it easy. The blades are grey green and light green; others are yellow but they lie directly on the earth, right on the soil. My feet were there and the insects crawled all around. A fine place for games. They go darting through the green blades and are never really satisfied till hitting the yellow ones below. And they dart headlong, set to collide all the time into each other but no, that last-minute body swerve. And that last minute body swerve appears to unnerve them so that they begin rushing about in circles or halting entirely for an approximate moment. (*Lean Tales* 20)

The parallel between the insects and human beings is clear, either pointlessly going round and round in circles or paralysed momentarily, and never coming into contact with each other. The passage above is the culmination of the narrator's too close focus. Throughout the story he is acutely aware of his body, especially its decay: the pores in his skin, the flakes of dandruff, the red veins in his eyeballs, nasal hair, the hairs on his legs. He is constantly aware

too of his physical sensations, especially the discomfort in his gut. Raili Elovaara's quotation from Karl Jaspers may be relevant:

> If a man comes to look upon his life as spiritually unacceptable, as intolerable were it merely because he can no longer understand its significance, he takes flight into illness, which envelops him like a visible protector.[11]

This recalls Dostoevsky's *Notes From the Underground* and the narrator's obsession with his decaying teeth and the pain they cause him. Kelman's narrator suffers similarly, and cannot do otherwise. He even relives the painful, if somewhat comic, experience of catching his penis in his trouser zip, including trying to recreate the sound of it happening, 'ZZZIPPP' and 'UUUNZZZIPP', the latter expression's greater length indicating the slow and careful attempt to extricate himself. To recreate such an experience in so detailed a fashion, including the breathing exercises to prepare himself for the anticipated pain, is partly comic, but also disturbing because of his later despair and the awareness that he will probably relive every painful moment of his life again and again. Everything becomes distorted and takes on a prominence that is false.

That thought itself creates rather than solves problems is hinted at further in, for example, 'the paperbag' and 'O jesus, here come the dwarfs', both in *Lean Tales*. The former story illustrates the futility of thought, while the latter seems to offer an example of a contrary view that the dynamism of the dwarfs is the result of an existence unbound by thought.

In 'the paperbag' the first person narrator himself actually distorts words in a physical sense. In a fit of anger at the uselessness of his life the narrator tells us:

> I crumpled the newspaper in both hands, watching it, seeing the shapes it made, the way its pages became. (*Lean Tales* 58)

He literally reshapes the words into a random, disordered mass. However, when he later restores the original ordered arrangement his life loses its pointlessness:

[11] Elovaara, *The Problem of Identity in Samuel Beckett's Prose*, p.28

> I uncrumpled the newspaper and rolled it into a neat sort of bundle, to carry it in my right hand, and then began walking. O christ but it was good to be alive - really. Really and truly. (*Lean Tales* 58)

The repetition of 'really' and the tautology of 'truly' alert us to the improbability of the permanence of this euphoric state, and underline the narrator's own uncertainty, but with words reformed his mood also is reformed.

The narrator is himself conscious of the distortion of his thought processes and his powerlessness to alter those processes. He tries to stop himself imagining what it is like to be a dog:

> Crazy, walking along the road thinking about such stuff. Absolute fucking nonsense. Mongrels by christ! But that's what happens. And thinking of that is better than thinking of nothing. I would say so anyway. Or would I? The trouble with being useless is the thinking; it becomes routine, you cannot stop yourself. I think all the time, even when I'm reading my newspaper. And the things I think about are fucking crazy. (*Lean Tales* 59)

His attempts to change what goes on in his mind only lead him down another, equally futile line of thought. Like 'A Sunday evening', this story goes full circle. It begins thus: 'What was the point anyway. [...] It was useless. I felt totally useless - I was useless, totally' (*Lean Tales* 58), and ends 'But what was the point of it all? It was useless, totally fucking useless.' (*Lean Tales* 62) As he returns to this nihilistic point he once again crumples up the newspaper. The completion of a circle, arriving back at the same point, could in one sense be considered as something positive, in that it delineates a unity and closure, but for Kelman's characters it represents futility and stasis.

'O jesus, here come the dwarfs' is a departure for Kelman in that it offers a realistic setting and characters mixed with the unreal; a holiday camp is invaded by a group of dwarfs who are comic and supernatural in aspect. The narrator is a resentful long-term resident in the camp who indulges in the usual over-analysis of events and situations in his life. He seems to indicate that life would be a lot more satisfying and trouble free if he had the ability,

represented by the dwarfs, for unthinking action, although it seems to make him distrustful and irritated:

> Dwarfs don't grumble. They just smile, are humble, are thoughtful to others. [...] Do not believe in their smile. It is not happy-go-lucky. (*Lean Tales* 69)

They meet with difficulties, but:

> Not only have the dwarfs encountered such things as problems, they have surmounted them. Apparently without having realized it. They haven't even realized those things were problems, they just fucking went ahead and got beyond them. And they are gaping at you, at your irritation. (*Lean Tales* 71)

Dynamic, unthinking action for Kelman's characters is as remote a possibility as a group of dwarfs taking over a holiday camp. Throughout Kelman's work there is the feeling of things happening to the characters, rather than the characters making things happen. Take, for example, 'Keep moving and no questions' in *Not Not While the Giro*. The first person narrator opens the story with a recognition of the awareness of this impotence, so common in Kelman's protagonists:

> It was my own fault. My planning never seems to allow of action of an intentional nature. I can always bring myself right to the point where some sort of precipice appears odds on to be round a corner. But this bringing of myself appears to be an end in itself; nothing further happens which can squarely be laid as an effect of my own volitions. Terrible state of affairs. (*Not Not While the Giro* 145)

Planning and thought achieve nothing, the 'bringing of myself' is the process leading up to action, with no follow through.

The notion that thought is something which overpowers is illustrated by one of Kelman finest stories, 'by the burn', in the collection *The Burn*. A third person narrative written mostly in free indirect style, but with interjections which seem to be free direct thought, or even exclamations spoken aloud, this perfectly captures a man trapped in a mire which is both literal and a reflection of his mental state. The more he struggles to get out, the more he

becomes bogged down. On his way to an interview the man is overcome by the memory of his dead daughter and the accident which killed her. The location is within sight of blocks of flats, but is a type of rural setting detached from the urban environment. The protagonist is neither in nature nor in the city, but in a type of wasteland which corresponds to his spiritual state of despair and hopelessness. The piece is a solid block of writing with no divisions into paragraphs: there is no respite from the unbearable intensity of thought and memory. The awkwardness of the opening sentence embodies the character's laborious progress:

> Fucking bogging mud man a swamp, an actual swamp, it was fucking a joke. (*The Burn* 239)

Read aloud, the sequence of sounds at the start is not one which allows the reader to flow from one word into the next, and this is intensified by the unusual (though occasionally heard in actual speech) placing of the second 'fucking'. The reader's progress, like the man's in the story, is impeded at every step. Throughout he refers constantly to things being 'a fucking joke', not in the humorous sense, of course, because the tone is one of unremitting gloom, but in the sense of absurd or meaningless. His progress is further impeded by a flooded burn:

> The roaring from the burn was really loud now, deafening. He waited a moment up on the bank, staring down at the swollen water, it came rushing, spray flying out, so high it looked set to overflow the banks. You couldn't even see the stepping stones where he would have crossed, probably about two feet of water were covering them. (*The Burn* 240)

The violent torrent of water matches the torrent of thought in his head, with no stepping stones to negotiate a way across. The incessant roar of the water echoes the endless roar in his mind. The sentence structure parallels the unstoppable rush as the punctuation allows several sentences to run into each other:

> But it was a bastard, it really was a bastard, these bloody fucking bushes and swamps man what could you do, going for a fucking job, just when you needed to look right, it aye happened, that was the way it went, you

> just couldn't win man never, you could never win. (*The Burn* 242)

Suddenly, however, the sentence structure changes to a succession of short units, sometimes not even grammatically complete:

> He glanced about him. Then he looked back over his shoulder. A funny feeling there. He walked on a few paces then slowed again, he stopped. He stopped and listened, he was feeling a bit funny, like somebody was watching him. It was like there was somebody watching him. He felt the twinge in his shoulders. There *was*. There was somebody watching him. (*The Burn* 242)

When the external encroaches on his thinking the torrent stops and order, at least of a verbal kind, is restored. In fact, we discover that there is nothing concrete watching him, but the ghost of his dead daughter, not in the supernatural sense, but as the memory of her accidental death, for which he feels some guilt. When the feeling passes the form reverts to its previous uncontrolled state:

> He shivered again. He was alone. He had to carry on now. He started walking, following the trail. One thing he did know but, see when he died, he was going to die of a heart attack, he was going to die of a heart attack and he was going to be alone, there wasn't going to be no cunt, no cunt, he was going to be fucking alone, that was the way he was going to die, he fucking knew it, it was a fucking racing certainty. (*The Burn* 244)

Impotence, isolation, and death are the only certainties.

6

Conclusion

It is a matter of some concern that one of the best British writers of the last twenty-five years has been paid so little serious critical attention. Even a cursory glance at the bibliography of this thesis would show that there have been fewer than a dozen attempts of any consequence to analyse Kelman's work in a systematic manner. There has been a plethora of newspaper reviews of his writing, but it is the nature of a book review to present only the briefest assessment. News articles, and not just in the tabloid press, have almost unanimously pointed up the controversial aspect and presented Kelman either explicitly or implicitly in a negative light. Few fiction writers can have been subjected to so many *ad hominem* attacks, or reviewers who have taken every opportunity to mislead readers and betray their own prejudices about what constitutes literature and who should write it, and about class and the nature of Scottishness. This state of affairs, however, is an inevitable consequence of Kelman's writing, for he is a writer who has from the outset challenged accepted views about the politics of literature, and the concomitant issues of language, class, and personal identity. It is a measure of the effectiveness of his challenge that so many feel threatened by an attack on the *status quo.* Kelman's assault on received values has clearly touched a nerve and the hostility towards him shows no sign of abating. In a recent interview with William Clark,[1] the author's outrage and sense of victimisation dominate the entire piece, and the list of those with whom he feels aggrieved is lengthy.

There is a sense, however, in which the role of outsider is one which is congruent with Kelman's success as a writer. Advances in literature are achieved by those who feel that new approaches are necessary to articulate themes and situations which have hitherto not been expressed. It is no accident that women writers, such as Virginia Woolf, contributed so much to the developments of Modernism, or that Kelman has an affinity with authors such as Frank Sargeson, or Sam Selvon. Whether excluded through sex, or

[1] William Clark, 'A conversation with James Kelman', *Variant*, Vol.2 No.2 (Spring 2001), pp.3-7

sexuality, or race, all of these writers were part of groups who had the role of outsider forced upon them. Kelman's concern with the politics of culture has driven him to confront those who would seek to assert dominance through colonising the Scottish working class on an economic and cultural level. As has been discussed in this thesis, Kelman's self assertion has necessitated the use of language and forms which take a stand against the imposed hierarchies in these areas.

In some respects, however, Kelman's experimentalism will forever exclude him from popular acceptance within Scotland itself, although it should be pointed out that popular acceptance is not necessarily one of his aims. It is a feature of the colonised that there will always be widespread acquiescence with the colonisers' estimation of Scottish and working class culture. Any changes in attitude will come slowly, if at all. Moreover, the readership for experimental literature will always be a limited one. Kelman's work is intellectually and emotionally demanding. As with the Modernists, there is a case to be made that, in spite of Kelman's rejection of others' hierarchies and the desire to write about everyday life, his writing may be elitist and aimed only at the small group who already appreciate 'difficult' literature. Kelman has acknowledged that this may be the case, but rejects the elitist tag on the grounds that intellectualism does not relate to class:

> I mean I would say that intellectuals read my work, which might seem like an elitist point, but I don't think it is. People in the working class read my work, and in the middle class and also, maybe, in the upper class as well, I don't know. Reading books has nothing to do with class.[2]

Kelman's greatest impact may be through his influence on other writers. There is no question that many younger writers have benefited from the innovations of Kelman. Irvine Welsh has achieved great international success using language and events which, before Kelman, would have been generally unacceptable. Welsh skilfully recreates the voice of young, working class Edinburgh, and relates the lives of at least one sector of the population of the housing schemes. Welsh is generally quite conventional in narrative style,

[2]Kirsty McNeill, 'Interview with James Kelman', p.7. Kelman makes a similar point in Duncan McLean, 'James Kelman Interviewed', pp.74-5

however, especially in his novel *Trainspotting*, although he does attempt some formal innovation in another of his works, *Marabou Stork Nightmares.* Alan Warner is more adventurous with narrative voice in his novel *Morvern Callar*, and in Janice Galloway's *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* Kelman's influence is clear in its depiction of a mind on the edge of breakdown. Duncan McLean's short stories, as in, for example, *Bucket of Tongues*, could, on occasion, be mistaken for the writing of Kelman himself. Nevertheless, while the influence is clear, all of these writers have developed their own style and themes, and are perhaps more accessible than Kelman to the average reader. Kelman has enriched Scottish writing indirectly through the filter of those writers on whom he has had an impact.

This thesis has considered exclusively Kelman's short fiction. The short story form is one that has been comparatively neglected in British literature. That Kelman has used the form so frequently indicates that he does not share the view that it is somehow inferior to the novel. In this he is displaying his international influences. The short story has been greatly valued and developed by American and European writers. Kelman is a Scottish writer, but he refuses to be limited by that and, as has already been discussed, he is more conscious of being part of an international tradition which includes Joyce, Dostoevsky, Kafka, Williams and Beckett, rather than following in the footsteps of Scottish writers such as Lewis Grassic Gibbon, in spite of the obvious affinities with that writer's work. The short story is a form well matched to experimental writing and ideal for the themes of fragmentation and isolation. The form suits Kelman's needs well, but an in-depth study of the novels is necessary also to discover how Kelman adapts his techniques and themes to the longer form. While the absence of any discernible plot may be sustainable in a short story, the longer form inevitably calls for some sequencing of events and an underlying sense of the passage of time. Maintaining reader interest over two hundred pages may force the author to reconcile variety of presentation with coherence of tone. How does he deal with the interaction between a greater number of characters and a world external to the central consciousness? All the issues discussed in this thesis regarding the short

stories can also be found in the novels: politics and language, community and place, and philosophical concerns appear again in the novels with a greater or lesser degree of emphasis from novel to novel. *The Busconductor Hines* lends itself to a consideration of the existential theme, and *The Chancer* reinforces this with its focus on the randomness of life. *A Disaffection* deals with the struggle to create harmony from chaos while *How late it was, how late* permits an examination of the nature of language and consciousness. His most recent work *Translated Accounts* addresses issues of the nature of language and its inadequacy, and scrutinises how people are represented by those who have power over them. It is a measure of Kelman's complexity that a study like this one opens up new areas to be explored. His work stands up to detailed examination but is not exhausted by it. It is the mark of good writing that even further scrutiny can be prompted by critical analysis.

Finally, it is essential that the importance of Kelman to Scottish and international writing is stated. Kelman is not without faults, but there is no writer who is faultless. One reason for his success is the quality of the execution. Much Scottish writing has tried to explore interesting and important themes, but has failed because fiction is not just philosophy, or concern with language, or politics, but the imaginative expression of those things. Kelman succeeds as a creative artist. The world he creates may be unrelentingly pessimistic and nihilistic, but the uncertainty of his characters is countered by the certainty and self-belief of their creator. A belief in the importance of art and the worth of ordinary people is inspiring and life-affirming. This is why Kelman is an important writer who demands our attention.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

James Kelman - Short Stories

- *An Old Pub Near The Angel* (Orono, Maine: Puckerbrush Press, 1973; reprinted 1996)

- *Three Glasgow Writers* (with Alex Hamilton and Tom Leonard) (Glasgow: The Molendinar Press, 1976)

- *Short Tales from the Night Shift* (as Jim Kelman) (Glasgow: Print Studio Press, 1978)

- *James Kelman: Writers in Brief No11* (Glasgow: National Book League, 1980)

- *Not Not While The Giro* (Edinburgh, Polygon, 1983; reprinted London: Minerva, 1989)

- *Lean Tales* (with Agnes Owens and Alasdair Gray) (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985)

- *Greyhound for Breakfast* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1987; reprinted London, Picador, 1988)

- *The Burn* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1991; reprinted London: Vintage, 1999)

- *Busted Scotch* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997)

- *The Good Times* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1998; reprinted London: Vintage, 1999)

James Kelman - Novels

- *The Busconductor Hines* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1984; reprinted London: Orion Books,1997)

- *A Chancer* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1985; reprinted London: Picador, 1987)

- *A Disaffection* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1989; reprinted London: Picador, 1990)

- *How late it was, how late* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1994; reprinted London: Minerva, 1994)

- *Translated Accounts* (London: Secker & Warburg, 2001)

James Kelman - Drama

- *Hardie and Baird and Other Plays* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1991)

James Kelman - Non-fiction

- 'No Fixed Realities?', *Cencrastus,* 7 (Winter 1981-2), p.41 (Review of Denis Keene ed. and trans., *The Modern Japanese Prose Poetry* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980)

- 'Alex La Guma', *Edinburgh Review,* 73 (May 1986), pp.117-121

- 'Relying on DHSS rather than the Fringe benefits', *Glasgow Herald,* 27 August 1987, p.4

- 'Introduction' in James Kelman, ed., *An East End Anthology* (Glasgow: Clydeside Press, 1988), pp.1-16

- *Fighting for Survival: the Steel Industry in Scotland* (Glasgow: Clydeside Press, 1990)

- 'A Reading from Noam Chomsky and the Scottish Tradition in the Philosophy of Common Sense', *Edinburgh Review,* 84 (1990), pp.46-76

- 'Storm in the Palace' in Farquhar McLay, ed., *The Reckoning* (Glasgow: Clydeside Press, 1990), pp.50-53

- 'Subjective Account' in Farquhar McLay, ed., *The Reckoning* (Glasgow: Clydeside Press, 1990), pp.82-5

- 'Art and Subsidy, and some politics of Culture City' in Farquhar McLay, ed., *The Reckoning* (Glasgow: Clydeside Press, 1990), pp.126-133

- Introduction' in George E. Davie, *The Scottish Enlightenment and Other Essays* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1991), N. pag.

- *Some Recent Attacks: Essays Cultural & Political* (Stirling: AK Press, 1992)

- 'Vernacular', *Brick: A Literary Journal,* 51 (Winter 1995), pp.68-9

- 'Foreword - Letter to My Editor' in *Busted Scotch* (1997) p.9

- *Tantalising Twinkles: some thoughts on a First Order Radical Thinker of European Standing* (Orkney: Emergency Eyewash Press, 1997)

- '"And the judges said"', *Variant,* Vol.2 No.2 (Spring 1997), pp.17-20

- 'Freedom for Freedom of Expression rally', *Variant,* Vol.2 No.3 (Summer 1997), pp.20-23

James Kelman - Recordings

- *seven stories* AK Press Audio/Soundhouse Productions, SOHO 002CD: AKA 005CD (1997)

Books and Articles which refer to Kelman

Baker, Simon, '"Wee stories with a working-class theme": The Reimagining of Urban Realism in the Fiction of James Kelman' in Susanne Hagemann, ed., *Studies in Scottish Fiction: 1945 to the Present* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang,

1996), pp.235-250

Barnes, Hugh, 'Fraynewares' (Review of *Lean Tales*), *London Review of Books,* Vol.7 No.8 (1985), pp.22-3

Bell, Ian, 'Four Letter Truths: Interview with James Kelman', *Observer,* 27 March 1994, p.16

- 'James Kelman' in Susan Windisch Brown, ed., *Contemporary Novelists* (Detroit: St. James Press, 1976) pp.562-4

- 'Patter Merchants and Chancers', *Planet* , 60, (December/January 1986-7), pp.43-52

Bien, Peter, Review of *The Good Times. World Literature Today,* Vol.73 Issue 2 (Spring 1999), pp.334-5

Bohnke, Dietmar, *Kelman Writes Back: Literary Politics in the Work of a Scottish Writer* (Berlin: Galda & Wilch Verlag, 1999)

'Books and People', *Books in Scotland,* 12 (Spring 1983), p.1

Bradbury, Ray and Judy Cooke, eds., *New Writing* (London: Minerva, 1992)

Bradley, Sean, 'No Dirt' (Interview with Kelman), *Scottish Child* (June/July 1998), N. pag.

Bruce, Samuel W. and L. Kay Webster, eds., *Dictionary of Literary Biography Yearbook: 1996* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1997)

Buie, Elizabeth, 'Author has a word with region over his books', *Glasgow Herald,* 12 September 1992, p.3

Burgess, Moira, *The Glasgow Novel* (Motherwell: The Scottish Library Association, 1986)

- *Imagine a City: Glasgow in Fiction* (Argyll: Argyll Publishing, 1998)

Calder, Angus, *Revolving Culture: Notes from the Scottish Republic* (London: I.B. Travis Publishers, 1994)

Campbell, Donald, Review of *Not Not While the Giro. British Book News* (August, 1983), pp.517-8

Charlton, Bruce, Review of *A Disaffection. Durham University Journal,* Vol.81 Issue 2 (1989), p.332

Clark, William, 'A conversation with James Kelman', *Variant,* Vol.2 No.12 (Spring 2001), pp.33-7

Corbett, John, *Language and Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997)

Cowan, Edward J. and Douglas Gifford, *The Polar Twins* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1999)

Craig, Cairns, 'Resisting Arrest' in Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson, eds., *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University

Press, 1993), pp.99-114

- 'Scotland and the Regional Novel' in K.D.M. Snell, *The Regional Novel in Britain and Ireland 1880-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.221-256

- *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999)

Craig, Gordon A, 'Glesca Belongs to Me!', *New York Review*, April 25, 1991, pp.12-18

Crawford, Robert, *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992)

Crawford, Roderick, 'The Struggle for Authenticity' (Review of *A Disaffection*), *Chapman*, 61/62 (1990), pp.185-186

Crumey, Andrew, Review of *Translated Accounts. Scotland on Sunday*, 3 June 2001, 'e.g.' p.14

Daly, Macdonald, 'Your Average Working Kelman', *Cencrastus*, 46 (Autumn 1993), pp.14-16

Daly, Mac, 'Gray Eminence and Kelman Ataxy: A Reply to H. Baum', *Gairfish*, 9 (1995), pp.23-35

Dixon, Keith, 'Talking to the People: A Reflection on Recent Glasgow Fiction' *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 28 (1993), pp.92-104

- 'Making Sense of Ourselves: Nation and Community in Modern Scottish Writing', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, Vol.XXXIX No.4 (October 1993), pp.359-68

Dooley, Tim, 'Living in the Filth' (Review of *Greyhound for Breakfast), Times Literary Supplement*, 8 May 1987, p.488

Dunn, Douglas, 'Awful Bitter' (Review of *A Disaffection*), *The Listener*, 9 March 1989, p.31

Fell, Alison, 'Sound of the City' (Review of *Greyhound for Breakfast*), *New Statesman*, 17 April 1987, p.30

Fleming, P.J., 'Critics for Breakfast' (Interview with Kelman), *The Big Issue in Scotland* , 51 (May 1995), pp.20-1

Fraser, Douglas, 'A one-man culture shock' (Profile of/interview with Kelman), *The Scotsman*, 21 October 1989, p.9

Fraser, Stephen, 'Curses - Kelman joins the text set' *Scotland on Sunday,* 15 July 2001, p.8

Freeman, Alan, 'Realism Fucking Realism: The Word on the Street - Kelman, Kennedy and Welsh' *Cencrastus* (Summer 1997), pp.6-7

Frew, Christopher,'Kelman reveals torment of a teacher's alienation', *Glasgow Herald*, 28 February 1989, p.30

Fullbrook, Kate, Review of *A Chancer*. *British Book News*, (November 1985), pp.684-85

Gifford, Douglas, 'Short Stories and Glasgow Verve' (Review of *Not Not While the Giro), Books in Scotland*, 12 (Spring 1983), pp.11-16

- 'The Richest Collection in Years' (Review of *The Busconductor Hines*), *Books in Scotland*, 15 (Summer 1984), pp.9-14

- *The Dear Green Place? The Novel in the West of Scotland* (Glasgow: Third Eye Centre, 1985)

- 'The Authentic Glasgow Experience: James Kelman's *A Chancer*', *Books in Scotland*, 19 (Autumn 1985), pp.9-13

- 'Recent Fiction' (Review of *Greyhound for Breakfast*), *Books in Scotland*, 24 (Spring 1987), pp.16-19

- 'Decline in the West' (Review of *A Disaffection), Books in Scotland*, 30 (Spring 1989), pp.5-12

- 'Discovering Lost Voices', *Books in Scotland*, 38 (Summer 1991), pp.1-6

- 'Old and New Masters' (Review of *The Burn*), *Books in Scotland*, 39 (Autumn 1991), pp.5-13

- 'Out of the World and into Blawearie' in Edward J. Cowan and Douglas Gifford, *The Polar Twins* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1999), pp.284-303

Gilbert, Geoff, 'Can Fiction Swear? James Kelman and the Booker Prize' in Rod Mengham *An Introduction to Contemporary Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), pp.219-234

Grimes, William, Review of *Greyhound for Breakfast*. *VLS* (Village Voice Literary Supplement), 62 (February 1988), p.3

Hagemann, Susanne, ed., *Studies in Scottish Fiction: 1945 to the Present* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996)

Hastie, David, 'The Quebecois Phenomenon', *Chapman*, 95, (2000), pp.23-29

Hunter, William, 'A voice of Glasgow with a withering effect on apostrophes' (Profile of Kelman), *Glasgow Herald*, 12 February 1983, p.8

Jacobs, Eric, 'Eyeless and Legless in Glasgow' (Review of *How late it was, how late*), *Spectator*, 2 April 1994, pp.33-4

Jaggi, Maya, 'Speaking in tongues' (Profile/interview/review of *The Good Times), Guardian Weekend*, 18 July 1998, pp.27-30

Jamie, Kathleen, 'The voice of the oppressed' (Profile of Kelman), *Scotland on Sunday*, 19 February 1989, p.40

Jenkins, Nicholas, 'Scotland's Burning, Look Yonder' (Review of *Greyhound for Breakfast*), *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, 10 April 1988, p.11

Jordan, Elaine, 'Travelling' (Review of *Not Not While the Giro*), *London*

Review of Books, Vol.5 No.7 (1983), pp.22-3

'K is for culture: Interview with James Kelman', *Scottish Trade Union Review*, 68 (January/February 1995), pp.24-29 [Anonymous article]

Kakutani, Michiko, 'Down and Out' (Review of *Greyhound for Breakfast), New York Times*, 16 January 1988, p.16

- 'Profane Wandering within the Idioms of Glasgow' (Review of *How late it was, how late*), *New York Times*, 16 December 1994), p.B8

Kirby, Martin, 'A Prufrock in Glasgow' (Review of *A Disaffection), New York Times Book Review*, 18 June 1989, p.14

Kirk, John, 'Figuring the Dispossessed: Images of the Urban Working Class in the Writing of James Kelman', *English: The Journal of the English Association* Vol.48 No 191 (Summer 1999), pp.101-116

Klaus, H. Gustave, 'Kelman for Beginners', *Journal of the Short Story in English (Les cahiers de la Nouvelle)*, 22 (Summer 1994), pp.127-135

Lewis, Peter, Review of *Greyhound for Breakfast. Stand Magazine,* Vol.29 Issue 2 (1988), pp.41-2

Lindsay, Frederic, 'The Glasgow Novel: Myths and Directions', *Books in Scotland*, 21 (Summer 1986), pp.3-4

Linklater, John, 'Author who puts Maryhill before Booker presentation at Guildhall' (Profile of Kelman), *Glasgow Herald*, 23 October 1989, p.9

- 'Averse to turn words into action'(Review of play *The Busker*), *Glasgow Herald*, 8 April 1991, p.10

Lockerbie, Catherine, 'James Kelman wins Booker Prize', *The Scotsman*, 12 October 1994, p.1

- 'Deep in the Heart of Kelman' (Interview with Kelman), *The Scotsman*, 18 July 1998, p.16

- 'Kelman and Morgan share £10,000 Stakis prize', *The Scotsman*, 28 November 1998, p.22

- 'Volume Control', *The Scotsman*, 28 November 1998, p.17

Lodge, David, 'The Novelist Today: Still at the Crossroads?' in Ray Bradbury and Judy Cooke, *New Writing* (London: Minerva, 1992), pp.203-215

Lyall, Sarah, 'Booker Prize Winner Defends His Language', *New York Times*, 29 November 1994, pp.B1-B2

Macafee, Caroline, 'Glasgow Dialect in Literature', *Scottish Language*, 1 (Autumn 1982), pp.45-53

Maley, Willy, 'Swearing Blind: Kelman and the Curse of the Working Classes', *Edinburgh Review*, 95 (Spring 1996), pp.105-112

Malzahn, Manfred, 'The Industrial Novel' in Cairns Craig, ed., *The History of*

Scottish Literature, Vol.4: Twentieth Century (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), pp.229-241

Mangan, Gerald, 'The Short Fantastic' (Review of *Not Not While the Giro*), *Times Literary Supplement*, 30 December 1983, p.1462

- 'Coming Down with an Acute Case' (Review of *A Disaffection*), *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 February 1989, p.191

Margetto, Jayne, 'James Kelman: walking among the fires', *Between the Lines* http:www.thei.aust.com/isite/btl/btlinkelman.html (Australian based e-magazine profile and interview with Kelman on the publication of *How late it was, how late*)

Marqusee, Mike, 'Giro Culture' (Interview with Kelman and review of *Greyhound for Breakfast), Books*, 2 (May, 1987), p.6

Mars-Jones, Adam, 'In Holy Boozers' (Review of *How late it was, how late), The Times Literary Supplement*, 1 April 1994, p.20

Massie, Alan, 'Missing the point about a work of pure fiction', *The Scotsman*, 17 October 1994, p.10

Matterson, Stephen, 'A tour-de-force of Language' (Review of *How late it was, how late*), *Times Change*, 4 (Spring 1995), pp.24-5

McAlpine, Joan, 'Honesty makes Jim his local's hero', *The Scotsman*, 12 October 1994, p.3

McCormick, Michael, 'For Jimmy Kelboats', *Chapman*, 83 (1996), pp.30-34

McCulloch, Margery Palmer, 'What Crisis in Scottish Fiction? Creative Courage and Cultural Continuity in Novels by Friel, Jenkins and Kelman', *Cencrastus*, 48 (Summer 1994), pp.15-18

McLay, Farquhar, ed., *Workers City* (Glasgow: Clydeside Press, 1988)

McLean, Duncan, 'James Kelman Interviewed', *Edinburgh Review*, 71 (1985), pp.64-80

McNeill, Kirsty, 'Interview with James Kelman', *Chapman*, 57 (1989), pp.1-9

Mega, Marcello, 'Straight talking wins over critics', *The Scotsman*, 12 October 1994, p.3

Mengham, Rod, *An Introduction to Contemporary Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999)

Millar, Karl, 'Shite' (Review of *A Disaffection), London Review of Books* Vol.11 No.5 (1989), p.13

- 'Glasgow Hamlet' in Karl Millar, *Authors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp.156-162

Miller, Jim, Review of *The Busconductor Hines. British Book News*, June 1984, p.365

Milne, Drew, 'James Kelman: dialects of urbanity' in James A. Davies and

Glyn Pursglove, eds., *Writing Region and Nation: Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on the Literature of Region and Nation* (Swansea: University of Wales, 1994), pp.393-407

Monnickendam, Andrew, 'Literary Voices and the Projection of Cultural Failure in Modern Scottish Literature' in Ton Hoenselaars and Marius Buning, eds., *English Literature and the Other Languages* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp.231-242

Morgan, Edwin, 'Glasgow Writing', *Books in Scotland*, 15 (Summer 1984), pp.4-6

- 'Musing on the Buses' (Review of *The Busconductor Hines*), *Times Literary Supplement*, 13 April 1984, p.397

- 'Glasgow Speech in Recent Scottish Literature' in Edwin Morgan, *Crossing the Border* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1990), pp.312-329

- *Crossing the Border* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1990)

- 'Flow of consciousness' (Review of *The Burn), The Weekend Scotsman*, 27 April 1991, p.8

Morrice, Julie, 'At the cutting edge of reality' (Review of *The Burn* and *Hardie and Baird and Other Plays*), *Scotland on Sunday*, 21 April 1991, p.36

Morton, Brian, 'Greater Expectations' (Review of *A Disaffection*), *New Statesman & Society*, 17 February 1989, pp.38-9

- 'Out of Sight' (Review of *How late it was, how late*), *New Statesman & Society*, 18 March 1994, p.56

Mosely, Merit, 'The Booker Prize' in Samuel W. Bruce and L. Kay Webster, eds., *Dictionary of Literary Biography Yearbook: 1996* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1997), pp.279-284

Nicoll, Laurence, '"This is not a nationalist position": James Kelman's existential voice', *Edinburgh Review*, 103 (2000), pp.79-84

O'Brien, Sean, 'The World with its labels taken off' (Review of *Translated Accounts*), *Sunday Times*, 3 June 2001, Sect.9 p.45

O'Hagan, Andrew, 'The Paranoid Sublime' (Review of *How late it was, how late), London Review of Books*, Vol.16 No.10 (1994), pp.8-9

Radcliffe, Allan, 'Experimental Drama' (Review of *Translated Accounts*), *The List*, 7-21 June 2001, p.108

Relich, Mario, 'The Politics of Language' (Review of *How late it was, how late*), *Chapman*, 80 (1995), pp.92-4

Review of *Not Not While the Giro. Scottish Review*, (May 1983), N. pag. [Anonymous article]

Review of *Lean Tales. Edinburgh Review*, 69 (1985), pp.139-141 [Anonymous article]

Robertson, James, Review of *A Disaffection. Radical Scotland*, 38 (April/May

19[illegible]), N. pag.

Rodger, Liam, 'Tense, Aspect and *The Busconductor Hines*: The Literary Function of Non-Standard Language in the Fiction of James Kelman', *Edinburgh Working Papers in Applied Linguistics*, 3 (1992), pp.116-123

Rose, Dilys, Review of *A Chancer* and *Greyhound for Breakfast*. *Chapman*, 49 (1987), pp.83-4

Shack, Neville, 'Reckonings among the Rough-and-Tumble' (Review of *A Chancer*), *Times literary Supplement*, 6 December 1985, p.1407

Skinner, John, 'Contemporary Scottish Novelists and the Stepmother Tongue' in Ton Hoenselaars and Marius Buning, eds., *English Literature and the Other Languages* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp.211-220

Spufford, Francis, 'Dialects' (Review of *Greyhound for Breakfast*), *London Review of Books*, Vol.9 No.7 (1987), p.23

Stevenson, Anne, 'Off the Buses' (Interview with Kelman on the publication of *An Old Pub Near the Angel*), *The Weekend Scotsman*, 14 July 1973, p.2

Taylor, D.J., 'Eh?' (Review of *Translated Accounts*), *Literary Review*, June 2001, p.48

Thomson, Geddes, 'The Glasgow Short Story' *Chapman*, 33 (1982), pp.5-8

Todd, Richard, *Consuming Fictions: The Booker Prize and Fiction in Britain Today* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996)

Turner, Jenny, 'Scottish Men and Scottish Women' (Review of *The Burn*), *London Review of Books*, Vol.13 No.12 (1991), pp.20-22

Vice, Sue, Analysis of *How late it was, how late* in Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp.91-102

Walker, Marshall, *Scottish Literature Since 1707* (London: Longman, 1996)

Wallace, Gavin, 'A Scottish Triptych' (Review of *Not Not While the Giro*), *Chapman*, 15 (1984), pp.53-4

Wallace, Gavin and Randall Stevenson, eds., *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993)

Warner, Alan. 'Interview between Sophie Dale and Alan Warner', *Edinburgh Review*, 103 (2000), pp.121-132

Weinstein, Arnold, 'Wee Prisons' (Review of *Greyhound for Breakfast*), *New York Times Book Review*, 20 March 1988, p.19

Williams, Nicholas M., 'The Dialect of Authenticity: The Case of Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*' in Ton Hoenselaars and Marius Buning, eds., *English Literature and the Other Languages* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp.221-230

'Writers Who's Who'. *Books in Scotland*, 14 (Spring 1984), N. pag. [Anonymous biographical note on Kelman]

Young, James D., *The Very Bastards of Creation - Scottish International*

Radicalism 1707-1995: A Biographical Study (Glasgow: Clydeside Press, 1997)

Background reading

Abe, Kobo, *The Woman in the Dunes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)

Allen, Walter, *The Short Story in English* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982)

Agee, James and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (London: Peter Owen, 1965)

Andersson, Lars and Peter Trudgill, *Bad Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990)

Annand, J.K., 'MacDiarmid at Broughton' in P.H. Scott and A.C. Davis, eds., *The Age of MacDiarmid* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1980), pp.22-26

Ascherson, Neal, 'MacDiarmid and Politics' in P.H. Scott and A.C. Davis, eds., *The Age of MacDiarmid* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1980), pp.224-237

Austen, Jane, *Sense and Sensibility* (London: Penguin Classics, 1995)

Barke, James, *The Land of the Leal* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1987)

Bell, Michael, 'The metaphysics of Modernism' in Michael Levenson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.9-32

Bercovitch, Sacvan, *The Cambridge History of American Literature, Vol.8: Poetry and Criticism 1940-1995* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Bergson, Henri, *Time and Free Will* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1971)

- *Mind-Energy* (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1920)

Bickerton, Derek, 'Modes of Interior Monologue: A Formal Definition' *Modern Language Quarterly*, Vol. XXVIII No.2 (1967), pp.229-39

Blair, Sara, 'Modernism and the politics of culture' in Michael Levenson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.157-173

Blake, George, *The Shipbuilders* (London: Pan Books, 1972)

Bold, Alan, 'Dr. Grieve and Mr. MacDiarmid' in P.H. Scott and A.C. Davis, eds., *The Age of MacDiarmid* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1980), pp.35-50

Bonheim, Helmut, *The Narrative Modes: Techniques of the Short Story* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1982)

Booth, Wayne C., *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (London: Penguin, 1991)

Bradbury, Malcolm, ed., *The Novel Today* (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1977)

- 'The Cities of Modernism' in Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, eds., *Modernism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), pp.96-104

Bradbury, Malcolm and James McFarlane, eds., *Modernism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986)

Bradbury, Malcolm, E. Mottram, and J. Franco, *The Penguin Companion to Literature Vol.3: United States and Latin American Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971)

Breslin, James E., *William Carlos Williams: An American Artist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970)

Brienza, Susan D., *Samuel Beckett's New Worlds: Style in Metafiction* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987)

Bruce, George, '1936 - The Borderer and the Orcadian' in P.H. Scott and A.C. Davis, eds., *The Age of MacDiarmid* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1980), pp. 100-121

Bruce, Samuel W. and L. Kay Webster, eds., *Dictionary of Literary Biography Yearbook: 1996* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1997)

Bryden, Bill, *Willie Rough* (Edinburgh: Southside, 1972)

Büchner, Georg, *Complete Plays, 'Lenz' and Other Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 1993)

Buehrer, Beverley Bare, *Japanese Films: A Filmography and Commentary, 1921-1989* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1990)

Butler, Robert, 'The City as Liberating Space in *Life and Times of Frederick Douglas*' in Yoshinobu Hakutani and Robert Butler, eds., *The City in African-American Literature* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995), pp.21-36

Butter, P.H., *Edwin Muir: Man and Poet* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966)

- 'Introduction' in Edwin Muir, *Poor Tom* (Edinburgh: Paul Harris Publishing, 1982), N. pag.

Chapman, Abraham, ed., *Black Voices* (New York: Mentor, 1968)

Chekhov, Anton, *Letters on Literature* ed. by Louis S. Friedland (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1924)

- *The Essential Tales of Chekhov* ed. by Richard Ford (London: Granta Books, 1999)

Coates, Jennifer, *Women, Men and Language* (London: Longman, 1993)

Cohn, Dorrit, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1978)

Conradi, Peter, *Fyodor Dostoevsky* (London: Macmillan, 1988)

Corkin, Stanley, *Realism and the Birth of the Modern United States: Cinema, Literature, and Culture* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1996)

Craig, Cairns, ed., *The History of Scottish Literature, Vol.4: Twentieth Century*

(Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987)

Cuddon, J.A., (Revised by C.E. Preston) *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998)

Culler, Jonathan, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

Cummings, Michael and Robert Simmons, *The Language of Literature* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1986)

Cunliffe, Marcus, *The Literature of the United States* (London: Penguin Books, 1987)

Davie, George E., *The Scottish Enlightenment and Other Essays* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1991)

Davies, James A., and Glyn Pursglove, eds., *Writing Region and Nation: Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on the Literature of Region and Nation* (Swansea: University of Wales, 1994)

Dekoven, Marianne, 'Modernism and gender' in Michael Levenson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.174-193

Dickson, Keith, 'Writing on the Borderline: The Works of William McIlvanney' *Studies in Scottish Literature,* Vol.XXIV (1989), pp.142-157

Dostoevsky, Fyodor, *Notes From the Underground* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

DuBois, W.E.B., 'The Souls of Black Folk' in Abraham Chapman, ed., *Black Voices* (New York: Mentor, 1968), pp.493-11

Edwards, Owen Dudley, 'Prose and Polemic' in P.H. Scott and A.C. Davis, eds., *The Age of MacDiarmid* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1980), pp.238-260

Eliot, George, *Adam Bede* (London: Penguin Books, 1985)

- *The Mill on the Floss* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 1995)

Elovaara, Raili, *The Problem of Identity in Samuel Beckett's Prose: An Approach from Philosophies of Existence* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1976)

Evans, Walker, *Walker Evans at Work* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994)

Faulkner, Peter, *Modernism* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1977)

Fleischman, Avrom, 'Forms of the Woolfian Short Story' in Ralph Freedman, ed., *Virginia Woolf: Revaluation and Continuity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, (1980), pp.44-70

Freedman, Ralph, ed., *Virginia Woolf: Revaluation and Continuity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980)

Friel, George, *Mr Alfred M.A.* in *A Glasgow Trilogy* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1999)

Fromm, Erich, *Man for Himself* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1947)

Gaitens, Edward, *Dance of the Apprentices* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 2001)

Galloway, Janice, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (London: Vintage, 1999)

Genette, Gerard, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990)

Gibbon, Lewis Grassic, *A Scots Quair* (London: Penguin, 1986)

- 'Literary Lights' in Lewis Grassic Gibbon & Hugh MacDiarmid, *Scottish Scene* (London: Jarrolds Publishers Limited, 1934), pp.194-207

Gibbon, Lewis Grassic & Hugh MacDiarmid, *Scottish Scene* (London: Jarrolds Publishers Limited, 1934)

Gifford, Douglas, 'Modern Scottish Fiction', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, Vol.XIII (1978), pp.250-273

- 'Scottish Fiction 1975-1977', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, Vol.XIV (1979), pp.207-237)

- 'Scottish Fiction 1979', *Studies in Scottish Literature,* Vol.XVI (1981), pp.188-207

- *Neil M. Gunn & Lewis Grassic Gibbon* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1983)

Giles, Howard, Richard Bourhis and Ann Davies, 'Prestige Speech Styles: The Imposed Norm and Inherent Value Hypotheses' in William C. McCormack and Stephen A. Wurm, eds., *Language and Society: Anthropological Issues* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), pp.589-596

Grant, Damien, *Realism* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1970)

Graves, Robert, *Lars Porsena: Or The Future of Swearing and Improper Language* (London: Martin Brian & O'Keeffe, 1972)

Gray, Alasdair, *Lanark* (London: Panther Books, 1984)

Gray, Martin, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Essex: Longman/York Press, 1998)

Grimm, Reinhold, Peter Spycher, Richard A Zipser, eds., *From Kafka and Dada to Brecht and Beyond* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1982)

Guerard, Albert J., *The Triumph of the Novel: Dickens, Dostoevsky, Faulkner* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976)

Hakutani, Yoshinobu and Robert Butler, eds., *The City in African-American Literature* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995)

Halter, Peter, *The Revolution in the Visual Arts and the Poetry of William Carlos Williams* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

Hart, Francis Russell, *The Scottish Novel: A Critical Survey* (London: John Murray, 1978)

Head Dominic, *The Modernist Short Story: A study in theory and practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

Heller, Erich, *Kafka* (London: Fontana, 1974)

Hesla, David H., *The Shape of Chaos: an Interpretation of the Art of Samuel Beckett* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1971)

Hildick, Wallace, *13 Types of Narrative* (London: Macmillan, 1968)

Hind, Archie, *The Dear Green Place* (London: New Authors Limited, 1967)

Hingley, Ronald, *Dostoevsky: His Life and Work* (London: Paul Elek, 1978)

Hoenselaars, Ton, and Marius Buning, eds., *English Literature and the Other Languages* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999)

Hogg, James, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977)

Howells, William Dean, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986)

Hughes, Geoffrey, *Swearing: A Social History of Foul Language, Oaths and Profanity in English* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991)

Hughes, Susan E., 'Expletives of lower working-class women', *Language in Society*, Vol.21 No.2 (June 1992), pp. 291-303

Humphrey, Robert, *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954)

Hymes, Dell, *Ethnography, Linguistics, Narrative Inequality: Toward an Understanding of Voice* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1986)

Janouch, Gustav, *Conversations with Kafka* (London: Quartet Books, 1985)

Jenkins, Robin, *The Changeling* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 2000)

- *Fergus Lamont* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1997)

- *Just Duffy* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 2000)

Jones, Malcolm, 'Introduction' in Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes From the Underground* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.vii-xxiii

Kafka, Franz, *The Diaries of Franz Kafka*, ed. by Max Brod (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972)

- *The Complete Short Stories* , ed. by Nahum N. Glatzer (London: Vintage, 1999)

Keene, Dennis, ed. and trans., *The Modern Japanese Prose Poem: An Anthology of Six Poets* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980)

Kelly, Michael, ed., *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)

King, Bruce, ed., *Literatures of the World in English* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1974)

King, Bruce, *The New Literatures in English: cultural nationalism in a changing world* (London: Macmillan, 1980)

Klerk, Vivian de, 'How taboo are taboo words for girls?', *Language in Society*, Vol.21 No.2 (June 1992), pp.277-289

Kolb, Harold H., *The Illusion of Life: American Realism as a Literary Form* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 1989)

Lawall, Sarah N., *Critics of Consciousness: The Existential Structures of Literature* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968)

Leech, G.N., and M.H. Short, *Style in Fiction* (London: Longman, 1981)

Leith, Dick, *A Social History of English* (London: Routledge, 1997)

Leonard, Tom, *Intimate Voices* (Newcastle: Galloping Dog Press, 1988)

- *Reports from the Present* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995)

- ed., *Radical Renfrew* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990)

Levenson, Michael, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

Macafee, Caroline, *Glasgow* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1983)

Macaulay, R.K.S., *Language, Social Class, and Education: A Glasgow Study* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1977)

- 'Urbanity in an Urban Dialect: The Poetry of Tom Leonard', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, Vol.XXIII (1988), pp.150-163

MacDiarmid, Hugh, *Selected Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970)

Macquarrie, John, *Existentialism* (London: Penguin Books, 1973)

Malzahn, Manfred, *Aspects of Identity: The Contemporary Scottish Novel (1978-1981) as National Self Expression* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1984)

Manning, Susan, 'Scotland and America: National Literatures? National Languages?', *Cencrastus*, New Year (1989), pp.41-46

Mautner, Thomas, ed., *Dictionary of Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 1999)

May, Charles E., 'Introduction' in Noelle Watson, ed., *Reference Guide to Short Fiction* (Detroit: St. James Press, 1994), pp.3-6

Mayne, Andrew and John Shuttleworth, *Considering Prose* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990)

McCormack, William C. and Stephen A. Wurm, eds., *Language and Society: Anthropological Issues* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979)

McCulloch, Margery, *The Novels of Neil M. Gunn: A Critical Study* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987)

- *Edwin Muir: Poet, Critic and Novelist* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press,1993)

McElroy, Davis Dunbar, *Existentialism and Modern Literature* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1963)

McIlvanney, William, *Docherty* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1975)

McLean, Duncan, *Bucket of Tongues* (London: Vintage, 1999)

Montagu, Ashley, *The Anatomy of Swearing* (London: Rapp & Whiting, 1968)

Moore, Jack B., 'No Street Numbers in Accra: Richard Wright's African Cities' in Yoshinobu Hakutani and Robert Butler, eds., *The City in African-American Literature* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995), pp.64-78

Morris, Mervyn, 'Introduction' in V.S. Reid, *New Day* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1973), N. pag.

Muir, Edwin. *Selected Prose*, ed. by George Mackay Brown (London: John Murray, 1987)

- *Poor Tom* (Edinburgh: Paul Harris Publishing, 1982)

- *An Autobiography* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1999)

Murison, David, 'The Language Problem in Hugh MacDiarmid's Work' in P.H. Scott and A.C. Davis, eds., *The Age of MacDiarmid* (Edinburgh; Mainstream Publishing, 1980), pp.83-99

Murray, Isobel, 'Novelists of the Renaissance' in Cairns Craig, ed., *The History of Scottish Literature, Vol.4: Twentieth Century* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), pp.103-117

Nasta, Susheila and Anna Rutherford, eds., *Tiger's Triumph: Celebrating Sam Selvon* (Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire: Dangaroo Press, 1995)

O'Connor, Frank, *The Lonely Voice: A Study of the Short Story* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1963)

Ortega, Ramon Lopez, 'Language and Point of View in Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *A Scots Quair*', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, Vol.XVI (1981), pp.148-159

Pascal, Roy, *The Dual Voice: Free indirect speech and its functioning in the nineteenth-century European novel* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977)

Pike, Burton, *The Image of the City in Modern Literature* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981)

Pratt, Mary Louise, 'Conventions of Representation: where discourse and ideology meet' in Willie Van Peer, ed., *The Taming of the Text: Explorations in Language, Literature and Culture* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp.15-34

Rainey, Lawrence, 'The cultural economy of Modernism' in Michael Levenson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 33-69

Ramchand, Kenneth, *The West Indian Novel and its Background* (London: Heinemann, 1983)

Rampersad, Arnold, *The Life of Langston Hughes, Vol.2: 1941-67* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988)

Rathbone, Belinda, *Walker Evans* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1995)

Reid, Ian, *The Short Story* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1977)

Reid, V.S., *New Day* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1973)

Rosenthal, M.L., 'Introduction' in William Carlos Williams, *The William Carlos Williams Reader* (U.S.A.: MacGibbon & Kee, 1966), pp.ix-xxxvi

Ross, Donald Jr., 'Who's talking? How characters become narrators in fiction', *Modern Language Notes,* Vol.91 No.6 (1976), pp.1222-1242

Sargeson, Frank, *I Saw in My Dream* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1974)

- *The Stories of Frank Sargeson* (Auckland: Longman Paul, 1980)

Scott, P.H. & A.C. Davis., eds., *The Age of MacDiarmid* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1980)

Selvon, Sam, *Moses Ascending* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1984)

- *The Lonely Londoners* (Essex: Longman, 1998)

- *Foreday Morning: Selected Prose (1946-86)*, ed. by Ken Ramchand and Susheila Nasta (London: Longman, 1989)

Sharpe, Alan, *A Green Tree in Gedde* (London: Michael Joseph, 1967)

Shaw, Valerie, *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction* (London: Longman, 1983)

Snell, K.D.M, *The Regional Novel in Britain and Ireland 1800-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

Sokel, Walter H., 'Kafka's Poetics of the Inner Self' in Reinhold Grimm, Peter Spycher and Richard A. Zipser, eds., *From Kafka and Dada to Brecht and Beyond* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), pp.7-21

Spiller, Robert E., Willard Thorp, Thomas H. Johnson, Harry Seidel Canby, Richard M. Ludwig, and William M. Gibson, eds., *Literary History of the United States* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Ltd., 1974)

Stephen, Dan, 'Talking to Tom Leonard', *Variant*, Vol.2 No.5 (Spring 1998),

pp.27-8

Stevenson, Randall, *Modernist Fiction: an Introduction* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992)

Stromberg, Roland N., *Realism, Naturalism, and Symbolism: Modes of Thought and Expression in Europe, 1848-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1968)

Thompson, Jerry L., *The Last Years of Walker Evans* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977)

- 'Walker Evans: Some Notes on His Way of Working' in Walker Evans, *Walker Evans at Work* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), pp.9-17

Thwaite, Anthony, 'Introduction' in Kobo Abe, *The Woman in the Dunes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp.vii-xiii

Torrington, Jeff, *Swing hammer swing* (London: Martin Secker & Warburg, 1993)

Tressell, Robert, *The ragged trousered philanthropists* (London: Paladin, 1991)

Twain, Mark, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979)

Van Peer, Willie, ed., *The Taming of the Text: Explorations in Language, Literature and Culture* (London: Routledge, 1988)

Vice, Sue, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997)

von Hallberg, Robert, 'Poetry, Politics, and Intellectuals: Avant-Gardes' in Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Cambridge History of American Literature, Vol.8: Poetry and Criticism 1940-1995* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.83-122

Wales, Katherine, 'Back to the Future: Bakhtin, stylistics and discourse' in Willie Van Peer, ed., *The Taming of the Text: Explorations in Language, Literature and Culture* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp.176-192

Wales, Katie, *A Dictionary of Stylistics* (London: Longman, 1997)

Warner, Alan, *Morvern Callar* (London: Vintage, 1996)

Watson, Noelle, ed., *Reference Guide to Short Fiction* (Detroit: St. James Press, 1994)

Webster, Roger, *Studying Literary Theory* (London: Arnold, 1990)

Wellek, Rene, (Ed.) *Dostoevsky: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962)

Welsh, Irvine, *Trainspotting* (London: Minerva, 1995)

- *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (London: Vintage, 1995)

Williams, William Carlos, *Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams* (New

York: Random House, 1954)

- *The William Carlos Williams Reader* (U.S.A. : MacGibbon & Kee, 1966)

- *A Recognizable Image: William Carlos Williams on Art and Artists* ed. and with an introduction by Bram Dijkstra (New York: New Directions, 1978)

Wirth-Nesher, Hana, *City Codes: Reading the Modern Urban Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Witschi, Beat, *Glasgow Urban Writing and Postmodernism* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1991)

Wittig, Kurt, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (Edinburgh: The Mercat Press, 1978)

Yamanouchi, Hisaaki, *The search for authenticity in modern Japanese literature* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978)