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Crafting Authenticity:

Voice and Structure in Three 20th-Century Scottish Novelists

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Abstract

The following thesis will explore the way in which three significant and critically renowned 20th-century Scottish authors subvert the traditional perceived hierarchy of standard English using language and narrative structure. The writers who will be focused on as case-studies are James Leslie Mitchell (Lewis Grassie Gibbon), Muriel Spark, and James Kelman. The thesis argues that each writer creates a highly crafted and literary style and narrative structure to represent the 'authentic' voice of their protagonists. This approach allows them to portray individuals who in the past may have been side-lined or ignored.

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Chapter 1.1 Removing the ‘Standard’ from English

Traditionally, when characters from various Scottish backgrounds are depicted in literature, there are two conventional approaches regarding the way in which their narrative voices are portrayed. Either they will be provided within the narrative construct of standard English and highlighted as ‘other’ using punctuation such as speech marks, or they will be ‘translated’ by the narrative voice so that they conform to the accepted norms of standard English. Both methods potentially introduce a perceived hierarchy within the text, where any speech which diverts from the standard English of the narrative is placed in an inferior position.

The use of non-standard English in a text allows for various artistic and creative opportunities. However, it can also lead to issues of perceived ‘inauthenticity’ and questions of legitimacy, or introduce hierarchies within the narrative where there is a dominant, authoritative voice which takes precedence over all other voices in the text:

There has been enough of Literature as a ‘path’ through the ages, as a ‘course’ entrusted to those appointed to ‘its’ charge. Let a writer have the authority to address any reader – and any reader to read any writer – without either feeling that valid dialogue can only take place in a code acceptable to a transmitter of the code of governance – in other words, within the code of governance itself. (Leonard, 1990, p. xxvi)

As Tom Leonard states, artists should ‘feel free to go back into the past that is Literature’ and utilize whatever tools they find and apply them to their writing, and not be tied to the dominant form of language, in this case standard English. However, this also applies in the other direction, where an author should be able to discard or alter a ‘traditional’ technique or established form where it does not suit their needs. This thesis will explore these questions of language, narrative, and artifice in 20th-century Scottish literature, and consider the way voices are represented and manipulated to depict different experiences and voices which may have been ignored or marginalized in literary writing in the past.

The thesis will trace the progression of the narrative voice in Scottish literature in the 20th-century and explore the way in which traditional English narrative language and form has been altered to allow new idioms of speech and narrative techniques to be introduced. These techniques remove the narrative hierarchy and allow individual voices and experiences to come to the forefront, creating a literary space where the voices of the characters are not simply confined to speech, but come through in the actual body of the text. As Kelman says:

language is the culture – if you lose your language you've lost your culture, so if you've lost the way your family talk, the way your friends talk, then you've lost your culture, and you're divorced from it. (James Kelman in Kovesi, 2007, p. 8)

Kelman (along with Gibbon and Spark) views language in terms of the power it holds. By denying a section of society a voice, an entire group's cultural identity is being silenced, or at the very least dismissed as inferior to the accepted standard. He argues that using standard English when writing about characters who do not speak or think in standard English is an act of disempowerment. He believes – and it is evidenced through his work – that the voice and idiom of the individual should not be confined to speech marks but should permeate the entire narrative structure of the novel. This argument, which may at first seem hyperbolic, was brought into sharp focus when Kelman's novel *How Late it Was, How Late* (1994) won the Booker prize, much to the dismay of many of the judges and critics:

It's hard not to see a political agenda – not to say a class war – in this reaction, as when Booker jury member Rabbi Julia Neuberger disassociated herself from the award describing it as a 'disgrace' and as 'crap', when the UK wide bookstore Dillons refused to stock the book (despite, or to spite, the fact that it reached no. 2 in the bestseller list), when columnist Gerald Warner claimed that Kelman's type of people should remain taboo, and when Simon Jenkins called Kelman an 'illiterate savage' and the language of the novel 'merely Glaswegian Alcoholic'. (Miller & Rodger, 2011, p. 12)

The notion of one form of language being perceived as inferior to another, and the way some writers challenge this idea, is what this thesis will explore. Focusing mainly on three key modernist authors in the Scottish literary canon, the thesis will consider novels, novellas, and short stories. The main authors in discussion will be Lewis Grassie Gibbon, Muriel Spark, and James Kelman. While other writers are referenced, these three will comprise the primary focus of the thesis and their works used as case studies. They will be looked at chronologically to argue for a literary lineage which passes through each writer's work, a lineage which emerges from modernism and the manipulation of language and narrative forms. The thesis will also showcase each writers' literary style, as each writes in distinct idioms and uses unique narrative structures to convey the various voices and experiences of their respective characters.

Gibbon, Kelman, and Spark, attempt within their work to alter and subvert the traditional literary practice of an omniscient third-person narrator, a narrative method where the text is presented to the reader from a position of heightened knowledge and understanding, giving one autonomous voice authority over all others in the text. The narrator traditionally presents the text to the reader in broadly standard English, essentially translating different characters' speech and experiences. As has been stated, all writing is at its core artifice, regardless of how 'accurate' its depiction of speech may be. However, this thesis aims to highlight the way in which narrative actively alters the voices of characters from backgrounds and experiences which do not conform to those traditionally represented in standard English.

Traditional narrative approaches create a hierarchy where the narrative voice takes prominence as the dominant linguistic force, with all other variations in the text considered inferior. Each of the central texts in discussion is exemplary of the way in which this traditionalist form of writing can be challenged, using distinct idioms of speech and manipulation of the narrative structure itself.

What Lewis Grassie Gibbon, Muriel Spark and James Kelman attempt with their linguistic idioms and narrative structures is to replace traditional narrative hierarchy within their texts, thus allowing their characters' voices to control the structure of the narrative itself. A shift in narratorial power is achieved not only by portraying events from the perspective of characters from different classes and social experiences, but also by utilizing and modifying the traditional literary tools of language, narration, rhythm, and structure, crafting entire texts in the idiom and demotic of the communities and characters they are attempting to portray. The achievement of each of the authors' texts is the way in which their highly stylized and crafted writing seems to be an 'authentic' depiction of the 'natural' voices of the people they are writing about, despite being a constructed product of literary artifice. It is the subversion of this artifice and knowledge of literary history which distinguishes the texts, and allows the authors to be regarded not only as significant figures in the realm of Scottish literature, but aligns them with the modernist writers of their respective periods.

In each of the texts, the authors are not making an argument for their mode of speech and narration being *superior* to standard English. The writers are attempting to illustrate the experiences and voices of the characters and communities they have created, allowing them to speak, act and think in their own voices, and to construct their own stories.

Chapter 1.2 The Authors and Their Craft

The first section of the thesis will focus on James Leslie Mitchell (writing under the pen name Lewis Grassie Gibbon) and will mainly be concerned with his *Scots Quair* trilogy; *Sunset Song* (1932), *Cloud Howe* (1933), and *Grey Granite* (1934). The thesis will discuss how Gibbon alters the rhythm and flow of his narratives depending on who is speaking and what the situation is, using language and idioms specific to the characters he is depicting. Attention will

also be paid to Gibbon's narrative structuring of his three novels within the *Quair*, where a chapter will begin in the 'present,' with a character looking back over the events which have brought them there. This moving backwards and forwards in time within the narrative is something Spark also utilizes repeatedly in her texts, and acts as a way of foregrounding and emphasizing an individual's personal experience, rather than focusing primarily on a linear narrative:

Narratives often contain references back and references forward, so that the order of telling does not correspond to the order of happening. Sometimes the story will 'flash back' to relate an event which happened in the past, and such parts of the narrative can be called 'analeptic' (from 'analepsis', which literally means a 'back-take'). Likewise, the narrative may 'flash-forward' to narrate, or refer to, or anticipate an event which happens later: such parts of the narrative can be called 'proleptic' (from 'prolepsis', which literally means a 'fore-take'). (Barry, 2009, p. 226)

The second section of the thesis will focus on Muriel Spark, particularly her novels *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), *A Far Cry From Kensington* (1988), and *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963). These texts were selected because they contain a multitude of different perspectives and voices which all coalesce to provide a narrative whole within the novels. Initially, Spark's writing may not seem to share much with Gibbon and Kelman regarding writing in a distinctive Scottish dialect, as she primarily writes in what would be regarded as standard English. However, despite not signposting her work by writing in a distinctly Scottish idiom like Gibbon or Kelman, Spark still puts her characters and their voices firmly in control of the narrative, so her use of standard English should not exclude her in a discussion on 'authentic' narrative voice outlined in the context of this thesis:

Standard English, it could be argued, can be accepted simply as a neutral medium of communication, which stands equally for all the various spoken forms of the language. (Scott, 2009, p. 104)

This thesis will argue that in Spark's writing, English is not a 'neutral medium' but is as carefully crafted a linguistic idiom and as idiosyncratic as that of Kelman or Gibbon. Reading Spark alongside Kelman and Gibbon in this way highlights the different artifice of each of these writers and the relations between 'voice', linguistic idiom, and narrative structure.

As has been mentioned, Spark is more concerned with her characters and their development than she is with straightforward plots. Therefore, like Gibbon before her, she moves backward and forwards within the narrative structure to provide 'future' information (prolepsis), such as the death of a character, or their future position in society. This technique allows her to explore her characters more fully through hindsight and ironic doubling, creating parallels and contradictions. However, in each case the reader is only provided with partial information that individuals in the text would sometimes not have access to. The reader is not in a heightened, superior position; they are participating in the text attempting to gather together all the different fragments of information to make sense of the narrative and understand the characters' motivations. Like Gibbon before and Kelman after, it can also be argued that Spark is very much a modernist writer, as broad as this term is, given that she focuses on the inner workings of her characters minds and their different psychological reactions to external events. She can be seen to bridge a narrative gap between the work of Gibbon and Kelman, who again at first glance may appear to be completely incompatible.

The final section of the thesis will look primarily at James Kelman's novels: *A Disaffection* (1989), *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994), and *Kieron Smith, Boy* (2008). These novels were chosen as they represent a selection of narratives from distinctly different perspectives, showcasing Kelman's ability to portray a multitude of different voices and experiences while maintaining his unique narrative structure and style. In each of these three novels, Kelman utilizes a distinct urban Glaswegian demotic and dialect. In each instance, the language is 'real'

for the character and experience depicted, but it is highly crafted and stylized. Although the novels share a narrative style and formal technique with one another, each of the voices within them are utterly unique to the character and experience they are attempting to depict. On a structural level, Kelman continues with Spark's technique of focusing on character over the plot by basically eradicating any traditional notion of the realist 'story.' In each of his texts analyzed in the thesis, and indeed in most of his novels and short stories, Kelman takes a singular individual and places the reader in that character's mind, allowing them to experience everything alongside them, or rather, from within their sensibility, from their perspective, and through their language, forms and sequences of perception.

Overall such techniques provide for a form of linguistic unity: there is no structural separation between the 'authority' of a narrator and the autonomy of the protagonist. The characters' words, thoughts and actions are thus not presented as a linguistic aberration, or at least as specimens ('trapped in a cage' of apostrophes and phoneticisation) to be judged by an all-seeing, omniscient 'standard' viewpoint. There is no god, no standard, no Establishment standing-in in judgement over Kelman's stories. In fact the readers are left 'space' here to judge for themselves. (Miller & Rodger, 2011, p. 51)

There is no narrative distancing, no hierarchical or superior voice giving an extraneous explanation. The reader is allowed to follow the characters' streams of consciousness until the author ends the texts as abruptly as it began, with no explanation or proper conclusions to tie everything up. Events occur, but they are mundane and painfully ordinary. The reader is provided with insight over action and given an 'authentic' account not of *the* working-class, but of *Kelman's* working-class.

Chapter 2.1 Lewis Grassie Gibbon and The Sowing of a Scottish Voice

James Leslie Mitchell, writing under the pseudonym Lewis Grassie Gibbon (by which he will be identified throughout the thesis), managed to set himself apart from his contemporaries in the realms of Scottish literature. In prose, he was the only writer of note attempting to utilize elements of the Scots language in the actual narrative of his writing on a large scale, rather than have it confined to speech:

The 'Grassie Gibbon Style' ... is a many layered instrument, a narrative basis close to standard English... a narrative which can be read and almost completely understood through the medium of orthography... (Gibbon, 2006, p. xiii)

While poets like Hugh MacDiarmid experimented with synthetic Scots, most notably in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926), and the short story 'The Waterside' (1927) (MacDiarmid, 1992, p. 44-48), the Scottish prose writers of the time were mainly concerned with accepted standard English and traditional narrative structures, a point MacDiarmid himself conceded:

Scots Quair was perhaps the first major Scottish work of fiction in which any kind of Scots was used throughout for narrative as well as dialogue — that is to say, as a first-order language. And... is by far the most promising attempt that has been made towards the creation of a modern Scots prose. (MacDiarmid in Munro, 1966, p. ix)

Novelists such as Catherine Carswell, Neil Gunn, George Blake and Dot Allen use a range of registers in their representations of speech, but their main narratives are pre-eminently in standard English. MacDiarmid experimented in Scots but never wrote an extended narrative novel in the language. As Tom Leonard notes on the writers of the period:

The new middle class of the towns and city – who identified most with Queen’s English in their diction – were often those most insistent on ‘good Scots’ in their literary hobbies. The contempt that was heaped on the speakers of the new urban diction of the West of Scotland was based on class, and sometimes religious, prejudice as much as a desire for a return to the mythical ‘pure’ diction of a pure race of pre-proletarian Scottish folk. (Leonard, 1990, p. xxiii)

The link between language and class and power, which Leonard makes here, is a vital element of this thesis, and in the case of Kelman a principal contention in what he sees as the problem with contemporary Scottish literature. As Leonard highlights above, language and the use of ‘Queen’s English’ is a clear indicator of class. This is true of language as spoken and language as written, where standard English is the accepted norm and any variations are considered inferior: ‘The new middle class of the towns and city...were often those most insistent on “good Scots” in their literary hobbies.’ This ‘good Scots’ is the traditional idea of the Scots ‘tongue’, the language of Burns and the Ballads. The ‘bad Scots’ is the language of the ‘new urban diction of the West of Scotland’, of the poor and the working-class. Because of this, during Gibbon’s period of writing, most of his contemporaries were facing the reality that to have work published, it must adhere to an accepted form of standard English, as Douglas S. Mack highlights: ‘a full rendition of the Scots speech... was not a practical possibility in the 1930s for a professional writer working for a London publisher’ (Mack, 2006, p. 210). Even writers who were tackling the same issues as Gibbon or who were reacting against the romanticised Kailyard genre of writing still wrote in a traditional way, such as George Douglas Brown and his influential novel *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901):

‘As I was saying when I was grossly interrupted,’ fumed the Provost, ‘there’s no needcessity for me to make a loang speech. I had thoat we were a-all agreed on the desirabeelity of the rileyway coming in our direction.’ (Brown, 1901, p. 90)

Brown's attempt above is to represent the true speech of his characters by writing it in a phonetic vernacular, but it is still framed within a traditional standard English narrative and highlighted using speech-marks. Another illustrative example of this is James Barke and his novel *Major Operation* (1936), which will be analysed closely in the following sections.

Chapter 2.2 Gibbon and His Contemporaries

While Barke's *Major Operation* (1936) shares various themes with Gibbon's trilogy such as socialism and a Scottish urban setting, the linguistic and narrative structure is drastically different and conservative by comparison, identifying most language with 'Queen's English'. Looking to distinguish himself from his contemporaries in his approach to narrative and language, Gibbon states his position with regard to prose writing of the time. Here he discusses the writing of John Buchan in a backhandedly respectful manner:

He writes it all in a competent, skilful and depressing English: when his characters talk Scots they do it in suitable inverted commas: and such characters as do talk Scots are always the simple, the proletarian, the slightly ludicrous characters. (Gibbon, 2001, pp. 130-131)

Like Kelman, who will be discussed more fully in a later section, Gibbon feels that the language he identifies as being able to represent himself and his community authentically, Scots, has been marginalized in literature, even by those who are held up as exemplary Scottish writers such as Buchan. The language of the working class has been established, through its positioning within the realm of standard English, as inferior. The people who use Scots in the prose of Gibbon's period of writing 'are always the simple, the proletarian, the slightly ludicrous characters.' It is clear from his attitude that while Gibbon concedes, somewhat backhandedly, that his contemporaries in Scottish literature are 'competent', 'depressing English' is unfit to depict authentic Scottish lives and voices adequately. The following section will take one of

his contemporaries, James Barke, as a case study to fully illustrate how radical Gibbon's approach truly was. However, it is important to initially define what is meant by the term 'authentic,' as it will be applied not only to Gibbon but also Spark and Kelman in later sections.

Chapter 2.3 Defining Authenticity

All novels are essentially realistic (in the broadest sense of that term), for all novels must surely engage with, comment on or attempt to reflect, in one way or another, to a greater or lesser degree, that elusive entity: the real world... (Scott, 2009, p. 1)

As discussed with regards to Kelman in the introduction, while he attempts to portray an 'authentic' narrative voice for his characters, he makes no claims that this is a representation of all working-class Glaswegians. An avoidance of a claim of linguistic authority also applies to Gibbon and Spark, who attempt to depict 'authentic' voices and experiences through their narratives without putting them forward as representations of everyone in these situations. They are never 'neutral', always partial and qualified. Authenticity is succinctly summarised by Jeremy Scott in his book *The Demotic Voice in Contemporary British Fiction* (2009):

A further useful, but troublesome, term should be defined here...and that is authenticity. The term will be used throughout – and it is a qualitative judgement, of course, but its status as such cannot be avoided – to refer to an aspiration on the part of writers to evolve a fictional technique which will engage in a more direct, honest and relevant fashion with a particular character or constituency, the better and more faithfully to represent that character or constituency through narrative fiction for the imagination of the reader. (Scott, 2009, pp. 12-13)

'Authentic,' then, refers not to a comparison between fictional representation and reality, as this is paradoxical by its very definition, but instead refers to the authors' attempt to portray as

convincingly as they can the ‘genuine’ voices and lives of their characters. As the thesis will show, this is achieved not only through the language the characters themselves use, but also in the way their voices control the actual narrative structure and form of the text, removing the barrier of an intermediary narrator and allowing the reader to gain a sense of immediacy with the characters and their experiences. As will be seen from the following analysis of *Major Operation* (1936), this was an approach that was a divergence from standard practice.

Chapter 2.4 A Summary of Barke

Major Operation: The Saga of a Scottish City (1936) tells the story of George Anderson and his encounters with the revolutionary socialist and activist Jock MacKelvie. The two men meet while spending time in Glasgow’s Eastern Infirmary, awaiting the ‘*Major Operation*’ of the title. As they become close, Anderson questions his social position in society and is drawn to MacKelvie’s politically leftist way of thinking. The text deals with themes of class, socialism, Marxism, and industrialization. It is unashamedly left-leaning in its politics, at points verging on political propaganda, with a large cast of characters who are used primarily as mouth-pieces for the author’s views and personal politics. Unlike Gibbon’s trilogy, the novel is written in third-person using the technique of omniscient narration, and the focus shifts between the two main characters (Anderson and MacKelvie). There are also chapters of exposition or musings on various aspects of city living (fish suppers, the joys of the picture house, the problems of poverty and slum living). Some have attempted to assign a modernist label to the novel, such as Mellor and his study on the use of sound within the text and its urban framework:

But what Barke attempts is not only a tutelary novel, full of parallelisms and moral choices, but also an experiment in how far a Joycean mode could be imported to Glasgow as a way of depicting the complexity of collective action in a metropolis. (Mellor, 2016, p. 115)

However, while there may be some argument in the formal structuring of Barke's text which may allow him to be considered a modernist, his narrative voice and language are centred in traditional realism. It would be useful at this point to define, as with the term 'authentic', what exactly is meant when the term 'modernist' is applied in this context, especially since the label is broad and nebulous. While each section will pinpoint specifically why each writer and text can be collected under the umbrella of modernism, it may be germane to provide a concrete, general definition of the term and movement.

Chapter 2.5 Defining Modernism

The term modernism, as it applies to literature but also other art forms, is an active breaking away from tradition and accepted standards in order to create something entirely new:

Contemplating the impact first of Gauguin and Van Gogh, then of Picasso, [Herbert] Read claimed that 'we are now concerned, not with a logical development of the art of painting in Europe, not even with a logical development for which there is any historical parallel, but with an abrupt break with all tradition... The aim of five centuries of European effort is openly abandoned.' (Bradbury et al., 1976, p. 20)

Although the above quote specifically refers to modernist art, its phrasing of 'an abrupt break' applies to literature also. While previously the focus of realist fiction in the Western canon was concerned with straightforward plot and attempting to depict an 'accurate' portrait of society in a realist mode, modernism and its proponents wished to shift the literary focus:

One of the word's associations is with the coming of a new era of high aesthetic self-consciousness and non-representationalism, in which art turns from realism and humanistic representation towards style, technique, and spatial form in pursuit of a deeper penetration of life. (Bradbury et al., 1976 p. 25)

As has been mentioned, the term modernism could be applied to a multitude of different approaches to art, given that any attempt to break away from tradition could be said to be modernist. However, in the context of this thesis, the focus is on the way in which traditional aspects of narrative form and structure are altered to more fully represent the characters and communities in the text. In literature, this is best illustrated by a breaking away from a traditional third-person omniscient narrator who has full authority over the text, to a more fluid construction. This approach allows the characters themselves to control the narrative and have the reader among them, rather than above them, trying to work through the narrative alongside them. This is achieved in the texts discussed both by the structural design of the narrative and by having the narrative written in the language used by the characters themselves, which gives the depictions an element of ‘authenticity’ as outlined above.

Chapter 2.6 A Major Operation with a Standard Composition

Unlike Gibbon’s *A Scots Quair*, most of Barke’s novel is written in what would be considered as accepted standard English, with rare use of regional idioms or dialects. Much of the direct speech is contained within quotation marks, and even characters who are clearly marked in the novel’s narrative as being from a working-class background refrain from speaking in any kind of alternative dialect or idiom. This calls into question notions of accurate representation and perceived authenticity, which is in direct contrast to what Gibbon does in his novels, where he allows his narrative to flow through different speech patterns and cadences, without an overarching voice keeping everything in order. The narrative structure of Barke’s novel is also traditional, with a third-person narrator taking the reader through a linear plot, which again differs from Gibbon, who uses an elaborate framing technique in *A Scots Quair* which will be analysed later in the thesis.

While the use of a uniform language throughout the text is not an issue, the idea of language as a social signifier is mentioned at various points in Barke's novel, particularly in relation to Anderson, and how he feels alienated amongst the ranks of the unemployed due to his speech. Anderson is clearly marked out as a cultured and intellectual man, not just by his social status at the beginning of the novel, but also through his education and knowledge of classic literature:

Unsought, lines from his favourite Tennyson came back to him. In his youth he had idled many hours with the poets. But not for years had he recalled a line of poetry. The poetry he had loved had been pastoral. He had lain on the bank of English pastoral poetry gathering to his memory its sweetest flowers. (Barke, 1936, p. 85)

Invocation of the past and pastoral writing, contrasting with the urban setting of the novel, sets Anderson apart as a man of culture and learning. His recollection of how he 'idled many hours with the poets' as a youth suggests a childhood spent in privilege and comfort, setting him apart from other working-class characters in the novel, who would not have had such an idyllic upbringing. Tennyson is also an interesting choice, given that he is a quintessential English poet, indeed, he was Queen Victoria's Poet Laureate, a central figure of the establishment. This lends support to the notion that Anderson is cultured and educated through his knowledge of the traditional English canon. However, this education is later called into question when Anderson struggles to adapt to his new life as a member of the unemployed:

He had been expensively educated. But what was his education worth against MacKelvie's. MacKelvie had left school when he was fourteen: he had not finished with Beechhurst until he was twenty. A lot of good his education had done him. (Barke, 1936, p. 356)

Anderson comes to realise that his expensive education has not equipped him to survive in the working-class world in which MacKelvie has become influential. Real-world experience is

shown here to be much more valuable than traditional education. Also, given the novel's left-leaning political stance, this invocation of Tennyson and an idyllic childhood could be read as a criticism of the notion of an established canon and the way in which a focus on tradition and culture has no real-world applications. More importantly, it again highlights the importance of language within Anderson's social class and illustrates the significance he places on it.

Although language as a social signifier is highlighted in the novel, we are never provided with an alternative, as most speech in the novel is like Anderson's own. This causes a hierarchy in the novel's narration. The overall narrative voice is written in accepted standard English, which gives authority to that mode. Most direct speech is contained and highlighted within quotation marks, and an argument can be made that in some cases it has been translated into a standard English form by the omniscient narrator. However, there are certain cases, such as the example below, where the narrator will quote a character in what is apparently their own voice without punctuation. This is problematic as it is not consistent with the way in which speech is portrayed in the rest of the text, and it could be argued that rather than providing a quote of direct speech, the narrator is providing their own impression:

Ted Brown had gone home at twelve o'clock without troubling to mention to Frank Pease, the paint storeman, that The Sunflower was docking: he expected Pease to know that. And Pease did know and was standing by. It meant extra money. He would drink a few extra pints on the strength of it tonight. But, being an Englishman, he grouched all the time at having to work on a flaming Saturday afternoon: w'en 'e'd a game fixed up on the bloomin' bowlin' green. In such a goddam country God's Englishman was at a disadvantage. (Barke, 1936, p. 31)

The use of phonetic spelling and the absence of quotation marks in the passage above for the English character Frank Pease is not consistent with the way the speech of the Scottish characters from the same social class is represented. Most of the characters who would

presumably speak a Scottish equivalent to Pease have their dialogue written in standard English, with a few minor exceptions. Also, neglecting to use punctuation to mark out direct speech contrasts with the rest of the novel, and can be read as the narrator giving a fictionalized impression of what Pease *would* say in that situation, rather than portraying what he *did* say. By doing this from a position of power - as omniscient narrator - the use of phonetic spelling when trying to portray an English demotic appears patronizing, providing the reader with *caricature* rather than *character*. This is one of the main problems when attempting to portray different linguistic elements and voices within the narrative confines of standard English. As the narrative structure of the novel is based on and implemented through accepted standard English, this becomes the authoritative voice, and any deviation from this is viewed as inferior, whether intended or not. The situation arises then that if demotic specific to characters is included, it is automatically positioned below standard English in the linguistic hierarchy of the text. Alternatively, all individual idioms are removed completely, and the speech is translated by the narrator into accepted standard English:

“He’s a wee beggar,” said one of the leaders. “He should sue the corporation for building the pavement too near his backside. I’d rather swing a twenty-eight pound hammer than cart they feet of his round the dock.” (Barke, 1936, p. 32)

Despite using the arguably colloquial term ‘beggar’, the spoken language in the above paragraph is written in standard English. Given that it is spoken by one of the red-leaders, who presumably is working class and of the same social class as Pease, it is fair to argue that this would not be his standard mode of speaking. The language used, therefore, does not appear to accurately depict the voice of the characters, but instead can be read as a translation by the narrator. The argument can be made that this is simply the way in which the character speaks; however, the fact that the speech of another character of the same social status, albeit from an

English background, is represented phonetically, and that the book repeatedly alludes to the differing signifiers of class, including language, it is fair to argue this is not the case.

By including a wide range of different characters in the novel, Barke has the potential, as Gibbon does, of showcasing a multitude of different voices and experiences. However, his dedication to use standard English as the primary narrative form negates this potential in that the speech of the characters loses any sense of perceived ‘authenticity’ when they are altered through the filter of the omniscient narrator:

“Mamma! mamma! Can I take my bathing costume?”

“Take what you like, silly: don’t bother me.”

“Mamma: will you tell Peggy to make up salmon sandwiches — I love them.”

“Make up whatever you like. No — I’ll tell Peggy what I want. You watch for Daddy and tell Mummy when he comes.”

At that the child ran from the bedroom jumping with joy. (Barke, 1936, p. 34)

The above passage illustrates the way in which speech is universally standard English in most of the text. The exchange is between Anderson’s daughter Beatrice and his wife Mabel, both of whom are portrayed as upper middle-class. It is fair to assume that this would be the way they speak, given that they are upper-middle class and operate in a social sphere where standard English would have been the norm. If we follow this assumption, and the argument the book uses that language is a key identifier of class, then we can safely assume that the speech of the ‘lower class’ (working-class/unemployed) would in some way differ. As this is not the case in the novel, the question then arises whose speech is being changed. Although standard English can indeed be used to depict characters accurately in a certain situation while maintaining claims to an authentic voice (an argument which will be explored extensively in the later section on Spark), Barke’s alteration of his working-class characters’ voices is problematic.

As standard English is typically the language of the middle/upper class, it can then be inferred that the speech of working-class characters in the novel is being changed by the omniscient narrator:

From the Thistle, MacKelvie and Conner travelled home together. Conner handed MacKelvie a Woodbine.

“What about joining the Branch, Jock?”

“Nothing doing Bill.”

“But you agree with us, don’t you?”

“Listen, Bill: I’m a socialist and I’ve always been a socialist. But I don’t like Kirkwood and I don’t like Neil MacLean: in fact there’s damned few of them I do like...Not even Maxton: though he talks well enough... As for Ramsay MacDonald: he’s an I.L.P.-er and that’s enough for me. I know what you’re going to say. But this system looks like doing me and mine for a long while yet. And even if it doesn’t, Kirkwood and Company are not going to change it: take that from me.” (Barke, 1936, p. 66)

The above exchange illustrates the way in which the language of speech doesn’t differ between different social classes. The exchange is between Jock MacKelvie and his colleague Bill, both working-class men. Now, it can be argued that this is the way they speak, as being working class is no barrier to being able to speak in standard English, and throughout the novel MacKelvie is shown to be extremely intelligent and well-read: ‘Even MacKelvie, who could speak remarkably correct English, used Americanisms with particular aptness.’ (Barke, 1936, p. 329) MacKelvie is a good speaker who uses ‘remarkably’ correct English, supporting the argument that language is a signifier of social class and standing. However, the fact that it is remarkable that MacKelvie can speak proper English suggests that there must be another form of speech used by people from the same background as him. This other form is never truly represented in the text, as most of the characters who speak, do so in ‘remarkably correct English’, reinforcing the argument that the narrative voice is altering the speech of working-class characters. Language is highlighted in the novel as a social and class signifier, so it seems

strange that this is not represented in the speech of the working men, and again supports the argument that the men's voices are being altered by the omniscient narration. For example, late in the novel, Anderson becomes a member of the South Partick Unemployed Movement, and while he accepts that the men attempt to bring him into the fold, there is a constant class barrier between them:

He was unable to speak their language... He did not belong to the working-class: he had been forced down into the working-class. Outwardly he still retained every appearance of belonging to the middle-class. He could not alter his manners, address and speech. (Barke, 1936, p. 396)

Economically, Anderson is indeed a member of the working-class, but on a cultural and linguistic level, he is still very much separated. Barke subverts the notion of the lower-class individual being unable to operate in high society by having the roles reversed and can hold the working-class community aloft as a beacon of inclusivity and acceptance through their strained attempts to integrate Anderson into their world. However, by not representing the language of the group he is clearly attempting to champion, Barke undermines his own point. Like Anderson, Barke is unable to truly merge the voice of the narrative with its working-class subject-matter and so, like Anderson, has strong intention without adequate execution, and inadvertently supports the inherent class-system he is so strongly condemning.

Chapter 2.7 Crafting the Voice of the *Quair*

The reason for the previous section's analysis is to highlight just how radical Gibbon's *Quair* trilogy was at the time of its publication, and how different his approach was to his contemporaries in prose fiction. Barke's novel is emblematic of the output of Scottish writers at the time, who, regardless of subject or focus, would write broadly in standard English. As has been established, framing a text in the narrative of standard English leads to problems of

representation and authority when attempting to portray characters and experiences from varied backgrounds, a problem Gibbon was very much aware of and one which he sought to solve with his *A Scots Quair* trilogy:

For Gibbon's literary style, less formally challenging than the Synthetic Scots formulations of MacDiarmid's lyrics, less daunting than many of the modern phonetic spellings of urban or rural Scots in poetry and prose, lends itself to ready comprehension; or if not complete comprehension, to sufficient comprehension to enable his fiction to be appreciated without interference. (McCulloch & Dunnigan, 2003, p. 10)

Rather than take a radical approach to the Scots language like his contemporary Hugh MacDiarmid, Gibbon sought to create a Scots/English hybrid which would allow him to craft a seemingly 'authentic' voice for the communities he was looking to represent, while also remaining completely accessible to readers with little or no experience of the Scots language or Scottish idioms. It is this idea of compromise that many feel has been the key to the trilogy's success, as Ian Campbell highlights in the introduction to the Polygon collection of *A Scots Quair*:

A subsidiary reason for the novel's popularity is the wide-ranging experiment he made in manipulating point of view, the ubiquitous 'you' of the novel (as Graham Trengrove has noted) swooping in and out of the consciousness of individual characters, the disembodied 'speak' of the neighbourhood, and the readers themselves — so that instead of standing back from Kinraddie and its gossip as well as its warm communal life, the reader is drawn into it... (Ian Campbell in Gibbon, 1932, p. xiv)

As Campbell states, through the author's linguistic technique and narrative structure, 'the reader is drawn into' the world of the *Quair*. By using local idioms and allowing the community he has created to speak, think and feel in its own voice, Gibbon removes the traditional linguistic hierarchy of standard English, while still maintaining a high level of accessibility to

non-Scots readers. Unlike MacDiarmid, however, Gibbon does not have a Nationalist agenda in his use of a hybrid Scots/English narrative voice. Indeed, as the *Quair* progresses, the narrative voice alters to best represent the changing communities which it is depicting. What Gibbon understood is that to ‘authentically’ portray his characters, straight standard English was simply not good enough:

As a Modernist writer he employs a range of linguistic experimentation, which is evidenced by the way that he reworks English in *Persian Dawns*, *Egyptian Nights* (1932) and *Spartacus* (1933). At the same time he expresses an awareness of the fact that some languages have a wider scope than others, and that the artist can use this to his or her advantage. (Hanne Tange in Lyall, 2015, p. 23)

Although the above excerpt from Hanne Tange’s essay in *The International Companion to Lewis Grassie Gibbon* (2015) refers to his work under the name of James Leslie Mitchell, it still draws attention to his experimentation with language and the way in which he was placed amongst contemporary modernist writers and illustrates his understanding that ‘some languages have a wider scope than others’. Even when writing predominantly in standard English, as is the case with most of his writing as Mitchell, Gibbon is still able to allow the narrative to be controlled by the distinct voices of his characters. This is the key element, as will be shown, which aligns him not only with other modernist writers of the time, but also with the other two authors focused on in this thesis. Each of the three writers (Gibbon, Spark, Kelman) hands over control of the narrative to their respective characters, therefore removing the notion of an authoritative narrative voice and any inherent hierarchy which accompanies it.

Chapter 2.8 Crafting Standard Scots

In Gibbon's work – most evidently in *Sunset Song* (1932) and to a lesser extent in *Cloud Howe* (1933) and *Grey Granite* (1934) – Scots words are used extensively, and their meanings made apparent through context, negating the need for a glossary. This allows the narrative to flow freely and uninterrupted between standard English and Gibbon's liberal sprinkling of Scots, giving the narrative in *Sunset Song* (1932) an aspect of oral storytelling, and drawing the reader in with its unorthodox, personable voice, as if hearing events from one of the many gossiping residents the narrative depicts:

If it were possible to define it so, this is the voice of locality: the voice of Kinraddie itself. 'Sunset Song', as the title implies (along with those of the two following sections of the trilogy, 'Cloud Howe' and Grey Granite'), is narrated by the very land whose story it tells. (Scott, 2009, p. 50)

In the first novel of the trilogy, this 'voice of locality' is close-knit and unified. Within the confines of the small farming populace, everyone knows everyone else's business, and they can be sure to have several opinions on various matters. This sense of intimacy is represented through the narrative in the way in which the narrative voice moves swiftly over and through each of the different inhabitants of Kinraddie, as exemplified in the passage below:

Uncle whispered behind her, him and the undertaker, and then Auntie was beside her, They're to screw it down now, kiss your father, Chris. But she shook her head, she couldn't do that... Then she just said Good-bye father, and turned from him and went down to her own room and put on her coat and hat, it wasn't decent for a quean to go to a funeral, folk said, but in Blawearie's case there was no son or brother to see him into the kirkyard. (Gibbon, 1932, p. 117)

As can be seen from the above passage, the narrative voice almost hovers, keeping its distance while still being close enough to overhear characters' thoughts and comprehend their emotions. It is unobtrusive, not offering moral commentary or judgement, but also not too distant. The gaze of the narrative is *with* the characters, not above them. The above scene, which portrays Chris's father John Guthrie in his coffin, begins from a distance. We watch and hear Guthrie's neighbour Long Rob say goodbye, in a mode of speech that occurs mid-sentence with no defining punctuation. The speech is defined only by being presented in italics, which is the case with all speech in the novel. The narrative perception then moves in closer, and we are drawn into the mind of Chris as she looks at her father, as she 'glowered at his face' (Gibbon, 1932, p. 117), attempting to reconcile the strange figure in front of her with the imposing memories of her father. The narrative point of view then snaps back again as Chris's thoughts are interrupted by her Auntie telling her to kiss her father. This mode of narration follows the tenets of free-indirect discourse, a mode of writing which was used widely by modernist writers and is characterised as:

The presentation of thoughts or speech of fictional characters which seems by various devices to combine the character's sentiments with those of a narrator. In its most primitive form, indirect discourse is signalled by the narratorial 'framing' of the thought or utterance... (Cuddon, 1977, pp. 330-331)

Use of this mode allows Gibbon to enter the mind of his characters, in this case Chris, creating an intimacy between them and the reader and removing any barrier which may be erected by an omniscient, detached, third person narrator. After Chris leaves, the voice of the narrative takes on the characteristics of gossiping and oral storytelling to summarize events: 'the voice of locality' (Scott, 2009, p. 50) is giving the opinion of the Blawearie populace and concluding that it 'wasn't decent for a quean to go to a funeral'.

The above is just one example of the way in which Gibbon's narrative flows in and out of different perspectives, from the heightened observer, to the internal 'translator', to the moral orator, a technique which evolves as the trilogy progresses:

As we will see in *Cloud Howe* and *Grey Granite*, the experiment was modified in interesting ways as Scotland's speech changed: for *Sunset Song* in the century's second decade, the experiment of writing in English-based Scots works, and worked, in the sense that people found the novel accessible whatever their background. (Ian Campbell in Gibbon, 1932, p. xiv)

One of the defining traits of Lewis Grassie Gibbon's *Scots Quair* trilogy is the way in which he does away with a sole unified voice in favour of a more fluid narrative, where the perspective differs depending on which character is in focus or what the situation is at that point in the text. This allows Gibbon to enter the minds of his characters and allows the narrative itself to represent their unique experience, rather than have it be told by one omniscient voice or from one single character's isolated perspective, as Munro states:

His aim was to keep a single unity of expression in which narrative, description, thought, and dialogue were one — each a part of 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. (Munro, 1966, p. 80)

By doing this, Gibbon creates a platform where each voice in the novel is presented as independent and on an equal footing, therefore challenging the traditional notion of a singular narrative voice, while also fostering the idea of a voice of the community, a voice of locality:

But half-way across the close he ran the barn swithered and roared and fell, right in front of him, and he'd to run back, there was no way then of getting at the byre. By then Long Rob of the Mill came in about, he'd run over the

fields, louping dykes like a hare, and his lungs were panting like bellows, he was clean winded. He it was that helped Mrs Strachan with the bairns and such clothes as they could drag out to the road while Chae and John Guthrie tried to get at the byre from another angle: but that was no good, the place was already roaring alight. (Gibbon, 1932, p. 94)

This passage illustrates the way in which Gibbon did not shy away from depicting the sheer brutality that can be found in a place as idyllic as that of *Sunset Song* (1932) and echoes his criticism of the 'Kailyard' genre which had been popular in Scottish writing of the time. Indeed, Gibbon was not alone in his impatience with this idyllic representation of rural Scottish life, as Ian Campbell notes in his introduction to the *Quair*:

To be sure, others were writing about that past (Stevenson, Buchan, Jacob, Linklater, Shepherd) and novels such as *The House with the Green Shutters* and *Gillespie* had marked an emphatic rejection of the kailyard's dwelling on a beautiful past as escape or rejection of unlovely present. Grassie Gibbon shared Douglas Brown's testy impatience with merely reflective and nostalgic writing, and in *Scottish Scene* he cheerfully and insultingly brushed aside what was flaccid and undemanding in contemporary Scottish writing. (Ian Campbell in Gibbon, 1932, p. xv)

To move away from what was 'flaccid and undemanding in contemporary Scottish writing', the language Gibbon uses is visceral and almost clinical in its un-sentimentality. For example, the description of the fire 'eating into the wooden couplings' (Gibbon, 1932, p. 94) and the 'rattle of the falling slates' (Gibbon, 1932, p.94) or the sounds Chris and Will hear as they approach: 'a scream that was awful' (Gibbon, 1932, p. 94). This again aligns Gibbon with the modernist movement, defined by *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (1999) as:

A breaking away from established rules, traditions and conventions, fresh ways of looking at man's position and function in the universe and many (in some cases remarkable) experiments in form and style. It is particularly

concerned with language and how to use it (representationally or otherwise) and with writing itself. (Cuddon, 1999, pp 515-516)

However, Gibbon is still able to find humour in the scene, particularly in his depiction of childlike innocence with ‘the bairns laughing and dancing about as though they were at a picnic’ (Gibbon, 1932, p. 94), and the heroic Rob of the Mill rescuing Mistress Strachan’s sampler which she ‘made as a bairn at school’. While the narrative voice is somewhat removed from the scene, in that it is observing rather than coming from the perspective of someone involved, there is something very personal in the address to the reader. The use of a rhetorical question when discussing Rob’s smoking — ‘there was surely enough smell and smoke without that?’ (Gibbon, 1932, p.94) — draws the reader in and engages them by making them feel they are being addressed directly. The scattered Scots — ‘louping’, ‘sholtie’, ‘meikle’ (Gibbon, 1932, p. 94) — has an oratorical effect, giving an indication of how the tale will undoubtedly be re-told by the many gossips in Blawearie over the following weeks, and, as has already been discussed, is clearly understandable due to surrounding context. Gibbon illustrates here how easily he can move between different registers, creating an engaging and arresting narrative voice which simultaneously shocks and entertains while never losing the overall flow and rhythm of the language. This flow and rhythm is evident at the beginning of the passage as the pace is kept with the description of Rob as ‘he’d run over the fields, louping dykes like a hare’ (Gibbon, 1932, p. 94). The use of the Scots word ‘louping’ has a jumping effect, with the onomatopoeic sound of the word echoing Rob’s action and adding a sense of urgency to the movement. This again highlights the defining feature of Gibbon’s linguistic style, his narrative voice refuses to be constrained to one view, instead flowing in and out of his characters’ consciousness, with the language changing to best suit the needs of the moment. The reader experiences the movement of the action internally with the characters while at the same time, in the same sentence, seeing the scene and the characters as if they were externally depicted.

Chapter 2.9 Vantage Points and Narrative Flow

As the above analysis indicates, and what can be seen throughout Gibbon's trilogy, is the way in which his narrative style allows for a fluidity of movement, both between characters and registers in tone. By not anchoring his narrative voice to one singular perspective, characters and events can be viewed from many different angles. There is no higher figure passing judgement. Gibbon forms his text through the community he is depicting:

Unlike most other novelists, Mitchell does not present an 'objective' picture of outer reality; instead, we are given the picture of reality as created in the mind of his characters. (Munro, 1966, p. viii)

The idea of perspective and history is one which permeates Gibbon's *Scots Quair* trilogy, and it is not only limited to the texts' plot, it is also a major element of the narrative structure and language of the novels. As has been discussed, Gibbon uses a shifting and free-flowing narrative voice to showcase many different perspectives on any given scene, which in some cases contradict and undercut one another. This allows the reader to gather a fuller picture and piece together all the different experiences to form a sense of the community as a whole. In terms of narrative structure, perspective is used in a more formal way, as it is built into the way in which the narrative is constructed:

There were the Standing Stones, so seldom she'd seen them this last nine months. Cobwebbed and waiting they stood, she went and leant her cheek against the meikle one, the monster that stood and seemed to peer over the water and blue distances that went up in the Grampians. She leant against it, the bruised cheek she leaned, and it was strange and comforting - stranger still when you thought that this old stone circle, more and more as the years went on at Kinraddie, was the only place where ever she could come and stand back a little from the clamour of the days. (Gibbon, 1932, p. 112)

In *Sunset Song* (1932), the Standing Stones are used as a navigational landmark in the novel, both in a physical sense, as they represent an ancient land which remains the same despite the changing lives of the people who work it, but also in a metaphysical sense. For Chris, the Stones are used as a space in which she can reflect and look back on previous events, ‘where ever she could come and stand back a little’ to reflect and process. This narrative technique follows Chris throughout the three novels:

And now, as she climbed swift up the slope, queer and sudden a memory took her — of the hills above the farm in Kinraddie, how sometimes she’d climb to the old Druid stones and stand and remember the world below, and the things that were done and the days put by, the fun and the fear of the days put by. Was that why the Kaimes had so filled her sky the twenty-four hours she had been in Segget? (Gibbon, 1933, p. 273)

The above passage is from the beginning of the second novel of the *Scots Quair* trilogy, *Cloud Howe* (1933), and in it Chris recollects how ‘sometimes she’d climb to the old Druid stones and stand and remember the world below’. This not only explicitly states the function of the site for Chris (reflection and remembrance) but also links the new site she is visiting with the function of the old. Gibbon is setting out his intention to continue the narrative structure he began with *Sunset Song* (1932), substituting the ‘the Kaimes’ for ‘Standing Stones’. Gibbon would complete this with the final novel, creating a narrative structural consistency to match his commitment to language and voice:

Chris started awake. The fog had re-thickened, blanketing Duncairn away from her sight as she stood here dreaming like a gowked bairn. Her hair felt damp with the pressing mist veils and the weight of the bag on her arm was lead — funny this habit she aye had had of finding some place wherever she bade to which she could climb by her lone for a while and think of the days new-finished and done, like a packman halting hill on hill and staring back at the valleys behind. (Gibbon, 1934, p. 539)

This narrative technique of providing an ending before giving an account of what happened is something which is also prominent in the work of Muriel Spark, who will be discussed later in the thesis. By framing the narrative in this way, Gibbon draws the reader in and piques their curiosity. They know that things have happened but not how they have happened, and like Spark later, Gibbon forces the reader to piece together information and different accounts to get the full picture:

Each chapter begins with a brief prolepsis, most often depicting Chris reflecting on immediately previous events.... By avoiding a straightforward chronological narration, Gibbon highlights the extent to which the entire novel, even as it edges into the present, is already historical; even more importantly, he aligns the reader with Chris in a quest to understand how both individual and collective pasts can shape the individual in the present. (Lyall, 2015, p. 53)

Once again, this removes the secure notion of hierarchy in the narrative by aligning ‘the reader with Chris’. There is no all-knowing speaker who will provide exposition, the reader is on a level with the participants of the novel and will learn of events and outcomes as they do, and at the end will stand with Chris, heightened with the information they have gathered, and make of it what they will. In the novels, the narrative is structured so that at the beginning of each chapter Chris is at the site, in what could be classed as the novel’s ‘present’. After a short introduction, the narrative then shifts back in time, to the novel’s ‘past’, and the reader is provided with an account of what led Chris there. This means that each chapter completes a cycle. By structuring the texts in this way, Gibbon again reinforces the notion of a communal voice. Events which are depicted in the novel are not happening in ‘real time’, they are being re-told, with all the elements of differing perspective and experiences which this implies. By structuring the trilogy in this way, along with providing not a single unified narrative voice, but multiple voices which come and go, Gibbon is able to conjure a living/lived, complex and ‘authentic’ community in

each of his three novels, each with their own individual characters, idioms and experiences.

Chapter 2.10 Crafting the ‘Authentic’ Voice of the Mearns

In the first of his trilogy, *Sunset Song* (1932), Gibbon seems to lay out his intent in regards to language and voice:

Two Chrisses there were that fought for her heart and tormented her. You hated the land and the coarse speak of the folk and learning was brave and fine one day; and the next you'd waken with the peewits crying across the hills, deep and deep, crying in the heart of you and the smell of the earth in your face, almost you'd cry for that, the beauty of it and the sweetness of the Scottish land and skies... You wanted the words they'd known and used, forgotten in the far-off youngness of their lives, Scots words to tell to your heart how they wrung it and held it, the toil of their days and unendingly their fight. And the next minute that passed from you, you were English, back to the English words so sharp and clean and true — for a while, for a while, till they slid so smooth from your throat you knew they could never say anything that was worth the saying at all. (Gibbon, 1932, p. 41-42)

This paragraph, often quoted to illustrate the linguistic tension in the novel which Chris personifies, again highlights the way in which Gibbon's narrative voice can move fluidly and almost imperceptibly between different modes and registers. The beginning of the paragraph is very direct and harsh, 'So that was Chris...' with words like 'hated' and 'coarse', all within the context of 'English' Chris. But then the tone shifts, the language becomes much more fluid and flowing, much more organic with the allusions to nature ('peewits crying across the hills') the words trip over commas and the rhythm creates the effect of running and bounding over the land the words describe. The mode then snaps back to standard English, with the words 'sharp and clean', getting to the point but escaping so smooth 'they could never say anything that was worth the saying at all'. Gibbon introduces at the very beginning of both the novel and the planned trilogy the conflict between standard English and the natural speech of the

community he is trying to depict. This is personified above in Chris's struggle with her identity and how different desires pull her in different directions:

Because it was early in the day and the lawyer's office still shut Chris loitered on the road in the tail of the hasting scholars, the little things they were, all legs and long boots, funny how they tried to speak English one to the other, looking sideways as they cried the words to see if folk thought them gentry. Had Marget and she been daft as that? (Gibbon, 1932, p. 124)

Chris is conflicted about the way in which she used to focus on studies and strive to be a teacher, and now sees it as juvenile and 'daft', which is highlighted through the speech of the girls on the street, who are speaking English (indicated as a way of speaking rather than the language itself) to present themselves as gentry. Language is used here and elsewhere in the novel as a social construct and an indicator of class, and this use of English is used by a higher social class (the gentry) or by those seeking to imitate or reach it:

In terms of social identification, Chris's predicament in *Cloud Howe* is that her preference for a rural, Scots speech conflicts with other people's perception of her as a member of the town elite. It is significant that this linguistic dilemma is resolved in *Grey Granite* where Chris, now occupying a lower class position, regains the freedom to use Scots and reclaim her social identity as a crofter's daughter. (Lyall, 2015, p. 27)

This differs from Barke in that it is illustrated in the narrative itself, both through speech and narrative structure. By highlighting this in the narrative, Gibbon draws attention to his own use of language, the hybrid English/Scots idiom he has created for his work. Much of the first novel is essentially Chris working through this tension:

So it was that she knew she liked him, loved him as they said in the soppy English books, you were shamed and a fool to say that in Scotland. Ewan Tavendale — that it should be him! And then she minded something, it didn't matter at all, but she wanted to know for all that, Ewan, was it true that story they told about you and old Sarah Sinclair? (Gibbon, 1932, p. 130)

Chris can use romanticized and sentimental language to describe how she feels about Ewan, but she is conflicted in using it as it would seem ‘soppy’ and have her branded a ‘fool’ within her social class and surroundings. This argument is also explored from the other side, where the legitimacy of Scots is brought up within the novel:

Up at Rob’s table an argument rose, Chris hoped that it wasn’t religion, she saw Mr Gordon’s wee face pecked up to counter Rob. But Rob was just saying what a shame it was that folk should be shamed nowadays to speak Scotch — or they called it Scots if they did, the split-tongued sourrocks! Every damned little narrow-dowped rat that you met put on the English if he thought he’d impress you — as though Scotch wasn’t good enough now, it had words in it that the thin bit scraichs of the English could never come at. And Rob said You can tell me, man, what’s the English for sotter, or greip, or smore, or pleiter, gloaming or glunching or well-kenspeckled? And if you said gloaming was sunset you’d fair be a liar; and you’re hardly that, Mr Gordon. (Gibbon, 1932, p. 156-157)

Rob argues that the abandonment of Scots for English to impress and increase social standing is a practice to be resisted and argues so much nuance and expression is lost in translating Scots words to English. This neatly sums up Gibbon’s intention in his melding of Scots and English idiom in his *Scots Quair* trilogy. Gibbon is not attempting to claim authority over the language or illustrate the way in which Scots is more expressive or effective than English or vice versa. Through his mixing of both he is creating an idiom which is in use by the community he is representing and one which best suits his purpose in any given situation. This ‘disembodied speak’ also allows Gibbon to move between different literary registers within the same passage, allowing many different emotions, actions and experiences to be depicted in a very short space of time:

Grassic Gibbon’s mastery of the larger sweep of his trilogy shows in other ways than his description of a parish in change, in collapse, a ministry in its last throes. For the very experiments in style and narration which made *Sunset Song* such a success continue to be pursued in the sequel, with variations which underline the change which destroyed Kinraddie, and is

hurrying Segget into an unknown future. (Ian Campbell in Gibbon, 1933, p. xxvi)

In the second instalment of the *Scots Quair* trilogy, *Cloud Howe* (1933), Gibbon moves to Segget and focuses on Chris's new relationship, the ministry, and a movement away from farming life to small-town life. As mentioned above, this involves a change in the narrative style as Gibbon attempts to portray the changing voice of the community, moving away from the 'unitary voice in *Sunset Song*' to a community with many conflicting voices which 'illustrate to the reader unconsciously the decay and collapse of community'. This collapse of community is a central theme of *Cloud Howe* (1933) and the *Scots Quair*, and while the issue is dealt with through the actions and experiences of characters in the text, it is also dealt with directly through the formal language of the narrative itself:

Other voices deliberately stand out, indeed jar. Mr Mowat the mill-owner is parodied for his 'jahly' English accent (as Revd MacShilluck is to be in *Grey Granite*), the workers in the factories for failing to fall in with the North-East accents of the older residents. (Ian Campbell in Gibbon, 1933, p. xxvi)

To signify the shift in narrative location and fall of community, Gibbon builds it into the language of the narrative itself, contrasting the unified voice of the previous novel with a series of splintered voices:

Mowat said Rahly? staring at Chris, Robert stared as well at her down-bent face — suddenly she'd seen so much she didn't say, all the pageant of history since history began up here in the windy Mearns Howe: the ancient rites of blood and atonement where the Standing Stones stood up as dead kings; the clownings and cruelties of leaders and chiefs; and the folk — her folk — who kept such alive — dying frozen at night in their eirdes, earth-houses, chaving from the blink of day for a meal, serfs and land-workers whom the Mowats rode down, whom the armies harried and the kings spat on, the folk who rose in the Covenant times and were tortured and broken by the gentry's men, the rule and the way of life that had left them the pitiful gossiping clowns that they were, an obscene humour engrafted on their fears, the kindly souls of them twisted awry and veiled from men with a dirty jest; and

this snippet of a fop with an English voice would bring back worse, and ask her to help! (Gibbon, 1933, p. 370)

As touched on in other parts of the trilogy, language is used as a signifier for social standing and power, and in the passage above it is used to illustrate the past and the ruling gentry, and the way in which they are trying to reclaim control of Segget by seeking the help of Chris and her reverend husband. Mowat speaks in the novel with a posh English inflection and is ridiculed for it by most of the other characters. However, in this scene his 'English voice' signifies something much more sinister and conjures in Chris's mind the history of the gentry and the oppression of her ancestors. Mowat's speech is presented in the same way as all other speech in the novel: it is not given prominence in the hierarchy of the text. It is simply provided within the context of the narrative which allows it, depending on that context, to be serious or humorous:

Mr Mowat's English bray sounded so funny that Else gave a giggle and near dropped the tray. Is the creature foreign? and Chris said No; and Else said no more, but went solemnly in, and took only a keek or so at the creature, a little bit thing in baggy plus-fours. And he said Oh, thanks! and I say! and How Jahly! Else nearly giggled again, but she didn't, till she got to the kitchen and there was Meiklebogs, and she gave him a poke, I say, how Jahly! You old devil, I've a good mind to make up to the laird. What would you do then, eh, would you say? (Gibbon, 1933, p. 368-369)

Unlike the previous passage involving Mowat, the tone here is much more light-hearted, but the same elements of language and power are in play. Even though Else finds herself struggling to contain her laughter when hearing Mowat's 'English bray', she still acts towards him as if he is her superior while serving him, going 'solemnly in'. This differs from her usual practice with guests and her familiarity with the family:

So you'd have done if it hadn't been Ewan, the laddie that came from her first bit marriage, so quiet and so funny, but a fine little lad, he'd sometimes come down and sit in the kitchen and watch as you peeled the potatoes for

dinner, and tell you things he had read in his books, and ask, What's a virgin princess like — like you, Else? And when you laughed and said Oh, but bonnier a lot, he would screw up his brows, I don't mean that, is she like you under your clothes I mean? (Gibbon, 1933, p. 283)

Language in the trilogy, both in the way it is used in the narrative itself and in its role within the communities it is depicting, is fluid and changes depending on any given situation. This sort of fluidity is only possible by removing any notion of authority or hierarchy in the text, in which one idiom, dialect or inflection is more important than another. However, this does not stop judgements being made within the narrative itself, where characters will have their own opinion on language, for example when young Ewan slips and uses the Scots word 'fey', much to his mother's surprise:

She seldom heard a Scots word from Ewan, he brushed them aside as old, blunted tools, but the word had come on his lips as though sudden he'd sought English and English had failed. (Gibbon, 1933, p. 457)

In a rare break from character, Ewan lets his language slip when he can't find an equivalent English word to describe how he's feeling. Unlike Chris, Ewan doesn't struggle with the use of Scots versus English, he simply naturally speaks in standard English, seeing Scots words as 'blunted tools' from the past. However, on this occasion he can draw from memory a word which best suits the situation. Essentially Ewan is doing in this scene what Gibbon does throughout the trilogy. Ewan is controlling and melding all the language available to him to suit his needs. He doesn't speak in standard English because he feels it is a superior form, he simply feels this is the mode which best allows him to express himself. However, when standard English fails to allow him to communicate exactly the way he wants to, he switches to Scots.

In Gibbon's final novel of the trilogy, *Grey Granite* (1934), the linguistic structure shifts once again to depict a society in change:

Below this level of plot, Grassic Gibbon does everything he can to show that change is doing far more than affect central characters. The clashing multiple

voices of Segget in *Cloud Howe* are now developed into dozens of working-class voices in *Dun Cairn*, articulating shades of opinion from the conservative distrust of all union activity to the gradual awakening of a conscience and a willingness to fight, attachment to individuals (in particular Ewan who moves from 'toff' to charismatic leader) and to the larger movement which is represented by the march to London in the last pages. (Ian Campbell in Gibbon, 1934, p. xxxii)

Grey Granite (1934) completes Gibbon's linguistic movement from the unified voice of the *Sunset Song* (1932) community, through the 'clashing multiple voices of Segget' in *Cloud Howe* (1933), to finally depict the modern, industrialized city, with unions, both literally and figuratively, being formed not through a sense of community, but social constructs and political 'conscience'. In his final work of the trilogy, Gibbon brings young Ewan to the forefront of the narrative, and allows long-standing heroine Chris to recede to the background, indicating the way in which one era of Scotland has ended and a new has just begun:

As *Cloud Howe* probes the troubled world of Robert Colquhoun trying to reconcile his Christian training with his socialist vision, *Grey Granite* tries to articulate shades of opinion in a baffled working class trying to understand a country changing too fast for comfort, and threatening stability and the possibility of comfort — marriage — family life which under the rhetoric was what people wanted — and the pages of *Grey Granite* emphasise again and again the misery of family life at breadline level in the slums of Aberdeen. (Ian Campbell in Gibbon, 1934, p. xxxiii)

As the narrative focus of the novel shifts, so too does Gibbon's language. In each of the previous instalments, the fracturing and division of the communities was represented not only in the narrative plot but also in the language of the text itself. Gibbon moves away from the intimate character insights of *Sunset Song* (1932) and the illuminating conflicts of *Cloud Howe* (1933) to focus on brief encounters in a fast-paced life, short encounters representing the bustling environment of city life:

The longer paragraphs and incidents and insights into characters 'thoughts' — Chris's thoughts, or other people's — are replaced by increasingly staccato vignettes, short paragraphs and mere moments of insight as city life brushes characters past one another without real attempts to converse or to communicate. (Ian Campbell in Gibbon, 1934, p. xxxiv)

Consistently, Gibbon in his *Scots Quair* trilogy manipulates the narrative structure and language to suit his needs. While most of *Grey Granite* (1934) is written in standard English, it is a matter of choice not necessity. As most of his characters have abandoned Scots upon moving to the city, so too must Gibbon to accurately represent them:

The breakdown in communication is underlined by Grassic Gibbon's deliberate thinning of the Scots in his narrative, both description and dialogue. While accurately catching the decline in spoken Scots in the period since 1911, he is also accurately mirroring the trend away from the country community with its intact speech patterns to the town with a mixture of populations, constant shift of people, and now the influence of radio and cinema. (Ian Campbell in Gibbon, 1934, p. xxxv)

The city in *Grey Granite* (1934) is one of fractured views, of glimpses witnessed and then seen no more, events without explanation or context. Whereas in the previous two instalments, incidents would have been explained, with preamble and then consequences, in Gibbon's vision of the industrial city they remain mysteries, and grim ones at that:

They were into the Lower Cowgate by then, ten o'clock and the pubs were spewing out the plebs, raddled with drink, kids crying in the gutter, Ewan saw a man hit a woman in the jaw, she fell with a scream and a bobby came up and an eddy of the crowd came swirling around, and they couldn't see more, going up Sowans Lane. But half way up they came on a woman pulling at the coat of a man who was lying half in a doorway, half in the gutter. Och, come on home, you daft Bulgar, she was saying, or the bobbies'll damn soon land you in the nick. But the childe wasn't keen to go home at all, he was saying what they wanted was a little song — Come on, you bitch, and give's a bit tune. And the woman said of all the whoreson's gets she'd ever met he was the worst: and what song did he want then, the neep-headed nout? And he said he wanted the songs his mucking mother sang, and Ewan and Ellen didn't hear more, they were out of Sowans Lane by then, on to the Long Brig where it spanned the Forthie, and stopping to breathe from the Gallowgate fug. (Gibbon, 1934, p. 560)

The above paragraph echoes earlier sections of the trilogy with Gibbon's complete lack of sentimentality and willingness to depict harsh reality. What differs though is our familiarity with the players involved. Nameless 'plebs' and 'kids' litter the street, running rampant and

neglected. Domestic violence is depicted in all its horror, but who is the attacker, who is the victim? In *Sunset Song* (1932) this would have been the speak of the Mearns for months on end, but in *Grey Granite* (1934) it represents a typical night out. In one short paragraph Gibbon showcases the horror but also the chaos of the industrial city, along with the anonymity and lack of community that goes with it. Ewan and Ellen, along with the reader, are given a brief glimpse into someone else's drama, but then we 'didn't hear more, they were out of Sowans Lane by then, on to the Long Brig where it spanned the Forthie, and stopping to breathe from the Gallowgate fug.' The short episode ends, but the story is not concluded, we simply never find out what happens. Just as in life we never get a full explanation of the outcome. However, this is one of the most illuminating sections of the novel as it accurately portrays life in a crowded, industrial city.

As has been seen above from the analysis of the *Scots Quair* trilogy and its comparison to contemporary texts of the time, Gibbon utilises a narrative voice and structure in which he is able to give voice to communities which in the past may have either been side-lined or completely ignored. Power structures brought about using different types of language are present in Gibbon's writing, but these are not enforced by the narrative form of the text but are drawn out by the experiences of the characters. This invites readers to empathize with the communities in the novels. Readers are not looking down on them from a position of power. They are experiencing the life of the characters along with them, even if the language they use in their own lives is very different to that used by characters in the novels. Throughout the trilogy, Gibbon manipulates the narrative language and linguistic idioms to best represent the communities he is depicting, be it the close-knit community of *Sunset Song* (1932), the fractured voices of *Cloud Howe* (1933), or the fragmented narratives of *Grey Granite* (1934). Rather than enforce an all-encompassing standard English narrative on the trilogy, Gibbon allows his characters and their experience to control the language, allowing the reader to

become *part* of their experience, rather than be a distant observer. In terms of narrative structure, Gibbon manipulates notions of perspective and recollection, and frames the narrative through memory to bring the reader closer to his characters. In each section, he presents the ending first, and then provides the details which lead to it, forcing the reader to piece together information to form a clear picture. This means that although readers know where each section will end, since that ending is noted in each section's beginning, they do not know how the characters get there. This gives the narrative both immediacy and urgency. And this, along with his innovative use of language, is why he is a major influence on – or rather, perhaps, sets such an important precedent for - the Scottish writers who succeeded him, whether they acknowledge him or not.

Chapter 3.1 Muriel Spark, Speech, Narrative and the English Language

Although most of my life has been devoted to fiction, I have always thought of myself as a poet. I do not write 'poetic' prose, but feel that my outlook on life and my perceptions of events are those of a poet. (Muriel Spark in Sheridan, 2009, p. 133)

The above quote from Spark, taken from Susan Sheridan's journal article on Spark's time as editor of the *Poetry Review*, gives an insight into how she crafts her writing. Her insistence that she does not write 'poetic' prose is accurate given the sharpness and efficiency of her writing, but her proclamation that her 'outlook on life and my perceptions of events are those of a poet' also rings true. Spark's novels are generally more concerned with exploring the minds and motivations of her numerous protagonists, with plot often taking secondary position, and to achieve this she structures the narrative itself in the mode and register of her characters:

Muriel Spark here seems to be following writers of the French 'nouveau roman' such as Alain Robbe-Grillet, who conceived the role of fiction as the dispassionate description of the external world as a substitute for the traditional novel's concern with character. (Page, 1990, p. 71)

Like Gibbon before and Kelman after, Spark creates a unique narrative voice by matching the language of the narrative to the speech of her characters (in this case mostly standard English) while also aligning the formal structure of the text with what is being depicted. Quoted in the same article from Sheridan, Spark outlines her stance on poetry, which can again be applied to her prose fiction:

She went on to propose that the great affinity among the arts is in meaning: 'not the rational meaning of prose or photography' but its capacity for signifying different things to 'different individuals and generations' (Sheridan, 2009, p. 136)

Spark's interest lies in showcasing alternative experiences to 'different individuals and generations', and she does this by crafting a narrative unified in form and structure which fully represents the characters and experiences she is writing about. In an article discussing Spark's interest in the occult, Frank Baldanza succinctly highlights an element of Spark's writing which can be applied to most of her longer works:

One feels the author's main interest does not lie so much in the solution as in the reactions of various characters to the mystery. Several of the novels offer no rational solution; in some cases, the author just seems to tire of the problem; where an explanation is offered, it is usually not so ingenious as Poe's. The solution is often easy to guess in advance, or it is revealed fairly early in the book, and thus it is an anti-climax. (Baldanza, 1965, p. 192)

As stated above, Spark is not concerned primarily with plot or the solving of mysteries in her texts, 'largely because one feels the author's main interest does not lie so much in the solution as in the reactions of various characters to the mystery.' As Baldanza highlights, major elements of plot are generally revealed in Spark's writing 'fairly early in the book.' However, his conclusion that this is an anti-climax arguably misses the point as anti-climax suggests a disappointment. By providing key information early on, such as the death of a character, Spark piques the reader's interest rather than deflating it, thus encouraging them to read on to find out exactly how a character reached their eventual fate. For example, in arguably her most famous text, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), Spark introduces the reader to the Brodie set at a young age, but sporadically flashes forward in time to show where their differing paths took them:

So that, in her middle age, when she was at last allowed all those visitors to the convent — so many visitors being against the Rule, but a special dispensation was enforced on Sandy because of her Treatise — when a man said, 'I must have been at school in Edinburgh at the same time as you, Sister Helena,' Sandy, who was now some years Sister Helena of the Transfiguration, clutched the bars of the grille as was her way, and peered at

him through her little faint eyes and asked him to describe his schooldays and his school, and the Edinburgh he had known. (Spark, 1961, p.p. 33-34)

Sandy, in the novel, is the member of the group who ‘betrays’ Miss Brodie, leading to her expulsion from her teaching position. She also plays a role in a love triangle between Miss Brodie and an Art teacher in the school whom Miss Brodie is platonically devoted to. By revealing the eventual fate of a character early in the novel, different light is cast on how the reader interprets their actions in the ‘present’, thus enabling Spark to create contradictions or duality depending on the situation, allowing her to introduce irony and humour, or even pathos when a character’s tragic end is contrasted with their thoughts and actions in the present:

These reminders of what the future holds in store for some of the characters endows their trivial acts with a kind of solemnity: the commonplace Nicholas takes on a profound seriousness when we learn that, after a revelation that leads to his conversion, he will become a monk and suffer a martyr's death in Haiti, just as Sandy the schoolgirl in the earlier novel is redeemed from banality by the juxtaposed image of the older Sandy, a nun clutching the grille that excludes her from the world. (Page, 1990, p. 46)

Does Sandy feel guilt over her ‘betrayal’ of Miss Brodie and her affair with the Art teacher, causing her to become ‘Sister Helena of the Transfiguration’ to atone? Is her memory misguided? By moving backwards and forwards in time within the narrative, Spark draws parallels between different situations. In Sandy’s case, she’s gone from the cult of Miss Brodie to the seclusion of the Catholic Church. This technique allows Spark to use narrative structure to build on her characterization and shifting backwards and forwards through time allows her characters to simultaneously exist in the present and the future, creating dynamics and tension by having a large group of individuals all playing off each other and diverting down different paths:

This scheme of organization provides Mrs. Spark in her later novels with a wide variety of character types, sometimes, depending on the group, with a rather broad spread in age and social class. And if she catches the group early enough (i.e. in school or early adulthood), she can build many ironies on their diverse paths of maturity. (Baldanza, 1965, p. 200)

Spark's technique of using a varied community to explore not only individual but also group mentalities is strikingly like Gibbon's technique in his *Scots Quair* trilogy, where the narrative voice and focus moves fluidly between different characters and situations depending on what he is aiming to depict, allowing for a multitude of different viewpoints and perspectives which all flow into a unified whole. While referring specifically to her novel *Memento Mori* (1959), Bryan Cheyette highlights a narrative technique which will become a mainstay of Spark's fiction:

This is because instead of locating its truths in a single voice, with which the reader is encouraged to identify, Spark gives three different characters various insights into the mysterious telephone caller and the meaning of the resonant phrase, 'Remember you must die'. (Cheyette, 2000, p. 38)

Spark introduces her readers to a multitude of different perspectives and forces them to piece them together to create an understandable, if not complete, whole. As Sandy comes to realize in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), although locations and experiences in life can be shared, each of us has our own individual viewpoint which can be drastically different. So, while the language of Muriel Spark's novels may seem to conform to what is accepted as 'Standard English', like Gibbon and Kelman she uses language to depict the distinct and unique voices of her characters, and like these other writers she unites narrative form, language, and

the voice of her characters to create a unified whole. Jean Brodie and the girls under her guidance are not translated to become palatable, their idiom fits that of the environment they are in, and while this is not the English/Scots hybrid of Gibbon or the urban Glaswegian dialect of Kelman, it is distinctly the voices of her characters, uncompromised and unfiltered to show them as they are.

Chapter 3.2 Narrative Structure and Spark's Manipulation of Time

In each of the novelists' work discussed within this thesis, the narrative shifts through different perspectives in their chosen communities to draw out conflicts, parallels, and different experiences and values. Gibbon does this on a large scale, looking at farming communities in *Sunset Song* (1932), small provincial towns in *Cloud Howe* (1933), and industrial cities in *Grey Granite* (1934). Spark narrows her focus to look at an Edinburgh private-school in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), a women's residential house in *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963), or an elderly upper-class circle of friends and acquaintances in *Memento Mori* (1958):

Her fiction embraces (or rather extends and radicalises) the modernist emphasis on technique while also projecting complex social worlds – worlds in which, in texts ranging from *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) and *The Mandelbaum Gate* (1965) to *The Driver's Seat* (1970), *The Hothouse by the East River* (1973), and *The Only Problem* (1984), characters are impinged on by powerful historical and political forces, their psychologies and interactions shaped by entrenched educational and religious institutions, ideologies of gender, and more or less dominant assumptions about the possibilities and limitations of human agency. (Herman, 2010, p. 2)

As will be looked at in the final section of the thesis, James Kelman takes this narrative progression to its logical conclusion and focuses on individuals: a young boy in *Kieron Smith, Boy* (2008), a disillusioned young teacher in *A Disaffection* (1989), or a newly blind, working-class Glaswegian in *How Late it Was, How Late* (1994). All the authors share a unification of

narrative in which the text corresponds to the way the characters speak, and the structural form complements the subject matter. This technique allows the characters to not only *speak* in their own voices, but to *think* in them also, removing the issue of perceived hierarchy and the problem of superiority when depicting alternate voices and idioms within a structure of standard English.

As has been mentioned previously in this section, Spark uses the narrative structure in her texts to enhance characterization, constantly moving backwards and forwards through time to provide insight, juxtaposition or parallels. This often allows for irony in her work, where a character will have certain views or act in a certain way in the ‘present’, only to be contradicted when Spark flashes forward to their future. This technique also heightens tragedy and pathos, especially when a character’s future death is revealed and every subsequent encounter with them is overshadowed:

One of the delicious discomfitures offered by the work of this writer is her swivelling proleptic use of time. Within its first pages, the book has moved from 1936 to 1930 and then forward again. We move between the present and the future, with sickening glimpses of the uncertainty of the past (for this book is about lying too, and its editing of memory), and we learn of the fate of a child before we see her growing towards it. (Spark, 1961, p. vii)

Although initially on a linguistic level it may seem strange to place Muriel Spark’s work in the same experimental sphere as the other texts discussed in this thesis, when it comes to narrative structure she is clearly operating in the same way. She constantly shifts the narrative timeline within her novels, unsettling the reader, foreshadowing events, and providing the fate of characters only to jump back to provide the path that led them there:

Mary MacGregor took fright and ran along a single lane between two benches, met with a white flame, and ran back to meet another brilliant tongue of fire. Hither and thither she ran in panic between the benches until she was caught and induced to calm down, and she was told not to be so stupid by Miss Lockhart, who already had learnt the exasperation of looking at Mary’s face, its two eyes, nose and mouth, with nothing more to say about it. (Spark, 1961, pp. 76-77)

Mary MacGregor's character in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) is initially comic. She is the least elegant, intelligent and talented of the Brodie set, seemingly tolerated out of pity or used as a way for the other girls to reinforce their own superiority. However, as the reader learns early on that Mary meets a painful and horrific end, she becomes a sympathetic and tragic character. In no way do her actions in the present change, she is still mocked and chided constantly for her failings. However, knowing the end she meets changes the way she is read in the present. The above paragraph illustrates well Spark's technique of paralleling events to create different effects. Taken on its own, we see a comic scene involving Mary and a mishap during a science experiment. However, when taken within the context of the whole novel and knowing the eventual fate of Mary, the line: 'Mary MacGregor took fright and ran along a single lane between two benches, met with a white flame, and ran back to meet another brilliant tongue of fire' has a much more sinister effect:

It occurred to her then that the first years with Miss Brodie, sitting listening to all those stories and opinions which had nothing to do with the ordinary world, had been the happiest time of her life. She thought this briefly, and never again referred her mind to Miss Brodie, but had got over her misery, and had relapsed into her habitual slow bewilderment, before she died while on leave in Cumberland in a fire in the hotel. Back and forth along the corridors ran Mary Macgregor, through the thickening smoke. She ran one way; then, turning, the other way; and at either end the blast furnace of the fire met her. She heard no screams, for the roar of the fire drowned the screams; she gave no scream, for the smoke was choking her. She ran into somebody on her third turn, stumbled and died. (Spark, 1961, p. 15)

The above account of Mary takes place on page 15 of the Penguin edition of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), so the reader has only recently been introduced to her and the other members of the Brodie set when they are provided with her grisly end. The line: 'Back and forth along the corridors ran Mary Macgregor, through the thickening smoke. She ran one way; then, turning, the other way; and at either end the blast furnace of the fire met her' clearly mirrors the previous line quoted from sixty pages later during the science experiment. Traditionally, in a novel focused on plot, the revelation of these would be reversed for the science experiment event to foreshadow Mary's death. However, by providing her death first, the second scene takes on a tragic and inevitable tone, allowing Mary to gain sympathy from the reader, even while she gains none from her peers, heightened by the information that she has spent years at the bottom of the Brodie set. Spark does this several times throughout the

novel, mirroring events, jumping backwards and forwards through time, undercutting tension and causing characters to be seen in a completely different light. Throughout the novel she manipulates the reader, teasing out reactions not from character behaviour but from the narrative structuring of time and events. For example, had the novel been written in a linear way, Mary would have been a derided character until her death, at which point she would have been merely forgotten as a secondary character killed off to serve the plot, or at best pitied as a poor, silly girl who met an untimely end. However, by introducing Mary's death early on, and then providing the events leading up to it, Spark garners sympathy for a character who's 'happiest time of her life' had been when she was on the bottom rung of a deluded teacher's set. By forming the narrative in this way, Spark transforms Mary from a character worthy of pity to one of tragic proportions, and in doing so highlights the way perspective, a key theme of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) can alter memory and perception:

So distinguished a technician is Muriel Spark that one may take practically any section of the book and it will provide a metaphor for the entire book itself. In the work of this most intellectually unclouded of writers, not prone to visible flights or descriptive digression, one is able to find the kind of symmetries (that doubleness again), echoes and reflections that are a manifestation of the naturally poetic vision. (Spark, 1961, p. vi)

This 'doubleness', the constant backward and forward movements through time which alter perception and memory, is again a narrative tool which allows Spark to unify the narrative with her characters. As the Brodie set are all in their formative years, their understanding and impressions of events in their youth will only become fully comprehensible with hindsight. Spark provides this hindsight not only to the characters by showing them in the future looking back, but she provides it to the reader, simultaneously setting a scene in the present and past-tense, providing hindsight to the reader in one line which will take decades for the character to achieve. As has been discussed, this manipulation of time is a key element of Spark's writing and, as she is more concerned with character than plot, the shifts serve to highlight changes in perception or provide insight into characters' personalities, rather than further any sort of story. This focus on characterisation and allowing her readers to enter the minds of her protagonists is what can be said to add 'authenticity' to their voices and actions. The reader is able to build an impression from the characters thoughts and actions, rather than be told of different traits from a detached external narrator.

Chapter 3.3 Spark and her Micro-Communities

As has been established, Spark, in a number of her works, creates a small community in which she is able to explore a multitude of different voices, ranging from various backgrounds and ages, to explore how they interact and craft a narrative structure around their experience. In *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) she illustrates the way in which a group of young, impressionable girls can be led by a strong-willed teacher, and how this will then affect them later in life. Miss Brodie's character is formed through our knowledge of the girls, as each of them takes on a personality trait under her tutelage. In *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963), her May of Teck Club, in which all the girls take residence, becomes a microcosmic representation of the time:

Jane mumbled, 'Well, I wouldn't have missed it, really.' She had halted to pin up her straggling hair, and had a hair-pin in her mouth as she said it. Nicholas marveled at her stamina, recalling her in this image years later in the country of his death – how she stood, sturdy and bare-legged on the dark grass, occupied with her hair – as if this was an image of all the May of Teck establishment in its meek, unselfconscious attitudes of poverty, long ago in 1945. (Spark, 1963, p. 142)

In the passage above, which comes at the end of the novel, Nicholas comes to see Jane and her simple act of pinning up her 'straggling hair' as 'symbolic of all the May of Teck establishment'. This is an intensified version of the narrative technique of the text, in which the May of Teck and its inhabitants of different ages, backgrounds, talents and experiences, comes to represent that period in Britain. Spark constantly shifts her narrative lens backwards and forwards, zooming in on characters to provide personal insight, or scaling back to provide a heightened view of the period:

Many strange arms were twined round strange bodies. Many liaisons, some permanent, were formed in the night, and numerous infants of experimental variety, delightful in hue of skin and racial structure, were born to the world in the due cycle of nine months after. The bells pealed. Greggie observed that it was something between a wedding and a funeral on a world scale. (Spark, 1963, p. 17)

In the above paragraph, Spark draws back her focus from the individual, and even further than her created community of the May of Teck and showcases the city of London. Her residents become part of the total mixture, ‘members of a wave of the sea’ (Spark, 1963, p. 17). Spark’s inclusion of this highlights through contrast her formal narrative technique. She acknowledges that the microcosm she has created in the May of Teck is part of something much larger, and that the stories and experiences she is portraying are part of a much bigger whole. Just as the resident’s personalities and stories feed into the creation of the May of Teck, so too does everyone else’s feed into the community of the city:

They walked back through the clear air of the park, stepping round the couples who lay locked together in their path. The park was filled with singing. Nicholas and his companions sang too. They ran into a fight between British and American servicemen. Two men lay unconscious at the side of the path, being tended by their friends. The crowds cheered in the distance behind them. A formation of aircraft buzzed across the night sky. It was a glorious victory. (Spark, 1963, p. 142)

This highlights Spark’s devotion to different and overlapping experiences coalescing to create the *human* experience. Chance encounters, fate, the cycle of time, all are represented in this one scene of a moving mass, where time seems to stand still while also moving through the cycle of life and death. The second passage, which is taken from the end of the novel, mirrors the first, albeit being slightly more specific with the inclusion of individual characters. However, the effect is the same: Spark is illustrating the way in which the community she has created is part of something much larger.

Chapter 3.4 Many Voices Creating a Chorus

As in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), and similar again to Gibbon in his *Scots Quair* trilogy, Spark introduces multiple distinct characters and voices within the narrative, so she can portray a multitude of different experiences, and once again unifies narrative technique

with the voices of her characters. For example, throughout *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963) there are small sections within chapters where the time-frame will jump forward, presumably to a 'present'. In these sections one of the more prominent characters in the text, Jane, informs her former housemates that Nicholas Farrington has been killed:

'Oh, Nicholas. The one who got up on the roof? What a long time ago that was. Have you seen him?'

'I've just seen a news item that's come over Reuters. He's been killed in a local rising in Haiti.'

Really? How awful! What was he doing there?'

'Well, he became a missionary or something.' (Spark, 1963, pp. 18-19)

The above exchange is another example of the way in which Spark will jump forward in time to provide information which the reader will then have to piece together. Once again, she provides news of a character's death significantly early in the novel, before the reader knows much about them. In this case, it is the young poet Nicholas Farrington, who becomes a regular visitor at the May of Teck Club where most of the novel is set. The reader is given a significant amount of information in this short exchange. We find out there was a relationship between Nicholas and another resident Selina; there was a memorable incident on the roof; he was killed in Haiti during an uprising; and he became a missionary. The key, however, is that at this point in the novel none of this has any context, we are listening to a call of which we can make no sense. So, much like Mary in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), we know a character's destination but their journey there is yet to be disclosed.

The constant movement backwards and forwards in time is an effective technique which Spark utilizes repeatedly in her work, and it allows her to keep her readers engaged as she teases out her character's stories and backgrounds. The telephone calls where former resident Jane (apty

now working as a gossip-columnist) informs her old house-mates of Nicholas's death are scattered throughout the novel, and each reaction to the news provides insight into the character of the receiver. Once more, Spark unifies the narrative structure with her characters. Depending on how a character receives the news, we are given an insight into their personalities, and when the time-frame shifts back to when Nicholas was alive, that character's interactions with him are overshadowed by the way in which they eventually receive the news of his death. For example, Rudi, an acquaintance of Nicholas' when he was alive, seems to take the news rather casually, prioritizing the sale of a book over hearing news of his friend's death, which casts doubt on the closeness of their relationship when Nicholas is alive in the novel:

'I've got something to tell you, Rudi,' said Jane.

'Hold on please, I have a customer.'

'I'll ring you back later, then, I'm in a hurry. I only wanted to tell you that Nicholas Farringdon's dead. Remember that book of his he never published – he gave you the manuscript. Well, it might be worth something now, and I thought –'

'Nick's dead? Hold on please, Jane. I have a customer waiting here to buy a book. Hold on.'

'I'll ring you later.' (Spark, 1963, p. 60)

Rudi is more interested in selling his book than hearing how an old acquaintance has died, which supports other references to him in the novel being concerned with profit. It is also interesting to note that Jane immediately mentions Nicholas's manuscript, which may have value now that the writer has died. She does this because she knows this is what will interest Rudi, she is able to read people and know what type of information would be most valuable to them, a skill she utilizes as a gossip columnist. Rudi's interest in profit and moneymaking is referenced elsewhere in the novel, so the call is used as a way of developing an existing trait of his character:

Rudi paid for the writing paper and the postage. He told her he only wanted the letters 'for sentimental purpose of my collection'. She had seen his collection. But she assumed that he was collecting them with an eye to their increasing value year by year. (Spark, 1963, p. 60)

Jane, as a supplement to her employment, writes to authors in the hope they will return correspondence with a signature. She has been employed to do this by Rudi, who claims these signatures are for his 'collection', although Jane has her doubts regarding his true intention. A parallel can be drawn here. As Rudi and Jane once conspired to make money from famous writers, Jane may have the same intention again. Rudi has in his possession an unpublished manuscript belonging to the late Nicholas, one which may be of value now that the writer is deceased. Jane works as a writer of a gossip column, but several characters respond to the news of Nicholas's death that it is an interesting story and she should write about it. Both could potentially profit from Nicholas's tragic death, and it is only through the technique of moving the narrative backwards and forwards, and doubling the different situations, that this scenario can be teased out.

Consistency of character is seen elsewhere in the novel, with the phone-calls continuing to act in reinforcing character traits. For example, when Jane calls Pauline to inform her of Nicholas's death, the discussion turns to her mental health:

'No, resting. I've just got back from the psychiatrist, he makes me rest after every session. I've got to lie down.'

'I thought you were finished with the psychiatrist. Are you not very well again?'

'This is a new one. Mummy found him, he's marvellous.'

'Well, I just wanted to tell you something, can you listen? Do you remember Nicholas Farringdon?'

'No, I don't think so. Who's he?'

‘Nicholas... remember that last time on the roof at the May of Teck... Haiti, in a hut... among some palms, it was market day, everyone had gone to the market centre. Are you listening?’ (Spark, 1963, p. 85)

As soon as Jane begins speaking to Pauline, the conversation is derailed when she notices Pauline’s distraction, asking ‘what’s the matter?’ They then go on to discuss Pauline’s visit to a psychiatrist, and not one who Jane has knowledge of: ‘This is a new one.’ This suggests Pauline has a long history of mental health problems and has been to at least two separate psychiatrists. The final paragraph appears to be from Pauline’s perspective. Information is fragmented and incoherent, and it ends with the question ‘Are you listening?’ This suggests that Pauline is unable to focus on what Jane is telling her, that she is distracted, or it may be a glimpse into the way her mind works. Possibly she is unable to process and put together information, so must rely on the reality she creates for herself. This develops her as a character given that in the ‘past’ sections of the novel, she is painted as a humorous, somewhat eccentric individual. Several times in the novel reference is made to Pauline and her supposed dinners with the famous actor Jack Buchanan:

On this floor was the room of a mad girl, Pauline Fox, who was wont to dress carefully on certain evenings in the long dresses which were swiftly and temporarily reverted to in the years immediately following the war. She also wore long white gloves, and her hair was long, curling over her shoulders. On these evenings she said she was going to dine with the famous actor, Jack Buchanan. No one disbelieved her outright, and her madness was undetected. (Spark, 1963, p. 29)

Referenced as a ‘mad girl’, Pauline is tolerated by her housemates and her claims of being in a relationship with ‘the famous actor, Jack Buchanan’ are never overtly challenged. The phrase ‘her madness was undetected’ suggests that the other girls may have thought she was simply lying, or was a little fanciful with an overactive imagination, which ties in with the way mental health was regarded and treated at the time. However, when this passage is taken into context with the phone-call later in the novel, her condition takes on a more serious, melancholic tone.

Again, as in her other works, Spark uses the narrative structure to manipulate perspective and forces the reader to re-consider their initial impressions. Through hindsight she can explore her protagonists more fully and create depth and layering through characterization. These exchanges also provide information to the reader in an organic way. We learn of events the same way characters in the novel would, by speaking to each other and piecing together information. This is another way in which Spark's narrative technique is comparable to Gibbon and Kelman. She does not introduce an omniscient narrator who conveniently explains everything to the reader, rather she allows the reader the opportunity to 'listen in'. For example, in one of the final phone-call exchanges of the novel, we witness Jane's investigative technique as she tries to piece together exactly what happened to Nicholas:

'Who?' said Lady Julia.

'Jane Wright speaking. I rang you last week to see if you could find out some more about –'

'Oh yes. Well, I'm afraid there's very little information from the F.O. They never comment officially, you know. From what I can gather, the man was making a complete nuisance of himself, preaching against the local superstitions. He had several warnings and apparently he got what he asked for. How did you come to know him?'

'He was friendly with some of the girls at the May of Teck Club when he was a civilian, I mean before he joined this Order. He was there on the night of the tragedy, in fact, and –'

'It probably turned his brain. Something must have affected his brain, anyhow, because from what I gather unofficially he was a complete...'
(Spark, 1963, pp. 116-117)

The reader is not provided with a neat summary of exactly what happened to Nicholas. There is no satisfying conclusion to his story which explains his motives. We are provided only with snippets of information and invited to come to our own conclusions, just as Jane is forced to do. This places the narrative on a level with the characters, as the reader is not privy to any extra information, thus removing the hierarchy or superiority that would be the property of an omniscient narrator.

Chapter 3.5 Forcing the Reader's Participation

The setting of the novel, the May of Teck, is a female boarding house with several levels and an intricate hierarchy. Everyone's business is known to everyone else, and information is often passed on and repeated, albeit in a slightly different manner. The text itself echoes this dynamic, as the reader is provided with multiple perspectives on the same events in a bustling household, taking on a frantic, fast-paced and communal aesthetic. For example, take the following exchange in the novel, between an older resident and one of the younger girls:

Anne trod out her cigarette-end contemptuously on the floor of the large entrance hall with its pink and grey Victorian tiles. This was pointed to by a thin middle-aged woman, one of the few older, if not exactly the earliest members. She said, 'One is not permitted to put cigarette ends on the floor.' The words did not appear to impress themselves on the ears of the group, more than the ticking of the grandfather clock behind them. But Anne said, 'Isn't one permitted to spit on the floor, even?' 'One certainly isn't,' said the spinster. 'Oh, I thought one was,' said Anne. (Spark, 1963, p. 13)

This is a humorous exchange which highlights the hierarchy and tensions between the different generations who live in the house. The line 'The words did not appear to impress themselves on the ears of the group, more than the ticking of the grandfather clock,' suggest the younger girls are used to being chided by the older women in the house, and Anne's sarcastic response is teasing without being overtly disrespectful. The exchange, which takes up a relatively short space on the page, efficiently and effectively establishes some of the dynamics which exist in the house, and is again repeated, albeit from a different perspective, later in the novel:

'One isn't permitted to put cigarette-ends on the floor.'

'No, one isn't.'

'Oh, I thought one was.'

Greggie affected an indulgent sigh and pushed her way through the crowd of younger members. She went to the open door, set in a wide porch, to look

out at the summer evening like a shopkeeper waiting for custom. Greggie always behaved as if she owned the club. (Spark, 1963, p. 15)

In the first passage, the perspective of the exchange is from Anne, indicated by her action of treading the 'cigarette-end contemptuously on the floor'. In the second passage, however, the exchange is heard from another party, Greggie. The speech is not written within a paragraph of description, but is separated, giving the impression that it is being heard off to the side. The shift in focus is confirmed when the physical action of the passage is performed by Greggie, who 'always behaved as if she owned the club.' This shifting and flowing of narrative voice creates a sense of community in the house, where there is no dominant voice or character controlling the narrative. This is comparable to Gibbon's technique in his *Scots Quair* trilogy, where the narrative ebbs and flows, passing through different characters and providing character insight and shifts in perspective. Again, as has been repeatedly shown, Spark unifies narrative voice and character, drawing the reader into the lives of her protagonists not only through their language, but through the narrative construction of the text, allowing the narrative consciousness and voice to come and go depending on what is being depicted.

Chapter 3.6 Homing in on the Individual

Spark shares similarities with Gibbon in the way they both create communities in their novels, which allows them to explore different voices and experiences through the narratives. Spark also lays the groundwork for what Kelman would come to perfect in representing one, unified narrative voice. In several of her works, Spark narrows her focus to the voice and perspective of one main character, rather than exploring the dynamics of a group. For example, in her novel *A Far Cry from Kensington* (1988), the narrative is told in the voice and perspective of Mrs Agnes (Nancy) Hawkins, the main protagonist, and the narrative is framed as her writing the novel, with her addressing the reader directly at several points:

This is a book that knows itself to be a book – and is always announcing its status to its reader. ‘I offer this advice’, our narrator says, ‘without fee; it is included in the price of the book,’ a book very much about the act of narrative skill, about the uses of foreground, background, foresight, hindsight, or the basics of narrative structure. Mrs Hawkins, our ‘scrupulous’ proof-reader and editor, almost suggests this novel is a case-book for those who would wish to write well. (Spark, 1988, p. x)

By framing the narrative in this way, Spark brings her reader close to Mrs Hawkins, and allows her voice to completely control the narrative. It also introduces an element of unreliability and the idea of the changing of perspective over time, which has already been established as a major theme of Spark’s work:

Her belief system gifted her a ‘balanced regard for matter and spirit’, as she called it, and a vision of all our realities, all our ‘real’ histories, as a kind of parallel fictional work; and this gives the recurring notions in her work of the relationships between fiction, truth and lies, between real and fake, between author, authority and free will, a particular slant. (Spark, 1988, p.ix)

Although *A Far Cry from Kensington* (1988) narrows its focus to one character and perspective, the novel still acknowledges the notion of a shared community and differing experiences: ‘the relationships between fiction, truth and lies, between real and fake, between author, authority and free will.’

While the novel is written in a much more linear fashion than the other works by Spark which have been discussed in this thesis, Spark still utilizes the technique of moving backwards and forwards in narrative time, discussing events before they have happened and using this either to heighten or undercut tension, depending on the situation:

I never got my last week’s wages. They owe me seven pounds, 1954 valuation. The noise in our general office might well have been due to an unconscious desire on our part to keep the devils away, after the practice of primitive tribes. The devils were to come in the end and Martin York was to

go to prison for multiple forgeries and other types of fraud, but we employees, although we knew the firm was rocky, did not as yet foresee quite so drastic a near future. We thought merely that we would soon have to find another job. In the meantime we got on with the jobs we had. (Spark, 1988, p. 12)

Given that the novel has established itself as being written by one of the main characters looking back on her experiences, these movements through time are less jarring than those discussed in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) or *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963), as befits with the narrative form. As can be seen in the passage above, Spark reveals information through Mrs Hawkins, but once again does not provide detail. She sets up several different strands which will all come together throughout the course of the novel as the reader begins to piece together what has happened from the scattered narrative. Like the previous novels discussed, this keeps the reader engaged as they try to figure out exactly what has happened, while also revealing aspects of different characters. For example, the line ‘We thought merely that we would soon have to find another job. In the meantime we got on with the jobs we had’ gives us insight into Mrs Hawkins and her co-workers and their resilient, stoic attitude. It also helps to illuminate the industry they are in, and how working in publishing can be an insecure form of employment, and how even though their employer was involved in unscrupulous acts, they did not find it against their morals to work for him:

When I described the letter to Martin York I was impressed by his spontaneous generosity in offering the services of his own lawyer, at his own expense, to help Wanda. He was genuinely outraged at the story. At that time Martin York was himself more deeply in trouble than I knew. Some months later, when the judge at his trial told how ‘Commercial life cannot be carried on unless people are honest,’ and sentenced him to seven years, I remembered his simple gesture to Wanda, an obscure immigrant seamstress in South Kensington whom he had only heard of through me. (Spark, 1988, p. 37)

Although coming from a singular perspective, - Mrs Hawkins - Spark still utilizes the narrative technique in creating communities. In the case of *A Far Cry from Kensington* (1988) it is the publishing scene in post-war London, and her different characters and experiences are explored through the perspective of Mrs Hawkins, rather than the narrative moving fluidly between them. This is a much more focused approach with a smaller cast of characters than those that have already been discussed in this thesis, and moves Spark away from Gibbon and points forward towards the beginnings of what Kelman's work comes to embody.

Chapter 3.7 Spark puts her Narrative in the Driving Seat

In her novella, *The Driver's Seat* (1970), Spark once again uses narrative structure and form to heighten characterisation and create a unified text, perhaps creating her purest example of a fusion between narrative, language and characterisation. For example, in this brief text she writes in short, sporadic sentences, which correspond with protagonist Lise's frantic and tragic search for her would be murderer:

There are two people in front of her. Lise's eyes are widely spaced, blue-grey and dull. Her lips are a straight line. She is neither good-looking nor bad-looking. Her nose is short and wider than it will look in the likeness constructed partly by the method of identikit, partly by actual photography, soon to be published in the newspapers of four languages. (Spark, 1970, p. 18)

The sentences in the passage are brief and abrupt, echoing the way in which Lise's eyes are darting from target to target, seeking the man who will eventually aid her in her quest to be murdered. The narrative also shifts through time, beginning in the present-tense and then leaping forward to provide a prophetic account of how Lise's appearance will be 'published in the newspapers of four languages.' This is a narrative technique which Spark utilises in many of her works, as has already been discussed. The reader is provided with the death of a character

but is given very little detail, thus creating tension every time this character appears as the reader knows their eventual fate, but not how they come by it:

She will be found tomorrow morning dead from multiple stab-wounds, her wrists bound with a silk scarf and her ankles bound with a man's necktie, in the grounds of an empty villa, in a park of the foreign city to which she is travelling on the flight now boarding at Gate 14. (Spark, 1970, p. 25)

This foreshadowing of events also possibly leads characters to be seen in a different light than they may have been had their story been allowed to play out in a linear fashion. For example, in the case of Lise, had the reader not been aware from the very outset that she would meet a tragic end, they may not have humoured or tolerated some of her more erratic or thoughtless behaviour. However, by writing the narrative in this way, Lise's thoughts and actions become unified with the narrative. She herself has a plan for how all of this is going to play out, like an author writing a novel. Everything she does is intentional. She knows ahead of time what the eventual outcome will be, and by providing the reader with future information, they become aligned with Lise:

So she lays the trail, presently to be followed by Interpol and elaborated upon with due art by the journalists of Europe for the few days it takes for her identity to be established. (Spark, 1970, p. 51)

Yet this is deceptive. What appears to be foreordained risks the intervention of the unforeseen. So, while Lise is laying the trail for Interpol, Spark is doing the same thing in the narrative, sprinkling clues for the reader to piece together. Like Lise, we know exactly how the story will end because Spark has already told us, but tension is maintained because we don't have the details, and that is what carries the story along. In this way, despite using standard English, Spark is surprisingly close to Kelman and Gibbon as she creates a unified narrative between character and text. Lise is fully aware of what the outcomes of her actions will be, and this is expressed in the way the narrative itself is written:

The woman has large breasts, she is clothed in a pink summer coat and dress. She smiles and is amiable in this transient intimacy with Lise, and not even

sensing in the least that very soon, after a day and a half of hesitancy, and after a long midnight call to her son, the lawyer in Johannesburg, who advises her against the action, she nevertheless will come forward and repeat all she remembers and all she does not remember, and all the details she imagines to be true and those that are true, in her conversation with Lise when she sees in the papers that the police are trying to trace who Lise is, and whom, if anyone, she met on her trip and what she had said. ‘Very gay,’ says this woman to Lise, indulgently, smiling all over Lise’s vivid clothes. (Spark, 1970, p. 23)

Just as Lise’s every action, choice and encounter is deliberate, calculated to move her closer to her final goal, so too is every part of Spark’s narration. In *The Driver’s Seat* (1970) (and the other texts of hers which have been discussed) Spark uses narrative form and language to create a unified voice, and although it initially appears less startling than Gibbon and Kelman as it is written in standard English, it allows the voice of her characters to come to the forefront, avoiding a superior or hierarchical narrative voice – providing an ‘authentic’ one instead. Like Gibbon, Spark constructs a highly structured narrative form, moving constantly backwards and forwards through time to shift perspective and provide character insight. By essentially giving away the ending of her novels at the very beginning, Spark can then use her texts to focus on her characters and their experiences. Gibbon utilises the same technique with his cyclical chapters, and Kelman, as we shall see in the next section, takes the process even further by essentially removing plot altogether. Spark’s refinement of this technique can be argued to create a connecting thread between Lewis Grassie Gibbon and James Kelman, both in the sense of time and the evolution of a particular narrative style.

Chapter 4.1 James Kelman and the Synergy of Voice and Narrative

In the writing of James Kelman, from his short stories to his full-length novels, the author allows the voices of his characters to come through as part of the narrative itself. Kelman's overarching formal intention seems to be to replace the traditional omniscient narrative voice of English literature and allow the voices and experiences of his characters – who are predominately working class Glasgow males – to come to the forefront:

I was uncomfortable with 'working-class' authors who allowed 'the voice' of higher authority to control narrative, the place where the psychological drama occurred. How could I write from within my own place and time if I was forced to adopt the 'received' language of the ruling class? Not to challenge the rules of narrative was to be coerced into assimilation, I would be forced to write in the voice of an imagined member of the ruling class. I saw the struggle as towards a self-contained world. This meant I had to work my way through language, find a way of making it my own. (James Kelman in Kovesi, 2007, p.12)

Thus, the controlling voice of the narrative is something Kelman is concerned with, and he refuses in his writing to allow his characters to be assimilated, refuses to write in what he terms the 'language of the ruling class' and instead manipulates the narrative and language to find a way of 'making it his own'. Like Gibbon, Kelman seeks to allow the voices of his characters to control every aspect of the text, and in doing so the narrative voice becomes distinctly theirs, meaning their thoughts and speech are not hindered or placed in an inferior position. Throughout his novels and short stories, Kelman uses his writing to portray the experiences of characters whom he believes have been ignored by English literature, both past and present, those people whom he feels British literature has been 'prejudiced against'. He explains that:

Whenever I did find somebody from my own sort of background in English literature, there they were confined to the margins, kept in their place, stuck in the dialogue. You only ever saw them or heard them. You never got into their mind. You did find them in the narrative but from the outside, never from the inside, always they were 'the other'. They never rang true, they

were never like anybody you ever met in real life. (James Kelman in Kovesi, 2007, p. 28)

Kelman's mission was to replace what he believed to be the inherent hierarchy within narratives written in Standard English, which is defined by *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms* (1999) as 'That English, spoken or written, which is regarded as generally accepted and correct in grammar, syntax and spelling, and which is a fit model for imitation' (Cuddon, 1999, p. 863). He achieved this by allowing the voice of the characters and participants in his fiction to control the narrative itself, and not be constrained by traditional punctuation, spelling, or omniscient narration. By doing this, the reader is on a level with whoever is the focus of the narrative, as they do not have a standard English narrator guiding them or providing exterior context. This replaces the inherent power aspect of traditional narratives in standard English, where characters who did not speak in formal English were placed in an inferior position within the narrative structure. This allows both insight and experience of the characters' consciousnesses:

The narrative of James Kelman proceeds to a large degree from an ambition to produce a narrative idiom which will more 'authentically' represent the essential essence and milieu of working-class Glasgow than, for instance, the modes of classic realism could do. (Scott, 2009, p. 13)

While Kelman utilizes the speech patterns and phonetic spelling of his characters within his texts – predominately working-class, male, Glaswegian – his narrative technique is not simply to apply a template of Glaswegian language over any narrative. Kelman makes no attempt to portray a 'true voice' to stand for the society he is depicting. Each of his novels and the voices that carry them are completely unique, albeit clearly coming from the same societal structure. More than Gibbon and Spark before him, Kelman's focus is on character, but this is emphasised as it is in Gibbon and Spark not only through the language itself but also through the

construction of the narrative. Like the other two novelists of the previous sections, the narrative form in Kelman's novels is very deliberate and stylised, even if it initially appears as a simple stream of consciousness. Once again, time does not move in a linear fashion, the reader is not guided clearly from beginning to end but instead must actively work with the text to comprehend what is happening. This ethos of allowing the structure of the narrative to explore characterisation is a technique Kelman shares with both Gibbon and Spark, and although each of the writers have a clearly distinctive style, there is a literary heritage which runs through each of their works. In each case, narrative form is primarily used as a way of enhancing and exploring character and constructions of consciousness, rather than furthering any sort of linear plot.

Chapter 4.2 Kelman's Creation of the Individual

Although not specifically referring to Kelman, Leonard does well in summarizing what appears to be his approach to character:

I would not describe myself as 'the' human being; that would mean I thought that no other human being existed, or that others weren't quite as much a human being as I am. I understand fully that I am just 'a' human being, just as anyone else is just 'a' human being as well. But of course like you the reader, whoever you are, I am not just anyone else – I am 'this' human being that nobody else is. (Leonard, 1990, p. xxvii)

Kelman does not provide the narrative voice for all human beings, his characters are unique, the 'human being that nobody else is'. For example, in his novel *Kieron Smith, Boy* (2008), Kelman provides the narrative of a young Glaswegian boy, Kieran, and provides a snapshot of his gradual growth from pre-pubescent to pre-teen, while in another novel, *How Late it Was, How Late* (1994), Kelman introduces us to Sammy, a stoic Glaswegian who has to adjust to being made newly blind after a self-destructive confrontation with the police, leading him on a Kafkaesque journey through the city's various arbiters of power (doctors, police, lawyers).

These novels, along with the others discussed in this thesis, share a distinct narrative structure and an inventive use of language and punctuation, but the voices and experiences they portray are startlingly different from each other.

Kelman's novels (like those of Hogg and Gibbon) demonstrate that a subaltern Scottish writer is not necessarily focusing on the trivial, the insignificant, and the merely local when seeking 'to write as one of my own people'. Writing as one of his own people, Kelman in his novels explores existential themes with Kafkaesque depth and subtlety. (Mack, 2006, p. 228)

The notion of 'working-class *individuals*' is essential to Kelman's work. While grand ideas are approached in his texts, Kelman offers no solutions. His characters are not ciphers for his own politics, although his declaration of being a socialist in various interviews comes as no surprise to those familiar with his work. Kelman is concerned with the human aspect of his characters, their thoughts, fears and beliefs, and the only way he can portray these is to write the narrative in their individual and unique voices, a trait he shares with Gibbon and Spark:

When Kelman assessed British literary history, he felt that the separation between language varieties was illustrative and reproductive of a divided society, of structures of power, of class stratification, and he discusses no Scottish exceptions. Lewis Grassie Gibbon opened up narrative use of a 'folk voice': as Cairns Craig points out, Grassie Gibbon 'invented a radical narrative strategy which displaces the third person, omniscient – and Anglocentric – author in favour of a narration organised through the voices and the gossip of the folk themselves.' As early as the 1930s Grassie Gibbon was breaking what Kelman asserts were the usual 'rules of narrative' (Kovesi, 2007, p. 13-14)

As Kovesi highlights, and what this thesis has attempted to argue, is that Kelman follows in a Scottish literary tradition which links him with, among others, writers such as Gibbon and Spark. He seeks to allow his characters to speak for themselves, in their own voices and with their own authority.

In *Kieron Smith, Boy* (2008), the narrative follows a young Glaswegian boy as he makes the transition from early childhood into puberty. However, Kelman's novel is not the traditional Bildungsroman. There is no overall arc where Kieron goes through various trials and tribulations and changes by the end of the novel, he simply grows up a little, and this change is portrayed most significantly through the language of the narrative.

Kieron's tale is 'ordinary', and possibly semi-autobiographical. Indeed, as an account of growing up in a particular era in Glasgow it is more than likely typical of what most children would have experienced. By not having to focus on plot-points and story beats, Kelman is able to fully immerse himself and the reader in the mind of his protagonist, a feat achieved primarily through the language of Kieron himself. In other words, by refusing a conventional plot-driven narrative structure, Kelman allows the individual boy his own authority. At the beginning of the novel, Kieron's language corresponds with his age at the outset of the text:

Ye were having to watch it as well how yer body went, lying on yer front, if it was wee bits at a time ye were moving. And ye did not notice till ye slid right down and the water was up yer shoulders, oh mammy. Yer hands reached the bottom and ye pressed and pressed to push yer feet back up and if a big boy caught yer feet and pulled ye out or else that was you and ye went right the way in the water. That happened to people and men had to go in and get them. Daft wee b****r. (Kelman, 2008, p.1)

As can be seen from the above excerpt, Kelman alternates between standard English and the idiom of his character. Words like 'yer', 'ye' and 'mammy' are all provided without speech marks or italics and no indication is given that these words are incorrect or out of place, they are set on the same linguistic level as what would generally be accepted as standard English. The sentence structure also resembles the way a child would speak, and the exclamation of 'oh mammy' when discussing being drawn into deeper waters is reminiscent of a child telling a story or responding immediately to stimuli. Possibly the most interesting aspect of the passage, and a feature which is repeated throughout the novel, is the narrator's self-censorship. The

word 'b****r', which can be taken to be 'bugger' from the context provided, is censored as it is considered a swear word by the young Kieron. Kieron's mother repeatedly chides him to speak correctly and is shown to thoroughly dislike swearing, and this has caused the young boy to censor himself within his own mind:

The worst was banging his head into the wall. He hit his elbows and knees but it was his head, if he hit that. Oh oh oh or else using bad words. My maw was at her work. She would have gived him a row. She hated bad words, swearie words. O for G*d sake. That d**n bed. (Kelman, 2008, p. 8)

This is an effective technique to illustrate to the reader that they are being given an insight into Kieron's mind, and provides an illuminating aspect of his character in a subtle way. As a contextual feature, it provides a comic insight into Kieron's innocence, and is given further weight when taken into consideration with most of Kelman's other work and his prolific use of swearing. Famously, this aspect of his writing earned him notoriety with certain literary critics on the award of the Booker prize for *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994). On a formal level, it highlights the way in which the narrative is operating, and how the voice of the novel is flowing between Kieron's internal thoughts and external proclamations and stimuli without any clear distinction or guidance to the reader. This fluidity is a distinctive feature of Kelman's writing throughout his novels and short stories, and is one of the main ways in which the narrative hierarchy is challenged:

One time I was soaking the whole way through and my maw was completely angry, how I was going to die of pneumonia or else diphtheria if ye swallowed the water. My da was home on leave and he gived me a doing. But I liked going to the pond. The men sailed their boats there and had races, and their boats were great. Ye saw their sails and how the boat was tipping right over till it was going to capsize but it did not, it was just picking up speed because the wind was there and it was good, so they were all sailing great and the boys all shouting, and the men to. Go on Go on, Hold there. (Kelman, 2008, p. 2)

Use of large, difficult words such as 'pneumonia' and 'diphtheria' would have been difficult for a young boy of Kieron's age to write, and his use of unusual grammar and sentence structure

supports this. This suggests the text is not a written account by Kieron himself, but rather a direct insight to his stream-of-consciousness. While this is a common modernist technique, it is useful to note clearly that this is not a diary or series of letters written by Kieron, but his inner voice on the page. Once this is established, the narrative becomes much more intimate as the reader feels they are getting an ‘honest’ and ‘authentic’ account from Kieron as the narrative is untranslated, and the only censorship comes from Kieron himself.

Chapter 4.3. The Maturing of an ‘Authentic’ Voice

Initially in the narrative, Kieron’s voice is distinctly naive and youthful, not only in its content but also in its presentation:

There were great smells at the river and big ships went down it, ocean-going. Ye heard the horn and ran to see them. Ye had to run fast so it would not be away. Everybody was cheering maybe if it was new or just built and here it was launched. Even if it was an old cargo boat or else a container ship, I liked them. Where had they been? They were all old and had been places all over the world. It was great, and ye were walking along and running along beside it then ye had to go round a corner and round a river-street and then back down and there was the river and the boat was there. (Kelman, 2008, p. 5)

When we first meet Kieron, he is enthralled by the youthful pursuit of watching boats on the Clyde. Everything is very immediate and sensory: the ‘smells at the river’; hearing ‘the horn’. The excitement it brings is palpable as Kieron is ‘walking along and running along beside it’. The sentence structure supports this youthfulness, with its straightforwardness and simplicity. Kelman merges Kieron’s feelings with his ability to portray them. As the novel progresses, however, and Kieron’s interests and priorities change, so too does the way in which this is presented to the reader:

It is no that, you are just a lying fucking bastard, I said, fucking cheating fucking bastard because I know what it is, how come ye are saying it, just cause I am a Protestant, how ye do not take me to the cards either, it is because I am a Protestant. Nothing else. It just was not anything. Because I was a Proddy. It was nothing about nothing except I was a Proddy. It was not with her being older but she was a Catholic. So if the Priests would not let her. Else her maw and da if they did not like Protestants. Some did not talk

to ye. So if that was her family. Oh do not marry him, do not let her marry him. That happened if ye married a RC, they got against ye. (Kelman, 2008, p. 408)

This passage, which comes at the very end of the novel, illustrates the growth which has occurred within Kieron, and when compared with the earlier examples fully showcases Kelman's control of his character's voice. Gone is the young, innocent, self-censoring Kieron from the beginning of the novel. Now the reader is faced a young and angry adolescent. In one passage Kelman fully portrays the angst and injustice felt by the young boy, beginning to come to terms with the unavoidable power structures within society (in this case religion), and then the novel ends, without preamble or a tying up of any narrative thread. The reader simply loses the connection to Kieron's thoughts, and is left to make up their own mind how his story continued. We are left with the young Kieron beginning to explore the existential questions which dominate the thoughts of Kelman's older protagonists:

Because sometimes it was slippery. I thought that too, if a good spirit was going with ye, maybe if it was granda, he had just passed over and was climbing with ye so it would not go wrong, just helping with yer grips. But what if it was a bad spirit? I used to think that. Oh what if it makes me put my foot in the wrong place. Or else my foot got jammed in between the ronepipe and the wall and I would topple back over, all my body except just my one foot stuck in. And I would be flapping my arms and just seeing my foot come out inch by inch till then I was falling. Maybe a bad spirit would make me do it. Or lift my fingers if I was going up a tree, one floated up to get me and if it was reaching high and came to my fingertips and just lifted them off one by one by one, or if it was a ronepipe and ye were getting to the very top and the spirit just blew the wind and knocked ye off. So yer granda would be there, his spirit would come to yer rescue, maybe a breath of wind or a hard blowing wind, to stop ye hitting the ground heid first, ye would land one foot at a time, nice and soft, or else in a big pile of sacks and just get up and walk away, Oh that was lucky, and it would be, except if it was him, yer granda. (Kelman, 2008, p. 422)

Kieron is beginning to move away from youthful pursuits and obsessions, considering death and spirituality. His voice has matured, he has grown up slightly from the beginning of the novel, but his voice is very much still his. He is still in control, he is still the author of his own narrative, and although the language he uses has evolved, this does not diminish the impact of the earlier sections. Kelman's technique allows all language to be treated equally because it is the voice of the individual, which allows it to be 'real' and 'authentic' to them, without making any claim to being 'the voice of the working class'.

Chapter 4.4. A Strong Voice in the Darkness

In the next text to be analysed, *How Late it Was, How Late* (1994), Kelman potentially explores the experience Kieron may have gone through as an older man. Although Kelman's literary universe is in no way connected, in that there are no overarching storylines or recurring characters tying his novels together, it is completely plausible that Kieron could have ended up in Sammy's position, or that Sammy's childhood shared aspects of Kieron's. Kelman is very much concerned with the individual in his text, and each of his voices are unique, but the experiences he represents are so grounded that they are applicable, if not fully representative, of a working-class society in Glasgow.

Like *Kieron Smith, Boy* (2008), the narrative of *How Late it Was, How Late*. (1994) is written in the voice and idiom of the main protagonist Sammy Samuels, and while it switches seamlessly and unexpectedly between first and third-person narration, the voice is consistently in the register of Sammy:

Ye wake in a corner and stay there hoping yer body will disappear, the thoughts smothering ye; these thoughts; but ye want to remember and face up to things, just something keeps ye from doing it, why can ye no do it; the words filling yer head: then the other words; there's something wrong; there's something far far wrong; ye're no a good man, ye're just no a good man. Edging back into awareness, of where ye are: here, slumped in this corner, with these thoughts filling ye. And oh Christ his back was sore; stiff, and the head pounding. He shivered and hunched up his shoulders, shut his eyes, rubbed into the corners with his fingertips; seeing all kinds of spots and lights. Where in the name of fuck... (Kelman, 1994, p. 1)

From the very beginning of the text, the reader is faced with the narrative voice and idiom of Sammy's inner mind. Throughout the novel there are very few instances of him speaking out loud, and when he does the speech surprises as it does not completely correspond to the register of his inner thoughts. Sammy's thinking is frantic, disjointed, he goes off on tangents, but the writing style differs from Kieron in that it is not a unified first-person perspective. In *How Late it Was, How Late* (1994), Kelman is challenging, much more forcefully, the traditional omniscient narrative. By utilizing the tool of free-indirect discourse he provides the reader with

the thoughts and voice of Sammy, while also showcasing a third-person narrator removed from the scene. However, what is exceptional about his narrative technique in this novel is that he allows his omniscient narrator to operate on the same linguistic plane as Sammy, removing the traditional hierarchic structure. In the text, then, Sammy is both the object of the gaze and the controller of the lens. His voice holds all power in the narrative.

And he was smiling; the first time in days. Know what I'm saying, the first time in days, he was able to smile. Fuck them. Fuck them all. He settled the jacket back on his shoulders, tugging it down at the front, checked to see if he was wearing a tie – course he wasnay wearing a tie. He gave his elbows and the arse of his trousers a smack to get rid of any dirt, and felt a big damp patch where he had been sitting. Who cares. He was smiling again, then he wiped it off, and he followed behind them, hands in his trouser pockets, until they stopped for a wee reccy; and he got into them immediately; and ye could see they didnay like it; them in their civvy clobber man they didnay like it (Kelman, 1994, pp. 3-4)

The passage begins in third-person with the narrator witnessing Sammy 'smiling', and the 'first time in days' indicates an intimate knowledge of Sammy. Then it switches to Sammy's first-person thinking of: 'Fuck them. Fuck them all', and then the view draws back again as Sammy 'checked to see if he was wearing a tie'. Sammy then approaches the undercover police who will contribute to his becoming blind, and we are given an insight into their feelings through the narrator: 'and ye could see they didnay like it'. What Kelman achieves through this narrative technique, one which he maintains throughout the text, is an ability to utilise the modernist technique of free-indirect discourse while maintaining the authority and legitimacy of his character's voice. Rather than translate Sammy into the voice of a standard English narrator, Kelman subverts the traditional omniscient narrative to suit the voice of his character, removing the hierarchy of language and presenting Sammy's voice as the only voice of the text. This is his experience, and while there may be times the reader is drawn away from his first-person thoughts, his idiom is always present, so we are always aware this is Sammy's text and Sammy's story:

The guy nearest Sammy looked a bit puzzled by this irritating behaviour; he squinted at his mate for a second opinion. So Sammy got in fast and controlled: Naw, he said, being honest, I had the wages and went straight into the boozier with a couple of mates; and one thing led to another; I woke up in the outer limits somewhere – ye need twenty-two buses to get back home, know what I mean, wild! That was the early hours this morning; all I had was the fare back into the city. And I need to get home, the wife, she'll

be going fucking mental, she'll be cracking up. What day is it by the way?
(Kelman, 1994, p. 4)

As noted, when Sammy does directly speak in the novel, it jars with the way he is presented within the narrative. From a distance, Sammy is a stoic, calculating and cautious man, who analyses situations to find the best outcome: 'The guy nearest Sammy looked a bit puzzled by this irritating behaviour, he squinted at his mate for a second opinion. So Sammy got in fast and controlled'. The fact that Sammy knows how to control the situation means he has experience of it, which sets up his criminal past. However, what is most telling about the scene is it is completely self-destructive without any real explanation. This encounter is what sets the novel on course, leading to Sammy's blindness and his struggles to adapt. But why did he feel the need to approach the police, and why when he does speak is it so at odds with his seemingly cool and calm inner-voice? When Sammy speaks out loud he appears rambling, and he is purposefully provocative without being outright aggressive. He wants a reaction so he can retaliate, something which the 'sodjers' amply provide:

Move it ya fucking pest. This was sodjer number 2 talking; then his hand was on Sammy's right shoulder and Sammy let him have it, a beautiful left cross man he fucking onered him one, right on the side of the jaw, and his fucking hand, it felt like he'd broke it. And sodjer number 1 was grabbing at him but Sammy's foot was back and he let him have it hard on the leg and the guy squealed and dropped and Sammy was off and running cause one minute more and they would be back at him for Christ sake these stupid fucking trainers man his poor auld toe it felt like it was fucking broke it was pinging yin yin poioioioiong (Kelman, 1994, p. 5)

As soon as they lay a hand on him, Sammy springs into action. He reacts and subsequently acts quickly to come out on top of a situation that he himself created. Once again, as illustrated in the passage above, the narrative flows in and out of Sammy's consciousness, giving us his thoughts in the moment while also drawing back to give a better view of the action. The narrative moves from action: 'he fuckin onered him one, right on the side of the jaw,' to feeling: 'and his fucking hand, it felt like he'd broke it.' The reader is given an account of Sammy 'off and running', to being back in his head feeling the pain in his toe 'pinging yin yin poioioioiong'. While the use of free-indirect discourse was a staple of modernist writing, the way in which Kelman utilizes it is exemplary in that he is providing a voice, in a higher literary style, to represent a group in society which was drastically underrepresented or side-lined within literature. However, as has been said before, Kelman never makes the claim to speak for all the

working-class people in Glasgow, he tells the story of his characters, and he does it in their voices, allowing them to control the narrative and giving them ultimate authority. Like Kieron, we are only allowed a glimpse into the life of Sammy, there are no satisfying endings or neat conclusions, his voice simply fades and we are left with our own conclusions:

He waited on the pavement once they had said cheerio. Then he tapped his way back to the pub doorway and stood inside. A hackney cab; unmistakable. When the sound died away he fixed the shades on his nose and stepped out onto the pavement. It was nay long till the next yin. He tapped forwards, waving his stick in the air. It was for hire, he heard it pulling in then the squeaky brakes. The driver had opened the door. Sammy slung in the bag and stepped inside, then the door slammed shut and that was him, out of sight. (Kelman, 1994, p. 374)

Sammy disappears off into the night, possibly heading for England, but nothing is certain, only he knows where he is going and this is information he is not willing to share. When first read, the ending is jarring, there are so many loose threads left to be tied up. What was Sammy involved in that he was being so closely monitored by police? Was the rep, Ally, who was trying to help him really who he said he was? What happened to his partner Helen? Kelman answers none of these questions because ultimately, they don't matter. As mentioned before, plot and story are not Kelman's concern, he is providing a glimpse into someone else's experience, entering their world for a relatively brief period and then stepping out again, allowing his characters to recede back into anonymity. Sammy ends the novel 'out of sight' both in the sense of being blind and disappearing.

In these two novels, Kelman's narrative technique follows a distinct formula while still being able to portray unique and individual voices. The two examples were chosen purposefully for the drastic differences between their central characters (age, circumstance), however Kelman does not only operate on extremes, but is able to craft distinct characters with nuance and depth.

Chapter 4.5. Crafting an Authentic Standard Glaswegian

In his 1989 novel, *A Disaffection*, Kelman tackles a character who is a mid-point between Kieron and Sammy in terms of age. The text's protagonist, Patrick, is a teacher who is disaffected and disillusioned with both his life and his profession, and the novel gives an account of his attempts to overcome and deal with his unhappiness. Once again, the focus is on character over plot, with Patrick's internal struggles taking precedence:

The pipes were strange kind of objects in the response Patrick had for them. It was immediate to begin with. As soon as he saw them it was, christ! And he shook his head, still just standing there, staring at the two of them. He picked the thinner one up and glanced about but nobody was watching. It was still winter yet. It was dark and it was cold. People seldom wandered round to here. Patrick scratched his head; then, without smiling, proceeded to blast out a long deep sound. He stopped. And now the glimmer of a smile did appear on his face. Again he glanced about: still nobody. He took a very long deep breath and once more he blasted out this long, very deep sound. It was really beautiful. Of a crazy sort of nostalgia that would aye be impossible to describe in words, and not in oils either. He noticed the other pipe but already the decision was made and it would make no difference one way or the other how it sounded, he was taking them both, the pair of them. (Kelman, 1989, p. 1)

From the very beginning of the novel, in line with most of Kelman's work, the reader is abruptly introduced to the narrative voice of the chosen subject. Without any significant preamble, the reader is dropped into Patrick's life, straight into his mind and introduced to his inner voice: 'The pipes were strange kind of objects in the response Patrick had for them. It was immediate to begin with. As soon as he saw them it was, christ!' Initially, the line seems quite formal, written in the third person and objectively describing Patrick's response to the pipes he's just found, a set of objects which come to symbolize the rut he's in as he forever fantasizes about using them but continually makes excuses not to:

and yet, this conceptualising. Creating a distance already. Only a couple of days since the first sounds and now here he was attempting to get away from it, from the actual physicality of them. That was hopeless. That was the kind of thing he always seemed to be doing nowadays. The totality of it: the totality of it; the way the sounds had been

the other night, or was it last night, the way the actual sounds had been, that was it – that was that! How come he had even felt the necessity of painting them in these bright enamels? What was wrong with their own colour? Their selfcolour? What was wrong with that, their self colour, the colour of their selves? Had that also been done to create a distance? And even the time it took for the paint to fucking dry! Was that also an excuse, a way out, an escape route, so he wouldn't be obliged to actually blow them? (Kelman, 1989, p. 9)

However, the final word 'christ!' pulls the reader into Sammy's mind as we glimpse his excited inner reaction. Significantly, the narrative in *A Disaffection* (1989) is written predominantly in what would be considered as standard English, with sprinklings of working-class Glaswegian such as the above 'that would aye be impossible to describe in words'. However, this is not a concession on Kelman's part. What he is doing in this case is exactly what he does in his other works, he is using the voice of his characters to create the narrative. Kieron is a young boy so his narrative is written in the cadences of a young boy, Sammy is a working-class man with a history of violence and criminality, so his narrative is written in the cadences of someone from that world. In this case, Patrick is a secondary school teacher, with formal training and what some would term a middle-class profession, so his voice reflects this:

When he parked the car in his own street he was aware of the pipes as a new problem in his life – even in such minor events as exiting from the car e.g. did one for instance take them in one's arms before rising from the seat? or get out first and then fucking drag them after you? or else prop them against the side of the car while you're still sitting down! It was almost like having a pet. Oddly enough the sister-in-law tried to dump a six-week-old puppy onto him quite recently, but he had declined. It would have been no good with him being out all day at the teaching. The wee beast would not have been happy. Plus holidays. Other difficulties too. And if he had wanted to stay out all night what then. (Kelman, 1989, p. 4)

Once again Kelman allows his characters to impose themselves on the narrative, rather than have them bend to standard English or traditional narrative form. The narration, much like the other novels discussed, is erratic, veering off on tangents and often ending mid-sentence. By writing like this Kelman is enforcing the notion that the reader is inside the mind of a real person, hearing their thoughts as they veer off in uncontrollable directions, or in some cases

getting led into dead ends where the character is unwilling to complete a darker thought process:

He glanced at the temporary English teacher who smiled but looked away immediately. He was not at ease with Patrick. That was for definite. It was as if he was just – as if he was maybe thinking he was not really able to say what might happen in the next couple of minutes. As if maybe he was worried Patrick might break down or something maybe and end up (Kelman, 1989, p. 39)

One of the main focuses of the novel is Patrick's mental health and the concern everyone has for him. However, despite being deeply unhappy he is unable to confront this unhappiness directly, so when his sentence above ends abruptly, the silence delivers so much more than if he had spoken. For example, given the context there are several possible endings for that passage. Patrick could 'end up' attacking the temporary English teacher, 'end up' crying, or 'end up' killing himself. Each of these scenarios is equally plausible, but Kelman isn't being obtuse, he is simply illustrating Patrick's inability to confront his own feelings of depression and unhappiness, achieving character insight through the way the narrative is written rather than simply explaining through exposition:

Mm. I must confess I didnt expect you to have anything like that, she said.

No.

It's a surprise. She smiled: You're a secret royalist!

...

A smile.

...

It was funny.

Alison watching him.

...

Yet as well though

but as well, in her face, in her look this great mixture of worry, care, of also affection maybe for him; a feeling for him, it was just obvious – Pat smiled, he gazed at his kneecaps. If he really was cracking up maybe she would rush to his defence, in the future, whenever his name cropped up in staffroom discussions, nostalgic ones about long-gone colleagues (Kelman, 1989, pp. 142-143)

Again, Kelman utilizes silences and gaps to portray much more than words could. In the above scene between Patrick and Alison, a married work colleague whom Patrick wishes to start a relationship with, we see in his reluctance to speak an inability to deal with the issues he is having. Patrick is dangerously unable to confront and deal with these issues, and this is fully represented in the narrative structure of the novel as even in his own mind he is unable to express his feelings or confront his own unhappiness:

But my brains willni let me my brains willni let me. That's what happened to old Holderlin. And what I want to know is, concerning your man, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, his boyhood friend (Kelman, 1989, p. 181)

As can be seen from the examples above, Kelman can be placed in a linear linguistic tradition with Gibbon and Spark. All three writers realize and utilize the importance of 'character-voice' in their narratives and allow the voices of their characters to rise above, rather than be buried or sanitized by, accepted standard English. Again, none of the writers, Kelman included, make any claim that the language they write in is categorically 'better' than standard English. What they do is *remove* the idea of superiority. Kelman's writing is a demonstration of the ways in which an accurate depiction of the lives and experiences of his working-class characters require him to move away from standard English, but this is a commitment to art, to the practice of artifice, a literary commitment that matches those of the great authors of the past for whom the linguistic hierarchy of the English-language omniscient narrator was established convention: for example, Walter Scott, Jane Austen or George Eliot. Gibbon, Spark and Kelman are

engaged in a different practice from these nineteenth-century authors, but they are of the same company of major literary artificers of their eras.

Chapter 5.1. Conclusion

If all writing is artifice, then it stands to reason that no form should be placed in a hierarchy above another, but this is not the case. Traditionally, standard English has been used as the dominant form in works written in the English language over the last few centuries. Even today, after the literary movements of Modernism and Post-Modernism, with all their experimentation and challenging of the status quo, accepted standard English is still the dominant language of literature. However, as this thesis has highlighted, by writing in standard English, the experiences and voices of individuals who do not speak and think in this mode are altered, side-lined or completely ignored. This is an issue in the realms of Scottish literature, where the Scots language and the various other regional idioms and urban dialects of the country are often placed in an inferior position within the confines of narratives written in standard English. This introduces a power element, where Standard English is the authoritative mode, and any deviation is automatically placed in an inferior position (intentionally or otherwise).

In the case of Lewis Grassie Gibbon, this is achieved by removing the traditional omniscient narrator, the one overarching voice in a novel which speaks to the reader in Standard English, providing context and insight from a distanced, privileged position. Instead, he places the narrative in the control of his characters, and allows it to flow and pass between them, changing tone and register depending on whose perspective is being shown or what the scene is. He anchors his *Scots Quair* trilogy on a main protagonist, Chris Guthrie, but hers is not the sole voice of the novel, she is just the pin holding it all together. He does this by framing the narrative as a recollection, with each chapter of his three novels beginning with Chris at a heightened position on the landscape, looking back on events that have already occurred. This draws the reader in, forcing them to actively engage with the text to piece together what has happened, and keeps them reading to follow the path that led her to the destination they already

know. Throughout the three novels of the trilogy, the reader encounters countless characters from a vast range of backgrounds and experience, all with their own individual voice which is given equal prominence on the page. A socialist in life, Gibbon translates this into his narrative, removing traditional notions of power and merging his own knowledge of Scots with Standard English in order to create a voice that is completely unique and ‘authentic’ to the community he has imagined and is representing, while also remaining completely accessible to anyone regardless of their experience with the Scots language. Unique among his contemporaries in prose, Gibbon demonstrated that characters who did not conform to what standard English traditionally represented were still valid, interesting and engaging, and his inventive and radical use of Scottish idioms and dialect in both the speech and narrative structure of his texts would pave the way for many Scottish writers who followed, including Muriel Spark and James Kelman.

While seemingly less radical regarding her language, it can be argued that Muriel Spark’s work continued what Lewis Grassie Gibbon began. Although writing mainly in standard English, and predominantly dealing with subjects, locations and characters without the realm of what would be considered typical of ‘Scottish’ writing, Muriel Spark’s experimentation with narrative structure and her commitment to character exploration and construction shares many aspects with Gibbon and Kelman. Although she predominantly uses standard English in her fiction, Spark is comparable to Gibbon in the sense that she allows the voice of her characters to permeate every aspect of her narrative. It just so happens that the characters she depicts are from walks of life where standard English would be the primary mode of communication. Spark, then, becomes a link between Gibbon and Kelman in that she pushes further the idea of character over plot. While Gibbon has a clear focus on character, his *Scots Quair* trilogy is primarily concerned with overarching ideas (community, industrialisation, socialism) and the

three novels have a clear intention of showcasing a historical shift and change in Scotland, from the farming country, through the small town, to the industrial city.

Spark, on the other hand, uses her plots as more of a frame through which she can explore her characters, and although there are clear beginnings, middles and ends, the action of the novels are secondary to the progression and exploration of her characters. In most of her texts, she creates a community (smaller than Gibbon but larger than Kelman) of different individuals from different backgrounds with varying voices and experiences. By doing this she can show shifting perspectives, and by introducing different events (the action of the novels) she is able to layer her characters through their varying reactions. On a narrative level, Spark frequently utilises a similar technique to Gibbon's cyclical structure. However, rather than have each chapter begin in the 'present', leap back and then work forwards again, Spark will constantly shift backwards and forwards within the narrative, most of the time without warning or explanation. This allows her to create parallels or introduce irony, while also building characterisation. Once again, despite her use of standard English, Spark's work aligns with Gibbon and Kelman in that every aspect of the narrative is written with character in mind, and is written from a level position, not a superior height.

Kelman can be posited as a hybrid manifestation of what Gibbon and Spark were attempting in their respective narratives. His use of various urban dialects and idioms is a continuation of Gibbon's Scots/English hybrid. While linguistically the two author's works are drastically different, their commitment to character and narrative voice are on the same level. Kelman's free flowing narrative stream of consciousness can be likened to Gibbon's ability to move seamlessly between different characters. However, Kelman's is much more focused, and moves in and out of one individual's mind, rather than whole communities. Regardless of style, though, the ultimate effect is the same. Kelman, like Gibbon, removes the notion of a superior,

standard English voice by allowing the register of his character to control the narrative in its entirety, not allowing it simply to be resigned to speech. On a structural level, Kelman again can be said to have taken to a logical extreme what Spark did with her focus on character over plot. Whereas she uses the plots of her novels as a way of exploring her characters through their reactions to various events, Kelman simply skips plot altogether, and the ‘action’ of his novels mainly takes place in his characters’ mind, with them simply trying to live their lives.

As has been established through a reading and analysis of a wide range of work from Lewis Grassie Gibbon, Muriel Spark and James Kelman, there is a literary tradition within Scottish literature which allows characters’ voices to embody every aspect of the narrative. Spark, writing mostly in standard English, does this mainly through her manipulation of narrative structure. In the case of Gibbon and Kelman, both authors use language which clearly does not conform to what would be considered standard English, but which is ‘authentic’ to the characters and communities they are depicting. By using this language in highly stylised and narratively complex novels, which utilise and subvert literary tradition, they not only legitimise the language and the people it represents, but they elevate it so that it is able to stand alongside, rather than below, the traditional, accepted, standard form.

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