

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI

FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky



Soňa Vaníčková

**SELECTED A. L. KENNEDY'S SHORT STORIES: FOCUS
ON SILENCE AND THE UNSPOKEN**

Bakalářská práce

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D.

Olomouc 2021

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci s názvem „Selected A. L. Kennedy’s Short Stories: Focus on Silence and the Unspoken” vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité a citované podklady a literaturu.

V Olomouci dne

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Soňa Vaníčková

Acknowledgements

I am forever grateful to my thesis supervisor, Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D., for her guidance, useful advices and patience during these difficult times in the pandemic. I would also like to thank her for providing me with materials for my thesis. Her proficiency and time dedicated to me are greatly valued. I'm also very thankful to my close friends for an endless supply of coffee and emotional support when it was needed the most.

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Introduction

Scottish nation whose independence was stolen by the English dominion has not recovered from being forcibly learned to remain inert to exploitation, nor were they given a chance to do so. The aftermath of the Jacobite revolution was only the beginning of the methodical silencing of Scotland, the features of which can be traced even today. The national history exaggerated by the general belief in predestination has remarkably influenced their contemporary spirit.

Contemporary Scottish literature reflects the silenced nation. During the 1980s, Scotland was under the devastating tyranny of Margaret Thatcher, silently enduring the exploitation. The Scottish literary Renaissance, which blossomed in the background of this era, signified a fresh blow in the sails of the somewhat deprecated national literary canon and made the Scottish literature seen by others. It is a characteristic feature of the Scottish Renaissance authors to depict the marginalized life in the silenced environment, usually writing about the working class.

A. L. Kennedy is a significant author classified among the younger generation of the Scottish Renaissance, whose talent is proved by many prizes. She has also written a number of politically themed articles on the subject of Scottish independence. Therefore, it will be interesting to do a close reading of her works of fiction to see whether the phenomenon of silence is projected there and how many kinds of silence can be found. This thesis argues for the possibility of categorization of silence in Kennedy's short stories and the relevance of her work to Scottish literature.

Kennedy's famous hate towards labelling and her stories' ambiguity make it impossible to apply only one literary theory to her work. Trauma narrative seems to connect her works and could therefore be used. Although it is a relatively new approach to literary criticism, it has the potential to become a reputable one, and Kennedy and Galloway might be its first foray. However, reader-response critical theory is perhaps the only one against which she has not objected. This theory stresses the significance of reader's textual interpretation. In accordance to Wolfgang Iser's formulation of it¹, the interpretation of silence in Kennedy's short stories depends on the reader who decides about the meaning of the text. Kennedy's narration relies on the audience deciphering

¹ Wolfgang Iser, 'The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach', *New Literary History* 3, no. 2 (1972): 279–99.

what she avoids saying but circles around. Depending on the readers' historical, social and cultural background as well as their relationship to the author's linguistic choices, the interpretations may vary. Therefore, this thesis' methodology is reader-response, based on its author's interpretation and analysis of the short stories, while admitting the plausibility of other interpretations. To find a variety of silence types, the focus of this paper will be on short stories assuming various works exhibit different silence. The selected short stories will be analysed to look for the unpleasant silence and the unsaid. Simultaneously, the stories will be compared to find any intersections of what they may have in common and how they differ.

Contextualization of Kennedy's work is essential for understanding the roots of silence in her stories, and it will hence be the focal point of the first part of this paper. Scottish Renaissance will be discussed first to introduce the political background of her work. In the following chapter, a brief attention will be given to women writers to uncover the historically gender-based silence in the profession. After contextualizing Kennedy and her work, the selected short stories will be analysed to find the unspoken turmoil which causes feelings of uneasiness and anxiety in readers.

1 Scottish Literary Renaissance: The Recognition of Scotland's Writers

Scottish literary tradition as an independent canon, rather than a part of English writing, had been recognized among other literary canons only not long ago. Scottish literature's heyday and world's interest in reading as well as publishing it stand behind this recognition.

It is evident, even regarding today's political situation in Scotland, that the land still suffers from being trapped in the shadow of England, the dominion of the United Kingdom. As a result of this oppression, ordinary people and their experiences in Scotland's daily lives were not being taken seriously, not to mention being worthy of being portrayed in art. After 1707, when the country lost sovereignty in the Act of Union, the nation inclined to comfort their deprivation in romanticized literature full of idealizations of their history. After the notorious Scottish devolution referendum in 1979, many believed that what was left of Scotland was "intellectual wasteland."² Despite the expectations of losing the rest of literature of ideals, a wave of writers emerged in the 1980s, which Wallace called a "movement of fictional innovation."³

This movement, which is often referred to as the Scottish Renaissance⁴, can be seen as a turn in focus from the brave heroes of Robert Burns and Scot Walter's works to the opposite, the traumatized and weak individuals, but also as a way of breaking free from the British literary tradition. This turning point's true importance lies in recognition of Scottish authors by British critics and publishers. In the introduction to his interview with Alasdair Gray and James Kelman, Toremans describes this turning point in the nation's literature as more of a "change in publication policy and an adjusted critical view on Scottish writers."⁵

Alasdair Gray's *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (1981) is considered the pioneering work of this era. In this work, Gray introduces new, original ways of writing and foreshadows the burst of experimental writing style present in works of the following generation of writers such as Welsh, Galloway, Smith, or Kennedy. In the

² Gavin Wallace, introduction to *The Scottish Novel since the Seventies*, ed. Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), 3.

³ Wallace, introduction to *The Scottish Novel since the Seventies*, 3.

⁴ According to Wallace, first Scottish Renaissance took place in the 1920s and 1930s, but it was by no means as important and demanding as the one in the 1980s. Therefore, the latter is sometimes referred to as the second Scottish Renaissance. Wallace, introduction to *The Scottish Novel since the Seventies*, 1.

⁵ Alasdair Gray, James Kelman, and Tom Toremans, 'An Interview with Alasdair Gray and James Kelman', *Contemporary Literature* 44, no. 4 (2003): 566.

following literary works, exploring the various options of working with text would be one of the most prominent attributes of Scottish literature, including distinguished dialects and breaking the rules of orthography, the latter being observable in, for example, *Lanark* or Galloway's *The Trick Is to Keep Breathing*.⁶ The authors adopt the use of Scottish dialect as a contrasting element to formal English, which further correlates with the major aim of the Scottish Renaissance to break ties with English dominance. To allow the characters to speak Scots, whether altogether or just some phrases and expressions, means acknowledging the nationhood in the text as a way of creating space for national revival. Moreover, the preference of Gaelic speech over other English language varieties can be seen as a rejection of the national union. Another experimental tool found in Kennedy and others is a thin, often disappearing border between reality and non-reality.⁷

The experimental language, which focuses mainly on narration and themes, also manifests in the works of James Kelman. Gray and Kelman, two Glasgow urban writers, are considered to be the major leading personas in the Renaissance of the nation. In their works, they both focus on the working class and explore new narratives. Another Scottish author, Ali Smith, even admitted in an interview that the younger generation of Scottish writers “take[s] advantage” of Kelman and Gray’s innovative writing styles.⁸

When asked about his stance on being called the founding father of the Scottish Renaissance for inventing the experimental stylistics, Gray denied such a role. He deemed it incorrect as other Scottish writers, namely James Kelman, Tom Leonard, and Liz Lochhead, had their works published long before his debut in 1981. On the notion of the term Scottish Renaissance, he added:

The writers Janice Galloway and others who referred to me as “useful” were about twenty-five or thirty years younger than me. The notion of a “Scottish [R]enaissance” was first urged by the sociologist Patrick Geddes in the 1980s, so the idea has hovered around for quite a long time.⁹

⁶ Kaye Mitchell, *A.L. Kennedy*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 19.

⁷ Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan, eds., *A History of Scottish Women Writers* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997): 619, qtd. in Matt McGuire and Nicolas Tredell, *Contemporary Scottish Literature*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 164.

⁸ John McKay, ‘The Banal Daily Drudge: Telling Stories in Scotland’, *ESharp, Special Issue: Spinning Scotland: Exploring Literary and Cultural Perspectives*, 2009, 102.

⁹ Gray, Kelman, and Toremans, ‘An Interview with Alasdair Gray and James Kelman’, 569.

Gray also expressed his feelings against the term Renaissance, calling it “inaccurate” while Kelman considers the term to mean “lack of awareness of the Scottish tradition.”¹⁰ As long as he is happy to see more writer’s freedom in expressing themselves in writing by, for example, experimenting with conjugation of narrative and dialogue, he suggests erasing the term since it is “not appropriate at all.”¹¹ He is also against Gray being considered to be the founding father:

The term is a convenient way of dismissing the need to talk properly about the topic and to hide a lack of knowledge. It’s convenient to call Alasdair a “founding father,” thus creating these writers who all come from the same school of letters, but they are very different kinds of writers.¹²

This group of writers, which formed around Kelman and Gray’s works, is often called the Glasgow School. There are general tendencies to include A. L. Kennedy in this school of writing. She and Janice Galloway, another member of the Glasgow School, form a pair that is described as the female contrast to the male pair of Kelman and Gray.¹³ Although the Glasgow School is a term used relatively often when referring to the writers, it was met with non-acceptance from the authors. For example, A. L. Kennedy has an opposing standpoint to such inclusion, which will be discussed in chapter 1.3, and questions the existence of such group. “Basically we all know each other, but there isn’t that much of a scene where everybody meets. And you know, I suppose we read each other, but not that much. The thing that would tie most Scottish writers together is that they all read American authors and they all read European authors,” she explained.¹⁴ Kennedy is certainly not the only one who considers the Glasgow school to be overstated. Kelman supports her words. Once again, he opposes being included in or calling the authors a school. According to him, to be in some kind of contact with his fellow writers is inevitable because of their shared profession: “Between myself, Tom Leonard, Alasdair, and other people who were around at that time, there was a lot of dialogue but not anything like a ‘school.’ In society some people just bump into each other now and again, you know, like carpenters, because

¹⁰ Ibid. 569.

¹¹ Ibid. 570.

¹² Ibid. 569–70.

¹³ McGuire and Tredell, *Contemporary Scottish Literature*, 162.

¹⁴ C. March, ‘Interview with A. L. Kennedy’, *Edinburgh Review* 101 (1999): 112, qtd. in McGuire and Tredell, *Contemporary Scottish Literature*, 162.

they end up in the same job and share a platform.”¹⁵ McGuire agrees that it is not a school that should be used when referring to them and stresses the individuality of each of the authors as he proposes that rather they are unique authors with “a mutual interest in the experimental techniques of postmodern writing.”¹⁶

Whether or not their work was behind the establishment of a new era of Scottish literary tradition, which meant a notable increase in publishing and reading Scottish literature beyond the nation, both Gray and Kelman’s names remain dominant in the canon despite their reservations against the terminology. What started with authors such as Muriel Spark, Robin Jenkins etc., with whom the change of a focal point from the romanticized view on Scotland began, grew markedly into an explosion in the 1980s, which gave voice to the so far neglected authors who followed the two Glasgow writers’ lead and whose works are today read across the world. These authors continue to separate themselves from the English influence and create a space for their own distinguished literature.

As a result of the Scottish Renaissance in the 1980s, Scottish literature currently enjoys a great deal of worldwide critical recognition. The movement was essential for the recognition and development of the nation’s individual literary canon, although some critics claim that it “occurred in problematic isolation from many of the developments that were revolutionising literary studies elsewhere.”¹⁷ Since the 1980s, publications on Scottish literature are also being written. Some of them even include Gaelic writing in the Scottish canon, proving the subject is finally being taken seriously.

1.1 Scottish Identity and Its Reflection in Literature

The results of the 1979 referendum only added to the feeling of helplessness about having little to no identity as a nation. Being forced to identify as British has proven to be unacceptable to Scots. Two more referendums targeted at the topic of independence took place in 1997, which resulted in partial independence with the establishment of Scottish Parliament two years later, and more recently, in 2014, in which unionism won once more. At the moment, a new referendum seems to be just around the corner and

¹⁵ Gray, Kelman, and Toremans, ‘An Interview with Alasdair Gray and James Kelman’, 585.

¹⁶ McGuire and Tredell, *Contemporary Scottish Literature*, 163.

¹⁷ McGuire and Tredell, *Contemporary Scottish Literature*, 169.

the results will be even more anticipated with Brexit deepening the space between Scotland and Europe.

Kelman compared the relationship between England and Scotland to the one of a master and his slave and suggested that it is the English rather than Scottish people who decide about their freedom, while Scottish people, who are affected the most by such relations, have little to say in that matter.¹⁸ That Westminster Parliament tends to make decisions with little regards to Scottish opinion was exemplified during Brexit discussions when the current independence-orientated Scottish government wished to preserve a close relationship with the EU. The eventual realization of exiting the EU is raising voices within the Scottish nation for a new chance to part their ways with England.

During the Scottish Renaissance, the need to separate the Scottish from the British in literature was voiced most strikingly. But to take the Scottish and extract it, its form needs to be defined first to know what to individualize. Scotland first must have its own identity again so that it can stand as a sovereign nation.

1.1.1 Scottishness: Wild Masculinity or Survival of Everyday?

Scottish identity is blurred by the years the nation has spent under cover of a different one, and it may be a difficult task to specify it. There seem to be two generalized ideas about Scottishness; each of those images can be perceived as corresponding to a literary period.

One of the prevailing ideas about Scottishness is the vision of a wonderful, rough, and wild land with hills covered in heath and moss, inhabited by strong Scottish men in kilts who play the bagpipes. Such stereotypical idealization of Scotland as we know it from Walter Scott or Robert Burns' literary works is rather romanticized. The reason for such portrayal of Scotland in the literature can be, to some extent, the restrictions imposed on these elementary segments of Scottishness after the defeat of the Jacobite risings at the end of the 18th century. These reductions of the nationhood affected the authors and their works. Giving the Scotland's spirit space on paper when in real world it could not exist played a great role in keeping it alive. Scottish dialect,

¹⁸ Gray, Kelman, and Toremans, 'An Interview with Alasdair Gray and James Kelman', 581.

which is famously used in Burns' works, is another means of retaining the culture and traditions of Scotland for the nation which found it difficult to surrender.

Such national revival communicated via dialect, as noted previously, is used by the Renaissance authors either, this time as a way to express the desired individuality on national level. Kelman pointed out that Scottish dialect was not being used enough before the Scottish Renaissance took place: "At that time, in what you could call 'the standard English literary form,' the Scottish voice would always be in the dialogue and never form a nationality in itself. That's a crucial problem, and it doesn't only apply just to contemporary Scottish literature."¹⁹

Mitchell discusses the level of opposition in Burns and Scott's narrative and the narrative chosen by Scottish authors who have been writing and publishing during and after the Scottish Renaissance.²⁰ The latter does not celebrate the wild masculinity of heroes. Instead, their priority is on the opposite side of warriors and heroes. Especially in the works of Kennedy and Galloway, people on the margin of society are being focused on, who seem to be uninteresting and unnoticeable at first sight and whose strength is simply in living and surviving their everyday life and facing their own demons. It was mainly the newer generation's authors like Kennedy, Galloway, or Welsh who "offered more ambivalent engagement with the discourses of the nation."²¹

Some authors set their stories more or less explicitly in Scotland; both Gray and Kelman are famous for their description of Glasgow. Kennedy is more ambiguous regarding settings, with some stories taking place explicitly in the Scottish environment, some explicitly not in Scotland, and some in other unspecified areas. Ali Smith hardly ever sets her stories in Scotland and puts little stress on the location. For her works, it is more important to focus on what can be called the *everyday* rather than the place. The local dialect is also not used in her stories, although she "draws upon an oral tradition of storytelling that is prevalent in Scottish fiction."²²

Scotland, just like any other state, has a range variety of people with different characters. However, there is a tendency for certain aspects of trauma to appear in Scottish literature. After all, when the nation's history is taken into consideration, to be Scottish inherently is to be traumatized, and Scottish writers are no exception. To write

¹⁹ Gray, Kelman, and Toremans, 'An Interview with Alasdair Gray and James Kelman', 571.

²⁰ Mitchell, *A.L. Kennedy*, 16.

²¹ Mitchell, *A.L. Kennedy*, 16.

²² McKay, 'The Banal Daily Drudge', 97.

and read about trauma, even if only on the level of individuals rather than nation, is precisely what the nation needs to recover.

To state that Scotland is only one of the cultural discourses, whether the romantic land or the traumatized nation and not the other, would be incorrect since they do not refute one another despite being fairly contradictory. The newer take on Scottishness does not make the former untrue or less important, they are somewhat in correlation, and yet, even together, they do not fully capture Scottishness.

1.1.2 The Distinct Nature of Scotland and England

Historically, attempts to gain independence resulted in more oppression in the form of forbidding and thus trying to erase elements of Scottish cultural heritage and even its language. Suffocation of the nation, which misses its own state or language, by the English dominion inevitably led to instinctively characterize what is Scottish as something essentially not English.²³ Attempts to fundamentally dissimilate from England have seeped into the core of literature. That Scottish and British are two different sets of minds is apparent from a simple comparison of the two nation's works.

The contrast between Scotland and England is reflected in the difference between their nature and their authors' descriptions of it. The roughness of Scottish nature is observable, for example, in Alice Thompson's *Burnt Island* (2013), where the protagonist is nearly killed by the powerful wind which blows on top of the cliff where he is sheltered in a moving shed. With the progression of his madness, the fog becomes a hiding place for a shadow that follows him, and he is repeatedly warned against the sirens who would lure him into the sea, which will eventually take his life during a high tide. In Ian Banks' *The Wasp Factory* (1984), two of Frank's three murders are hidden behind the cruelty of nature combined with bad luck without any suspicion. The river in James Robertson's *The Testament of Gideon Mack* (2006) is so wild and dangerous that when Gideon falls into it, they are not bothered to try to save him and only search the sea for his corpse. The river's demonic power is further increased because a hidden cave underground, where the water disappears for a few miles before reaching the sea, is a place where Gideon encounters the Devil himself.

²³ Ema Jelínková, 'Traumatized Selves in Janice Galloway's *The Trick Is to Keep Breathing* and A. L. Kennedy's *Night Geometry and the Garscadden Trains*', *Ars Aeterna* 10, no. 2 (1 December 2018): 2.

A certain similarity between the Scottish character and their nature is apparent. Both Scottish and English nature can be used as an excellent metonymy for their national spirit and literature. While the British literary canon mainly operates within light, safe, and stable narratives, Scottish authors are sailing through the dark, wild, uncertain, and sometimes dangerous and cruel themes. Nevertheless, motifs of such essence are essential for the nation as they reflect on its traumatic history and fate.

1.2 The Dawn of Women Writers' Literature

In contrast to previous centuries, the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century was marked by an outburst of literature written by women. That women writers have been given more space in the previously male-dominated literary sphere since this period reflects the worldwide enlightenment in the society where women were given more and more recognition as equals to men and were empowered to live independently on them. Although there is still a long road to reaching full gender equality, women these days are far more financially or sexually independent than before.

In the past, women's options to be recognized in literature in any way were limited as much as their lives. Women, who could not vote, work or inherit property after their late husband, presumably struggled to get published anything else than a diary. Of course, there are some exceptions to this; Elizabeth Barrett Browning or Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, to name a few. However, it is worth noting that they both were married to writers who could be to a certain degree behind their success (not in terms of possessing writing skills but rather as helpers in publishing their works). As a matter of fact, Shelley goes so far as to admit in her introduction to *Frankenstein* (1818), which was initially published anonymously, that her husband was the one who wanted her not to give up her writing:

After this my life became busier, and reality stood in place of fiction. My husband, however, was, from the first, very anxious that I should prove myself worthy of my parentage and enrol myself on the page of fame. He was forever inciting me to obtain literary reputation.²⁴

²⁴ Mary Shelley, author's introduction to *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus* (Wordsworth Classics, 1993), 2.

She further describes that when she first wrote about Frankenstein's monster as a short story, her husband pressured her into making it a novel²⁵ and wrote the whole preface for it. It may seem unclear why she was so reluctant to publish her story considering the amount of her husband's support. Shelley also offers a brief hint on her reasoning, which turns out to be a shocked society: "How I, then a young girl, came to think of, and to dilate upon, so very hideous an idea?"²⁶ Some today famous authors like the Brontë sisters even chose to publish under pseudonyms to avoid being in the public eye. It is not astounding that there were not many women writers in the era previous to the contemporary one under these circumstances.

Despite this apparent shift, fiction written by British women was under attack for being dull, "'piddling' and 'parochial'" as opposed to the one written by American women, in the scandalous Orange Prize Fiction, a prestigious women's prize in the United Kingdom, in 1999.²⁷ The general outcome of the Orange Prize was that American writing horizons are much more comprehensive compared to British as they take more topics as a subject of their writing than just their monotonous lives at home. Parker draws from Virginia Woolf's defence of women's writing. She rejects claims of it being less important than men's writing for being overly short-sighted and only about domestic matters, or suggestions that fiction based solely on women's life at home and their feelings is uninteresting and somehow inferior to other motives.²⁸

While Woolf is defending women's narratives against gender-based biases, Parker fights for equal reception of women's fiction written in the United Kingdom and the USA. Although this scandal could have been a creation of journalists striving to set the two states in dispute and belittle the solely women-oriented Prize, she admits that recently, "many . . . British women are often overlooked."²⁹ Scottish authors appear among the names she lists as authors that are not given as much attention, for example, Kate Atkinson, Ali Smith, or A. L. Kennedy. Although Parker includes these authors in a collection of essays titled *Contemporary British Women Writers* and thus veils them under the British identity, which is in straight opposition to the aims of Scottish

²⁵ Shelley, author's introduction to *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus*, 3.

²⁶ Shelley, author's introduction to *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus*, 1.

²⁷ Emma Parker, 'Introduction: "The Proper Stuff of Fiction": Defending the Domestic, Reappraising the Parochial', in *Contemporary British Women Writers* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 14.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 7.

contemporary literature as pointed out previously, she makes it understood that to her, “‘British’ is no longer a stable or straightforward category, and certainly not one defined by place of birth.”³⁰

1.2.1 Scottish Women Writers

Scottish Renaissance takes place in the background of the beginning of this worldwide social shifting in favour of women. It therefore comes as no surprise that the Scottish literary canon also gets enriched by many women writers at the turn of the centuries. These authors are on the periphery of the literary world scheme since they are both women and Scottish, which marginalized them to an extreme. “Clearly, there is a sense in which both denote a degree of ‘marginality’, an exclusion from the dominant discourse of white male ‘Britishness.’”³¹

To claim that before the Scottish Renaissance, there were no woman writers in Scotland would be as inaccurate as to say that there were no male ones. Liz Lochhead was active before the publication of *Lanark*, and she was not the only one. In addition to her, there were also Muriel Spark, Emma Tennant, Joan Ure, to name a few, who wrote in the 1970s and 1980s. The list of women writers was, however, relatively concise until the 1990s. According to Douglas Gifford, another characteristic phenomenon of Scottish literature after the Renaissance is the inclusive approach to gender, noting that “a new fiction emerges in which men write women and women write men.”³²

To categorize these women based only on their gender and nationality would be insufficient, considering that their works share some interesting features and simultaneously differ in other areas, without distinction from works of men writers. Scottish women authors are, just like men authors, individually diverse in style, genres, and to some degree, in their subject matters. There is a frame of shared characteristics that connect them, such as experimenting with dialect and orthography. However, those characteristics are shared across the whole Scottish new writing, and they are not female-specific. Christianson and Lumsden even go as far as claiming that it is women

³⁰ Ibid. 7.

³¹ Alison Lumsden and Aileen Christianson, introduction to *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 2.

³² Douglas Gifford, "Contemporary Fiction I: Tradition and Continuity", *A History of Scottish Women's Writing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1977a): 580, qtd. in Mitchell, *A.L. Kennedy*, 20.

who enrich the national literary canon and reveal the nationhood from a different point of view: “[T]heir work *cuts across* patriarchal constructions of Scotland to suggest alternative ‘imaginings’ or constructions of nationhood and their relationship to it than those offered by their male counterparts.”³³

As it was with men during Scottish Renaissance, there is a notable difference between contemporary British and Scottish authors regarding their stories. Although it takes form through various themes, trauma caused by oppression on both national and gender levels is identifiable in Scottish works. National sentiment is manifested in individual author’s works differently since their relationship to nationhood is also heterogenous. While there are authors who live in Scotland, work there and “engage directly with its parameters,”³⁴ there are also authors who moved out of Scotland or whose reluctant stance on being categorized in any way makes it difficult to simply label them as Scottish.

1.3 A. L. Kennedy: Looking for Possible Identity

Alison Louise Kennedy is one of the authors of the new generation of the Scottish Renaissance. She was born on 22 October 1965 in Dundee, Scotland, to a teacher at primary school and a psychology lecturer at university. She attended a private high school and got her BA Hons in Theatre Studies and Drama at the Warwick University, where she has been teaching creative writing. Next to teaching at university and writing novels, short stories, and children’s literature, she has written non-fiction and screenplays for the screen as well as stage. She contributes articles, which are usually politically oriented, to various papers, and does stand-up comedy and one-person shows. In addition to that, she has done many pieces of various genres for radio. Kennedy has won many awards for her literary works and appeared twice on the Granta Best of Young British Novelists list in 1993 and 2003.

³³ Lumsden and Christianson, introduction to *Contemporary Scottish Women Writer*, 2. Italics in the original.

³⁴ Lumsden and Christianson, introduction to *Contemporary Scottish Women Writer*, 3.

1.3.1 A. L. Kennedy as a Construct

Very little is known about her because of her popular secretive nature when it comes to her personal life. Unlike it can be in case of other famous personas, Kennedy chooses to grant people some pieces of her life. But when she reveals some new information about herself, she does so with shocking confidence and openness. On how complex her character is, Mitchell wrote: “Despite being a very private person in many respects, Kennedy has written with astonishing honesty and acuity in her personal life, the challenges of being a writer and her health problems – both mental and physical – in a number of her publications.”³⁵

Kennedy’s rare windows to her life are described so they sound very tragic and dark. Her parents’ separation and following divorce at her thirteen years of age affected Kennedy deeply. Mitchell sees this era of her life as the beginning of “an introversion and an alienation already visible as aspects of Kennedy’s burgeoning identity.”³⁶ On the other hand, what becomes apparent from the way she expresses herself is that she strives for an image of her that is more in line with an outsider, a mysterious foreigner who does not fit the society, displaying since early life as she experienced bullying in infant school, but at the same time, not a beaten individual without hope, as it can sometimes seem. Although she speaks of “turmoil unspeakable”³⁷ when referring to the divorce of her parents and subsequent life with her mother, when asked about growing up without a father, she explains it is of little importance since one either has a parent in their life or does not³⁸ with an existential reconciliation.

The problem with this is, one can never be sure whether what we receive as an answer to a question that is Alison Louise Kennedy is an honest, subjectively perceived report on her emotional perception of reality or just another process of literary character creation. A proof of Kennedy’s tendency to lie can be found in her short story “The Role of Notable Silences in Scottish History,”³⁹ where she admits to

³⁵ Mitchell, preface to *A. L. Kennedy*, x.

³⁶ Mitchell, *A.L. Kennedy*, 26.

³⁷ A. L. Kennedy, *The Life and Death of Coloner Blimp* (London: BFI Publications, 1997): 16, qtd. in Mitchell, *A. L. Kennedy*, 26.

³⁸ S. Merritt, ‘What’s It Like Being a Scottish Writer? I Don’t Know. I’ve Never Been Anything Else.’, *The Observer* (23 May 1999): 13, qtd. in Mitchell, *A. L. Kennedy*, 26.

³⁹ A. L. Kennedy, ‘The Role of Notable Silences in Scottish History’, in *Night Geometry and the Garscadden Trains* (London: Phoenix, 1993), 62–72.

adjusting the reality to make it interesting. All the world knows about her is what she decides to share, using the words she uses, resulting in us knowing only the A. L. Kennedy she wants the world to know, which is a lonely person on the periphery of society and human experience who is reconciled with this position nevertheless. “The picture she paints of herself is as bright, rebellious . . . , but also sensitive and put upon.”⁴⁰ This paradoxical dualism is a characteristic feature for Kennedy based on the non-acceptance to being defined or categorized and creating a new box fitting only herself, to be put in.

Contradiction is what could describe most things about her. She does not want to be the subject of attention, which can be understood as the reason she shares very little about herself and when directly asked, she usually responds with irony or obviously lies. It is thus surprising that her non-fiction reveals so much about her.⁴¹

At the beginning of *On Bullfighting* (1999), Kennedy reveals her wish to commit suicide and even offers some detail of her plan of doing so, which is probably one of the most private information. Among other reasons to do such thing, she states that it is also her writer’s block that makes her want to kill herself. The non-fiction book is supposedly written to help her overcome this problem. “[I]n writing this book, I am looking for faith. I am not unaware that I need it,” she reveals.⁴² To Kennedy, the craft is almost divine. She emphasizes the role of the author, who is the only one who should have a say in what they write and what they write about in order to preserve the work’s quintessential value. Should the work yield to audience’s (or anyone else but the author’s) wishes or financial prospects, it is no longer a full-fledged work which fulfils its mission.⁴³

Kennedy sees writing as the point of a writer’s existence, and if she cannot write, her existence is no longer valid. According to Mitchell, this exhibits the importance of writing to her since she finds “whatever identity she nominally possesses” in it.⁴⁴ She does not wish to be included in any type of taxonomy; “writer” is the only word that she allows to describe her. In an interview with *The Guardian*,

⁴⁰ Mitchell, *A.L. Kennedy*, 28.

⁴¹ Mitchell, *A.L. Kennedy*, 33.

⁴² A. L. Kennedy, *On Bullfighting* (London: Yellow Jersey Press, 1999): 12, qtd. in Mitchell, *A.L. Kennedy*, 34.

⁴³ Kennedy, *The Life and Death of Coloner Blimp*: 37, qtd. in Mitchell, 35.

⁴⁴ Mitchell, *A.L. Kennedy*, 34.

she reveals that writing is her only option as a job, as she wanted to be an artist in a circus as a child, but her physique did not allow her:

I read a biography of Grock and I wanted to be Grock. But I realized that I was not physically capable really of walking in a straight line most of the time. I didn't have the skills and then I didn't have the compulsive-obsessive thing that would mean that I could do . . . anything other than typing, that's where my solipsistic obsessive-compulsive thing went.⁴⁵

At the same time, she announces that she deems her writing "very unimpressive,"⁴⁶ which seems to be in direct contradiction. Considering her above proven bond with writing, it seems improbable that she would take her work so lightly. Since she identifies by her work, one is left wondering whether it is her own person she considers insignificant. She teaches writing, but at the same time, she considers it impossible,⁴⁷ which further proves her torn personality.

1.3.2 The Fuzzy Nationality of A. L. Kennedy

Kennedy has made it clear she does not wish to be discussed in terms of categories and labels. In "Not Changing the World", she explains that she does not understand how her gender, sexual orientation, or place of birth should make her a Scottish writer or a woman writer.⁴⁸ Having spent most of her life in Glasgow, she is usually included among Scottish writers, despite her famous reluctance to being limited to the pre-made labels. It could be argued against her being recognized as a Scottish writer. Even though Kennedy was born in Scotland, her parents were Welsh and English, and they brought her up speaking RP at home, so her nationality is a mixture of more than just Scots.

There seem to be an ambiguity about being a Scottish writer. She is a Scottish author as far as her nationality and residence is concerned. To Kennedy, her nationalism is something natural but unimportant; she, by chance, occurs to be Scottish. She claims

⁴⁵ "AL Kennedy: 'I Find Writing Very Unimpressive'," YouTube video, 4:51, "The Guardian," 5 September, 2011, accessed 13 June 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VQsBgp8CaA>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Mitchell, *A.L. Kennedy*, 30.

⁴⁸ Kennedy, "Not Changing the World", in *Peripheral Visions: Images of Nationhood in Contemporary British Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995): 100, qtd. in Mitchell, *A.L. Kennedy*, 14.

all elements of her writing, which one could attribute to the classification of Scottish writer, are results of her background without any message, importance or implications. She refuses the ascribed idea of being a writer of a Scottish movement who must write only about Scotland and Scots as her subject matters. In her earlier works, she specifies it takes place in Glasgow, while her older works are more often set in unspecified places which, however, can still resemble Scottish scenes. Moreover, many but not all of her characters are Scottish. She rejects writing as a form of statement:

[I]t's just that people took exception to stories being set in Scotland and having Scottish characters, like it was this big statement and it's not, it's just where I live, what else am I going to write about? . . . I'm not saying anything explicit about Scotland other than that I'm a Scottish writer because I live there and I was born there, and my books will relate to other books that are Scottish, but it's not my job [to create a Scottish movement to help sales.]⁴⁹

Kennedy thus ascribes low importance to the nationality of her characters and dissociates herself from attempts to incorporate a political meaning into her works. She refuses to be a part of Scotland but chooses to look at it from the perspective of the outsider she describes herself to be, to capture it objectively in its essence.

Eleanor Bell stated that despite Kennedy's attempts to detach her works from any manifestation of Scottish nationhood, it is still "ethically and politically focused."⁵⁰ Kennedy seems to write about the nation in a dispassionate manner that allows her to offer a true, objective picture of Scotland and its people. Nevertheless, by pointing out some aspects and putting them in the spotlight, she attacks the stereotypes. "Scotland, when it is there, is not a known quantity. Instead it is a place to be discovered, charted and mapped out. As much as Kennedy's characters reside in Scotland, and Glasgow in particular, they also benefit from travelling to other places."⁵¹ The aspects can be the characters in her works, who are marginalized people on the periphery of society, or some characteristics of the whole nation, as it is in "The Role of Notable Silences in

⁴⁹ S. Merritt, 'What's It Like Being a Scottish Writer? I Don't Know. I've Never Been Anything Else.', *The Observer* (23 May 1999): 13, qtd. in Mitchell, *A. L. Kennedy*, 14.

⁵⁰ Eluned Summers-Bremner, "'Fiction with a Thread of Scottishness in Its Truth': The Paradox of the National in A. L. Kennedy", in *Contemporary British Women Writers*, ed. Emma Parker (D.S. Brewer, 2004), 124.

⁵¹ McGuire and Tredell, *Contemporary Scottish Literature*, 164.

Scottish History.” In this short story, she stresses the Scottish tendency to narrate the national history in such a manipulated manner it becomes more of a tale rather than facts.

In spite of what literary critics say, Kennedy seems to never accept being reduced to a Scottish writer. As she states in “Not Changing the World,” she writes “fiction with a thread of Scottishness”⁵² in hopes to “communicate a truth beyond poisonous nationalism.”⁵³

1.3.3 Gender in Kennedy’s Works

Kennedy’s stance on being classified is projected to gender as well as the nation. Despite the general tendency of literary critics to describe her as a Scottish woman writer, she is unsurprisingly against such a label. Similar to how it was in the case of nation, it is also important to distinguish between a woman writer and a feminist writer, the former being a female author and the latter being an author who writes literature focused on the women’s cause. While the latter can be represented by both men and women who write literature based on the feminist ideology, the former can be exclusively represented by one gender, women, whose writing is not necessarily under the influence of feminism and its implications, and therefore can contain a wide variety of genres, subject matters, and possible implied messages.

Kennedy distances herself from being defined as both woman and a feminist writer, since she prefers to focus on her works rather than herself. Although she does not deny her sex, nor does she try to do so, she reduced her first and middle name, Alison Louise, to initials to sign her works and thus made her name gender-neutral. This can be seen as a step to prevent being seen as a woman writer to some extent and provide a space for herself where she would be able “to just write, to just be”⁵⁴ like male writers.

There are many ways to approach feminist criticism caused by various differences in establishing their target, with some critics attempting to “canonise female

⁵² Kennedy, “Not Changing the World”, 102, qtd. in Summers-Bremner, ““Fiction with a Thread of Scottishness in Its Truth’: The Paradox of the National in A. L. Kennedy”, 128.

⁵³ Kennedy, “Not Changing the World”, 101, qtd. in McGuire and Tredell, *Contemporary Scottish Literature*, 163.

⁵⁴ C. March, ‘Interview with A. L. Kennedy’: 107, qtd. in Mitchell, *A.L. Kennedy*, 21.

authors.”⁵⁵ This approach would include Kennedy as a feminist author. Her fiction is “preoccupied with (mostly) heterosexual relationships, scenes of domesticity and the relationship between sex and power, making frequent allusions to the sexual and violent abuse of women or girls by men.”⁵⁶ While we can argue that she is a feminist author based on these points of her work, she has argued against being automatically defined as a feminist for the sole reason of her sex and continues to be in opposition to such labelling “[b]ecause feminism is a theory. It’s a variety of theories. And I’m writing about people that I’m trying to make real.”⁵⁷ Kennedy disagrees with her work being read as feminist considering she arguably does not write exclusively about women characters and in fact, male characters are familiar in her fiction, for example, in her short stories “Spared”⁵⁸ or “Edinburgh.”⁵⁹ Moreover, she arguably wishes to be secluded from being defined according to her sex, considering her choice to write her work under a gender-neutral name reduced to initials.

Kennedy’s approach thus agrees more with including women writers under the common term writer despite the continued urge of many literary critics to separate them. This shows an ongoing need to consider the difference of historical access to writing for women as discussed in chapter 1.2. Therefore, defining her in terms of literary criticism remains a difficult task.

⁵⁵ Mitchell, *A.L. Kennedy*, 22.

⁵⁶ Mitchell, *A.L. Kennedy*, 23.

⁵⁷ C. March, ‘Interview with A. L. Kennedy’: 107, qtd. in Mitchell, *A.L. Kennedy*, 21.

⁵⁸ A. L Kennedy, ‘Spared’, in *Indelible Acts* (London: Vintage, 2003), 1–23.

⁵⁹ A. L Kennedy, ‘Edinburgh’, in *What Becomes* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010), 33–52.

2 Silence in Kennedy's Short Stories

Kennedy claims there is no implicit meaning or hidden statement in her works, by which she belittles it and makes it seem like an unimportant piece of text which is only what it is and nothing more. However, when reading her short stories, it is difficult to resist the urge to look for more. There almost seems to be an appealing challenge written in the story to do so. To a reader who wants to understand, it can feel even wrong not to read between the lines, simply because if the unspoken was left unidentified and consequently uninterpreted in some way, the reader could hardly understand the whole story.

From the start of the story, there is a blurry dark shadow of an unidentified problem veiling the at first sight calm, everyday situation. This foreshadowed unspoken shadow usually guides the readers into not believing the circumstances the protagonist is in are simply familiar and ordinary. The turmoil is leaking from the sheets of paper, making it impossible not to look for something more than simply everyday life.

The reoccurring motif of silence in Kennedy's short stories is not dissimilar to the iceberg theory used in Hemingway's works. Paradoxically, the part of the story that is expected to be the most explained and focused on is left untold. Kennedy lets her readers connect what she implies, hints and suggests but never openly states and thus manages to tell a much deeper story within the few pages, where she suffices with saying very little. It is upon the reader to discover the unspoken second layer of the narrative between the lines. Behind seemingly calm, banal everyday scenes, there lies chaos and suffering, pain is sneaking into the unconsciousness of Kennedy's characters, who, perhaps still in denial, are expecting it to come sooner or later and are thus their own tormentors, before others can become ones. This shocking revelation that the readers eventually find makes the explicit everyday become so bitterly horrifying.

The contrasting duality of her stories' everyday background is not the only Gothic element of silence in Kennedy's texts. She uses silence as a narrative tool and uses it to explore the psyche and the deepest, unconscious thoughts of her characters, but at the same time leaves room for interpretation of the reader, who, according to their own experience and fears, can adapt their interpretation, which can make the untold horror even more shocking. By presenting only the calm and silent part of the characters' story, Kennedy never explicitly states the turmoil's true nature. However, despite that, it is hinted throughout the story that something is not alright, and the

characters are suffering. This silence, therefore, also works as a tool for the writer. It is a notional compass which directs the reader to discover an important fact about the story, which has been left aside untold despite being the whole story's very basis. Once discovered, the unexplained part of the characters' life changes the narrative significantly.

The reason for the silence may reflect the silenced nation. Along with other Scottish Renaissance writers, Kennedy writes about people marginalized either socially or emotionally, very often people who are bullied, manipulated or traumatized, who struggle to communicate their feelings to their surroundings. "If we read Kennedy's work as a whole, we find there is a far greater emphasis on human vulnerability, miscommunication and aggression within relationships than on happy, rationalized solutions, . . ." ⁶⁰ She gives voice to the people who cannot speak their needs in her stories, whether they are physically unable to speak, their voice is (yet) not strong enough or there is no one listening to them, because even these people deserve to be represented. Kennedy admitted her characters are unable to express their wishes in words:

I mean, most of my people are in situations outside of their control. I'm always drawn to the border between what you want and what you want to say and what you need to say and what's actually possible – the interior life and the exterior life . . . So if I've got any kind of agenda at all it's this: the people who come to me tend to be people who can't say what they want to say, so I say that they can't say what they want to say. ⁶¹

When it comes to the lack of words, Summers-Bremner says: "Kennedy's characters frequently suffer from incommunicable feelings that have an intimate relation to language while not being expressible within it." ⁶² According to her, language is a means of expression connected to what is going on inside of us, our feelings. For example, the protagonist in Kennedy's "Spared" is tormented by his relationship with another woman to the point where he cannot sleep and develops a psychosomatic skin condition. In this short story and many others, Kennedy does not believe language is

⁶⁰ Summers-Bremner, "'Fiction with a Thread of Scottishness in Its Truth': The Paradox of the National in A. L. Kennedy", 124.

⁶¹ C. March, 'Interview with A. L. Kennedy': 117, qtd. in Summers-Bremner, "'Fiction with a Thread of Scottishness in Its Truth': The Paradox of the National in A. L. Kennedy", 123.

⁶² Summers-Bremner, "'Fiction with a Thread of Scottishness in Its Truth': The Paradox of the National in A. L. Kennedy", 124.

satisfactory considering her characters' disrupted internal lives. Mitchell offers yet another way to look at Kennedy's use of silence. According to him, it is a technique used to explain characters that could otherwise be impossible to write about, adding that "it can be used as a way of dealing with trauma."⁶³

The discourse is filled with free indirect thoughts or direct thoughts in places where the silence is present and hinted towards. Even though seemingly calm and ordinary at first sight, Kennedy's short stories become gradually more shockingly horrifying as she, little by little, hints more and more of the internal unrest of her characters. The stories' power lies here since the sinister silence veiling the actual cause of the protagonist's situation and events that led to it often says more than any words can describe. If searched for the nature of the brief hints and suggestions within the texts, her stories then take shape of Gothic ones. This is achieved by two phenomena characteristic for Kennedy's work: fragmentation, usually of the torn protagonists and their perception of the world, and defamiliarization of the situations that affected them and their current state.

Regarding the nature of the silence, there seem to be several kinds based on the characters' social position, their age, traumas or events that caused it. Evaluating what these silence types share and how they differ, the stories are divided into six categories and analysed to see how they fit in the given category and whether it could be presented under a different category.

2.1 Silence in Dysfunctional Families

Among the kinds of silence in Kennedy's short stories, a reoccurring one is the silence in dysfunctional families. We know that Kennedy's parents divorced when she was entering her teenage years which greatly affected her. However, it seems improbable that the stories are in some way a direct reflection of her personal experience. She discovers the rotten basis of a family, which usually takes shape of one tormenting member of it, through the child's narrative in at least two of her stories, one of which will be later further analysed. The child is forced to endure one of their parent's violence or sit and witness another person being attacked by them verbally or physically. Apart from domestic violence, themes of sexual abuse and infidelity are also

⁶³ Mitchell, *A.L. Kennedy*, 51.

often hinted at. All kinds of abuse and violence cause the slow decay of both family relationships as well as the protagonists' inner state. In this story type, silence traps helpless individuals who can only endure it. They are either waiting for their disastrous, traumatic experience to break them finally or to become strong enough to deal with it in such a way to reach relieving liberation from it. Two short stories will be analysed in here — one exemplifying the experience of a child dealing with not being strong enough to stand up to a violent father, the other representing stories of a crumbling marriage.

2.1.1 “Bad Son”

Little Ronald becomes physically sick from the thought of his mother being left alone with his violent father. He is overwhelmed with guilt for he cannot yet fully protect her from him, only through staying there with her, which seems to lessen the father's attacks. By staying with Jim, he practically caused her mom to be attacked.

Ronald's age and physical incapability to stand up to his abusive father caused his silence. He knows the torture of not being heard: “[he could have] bitten off his tongue – which would be awful, that would mean you couldn't speak.”⁶⁴ He is in constant search for power, which can only come when he changes into Mad Ronnie. His made-up rough, misbehaved identity is naturally capable of swearing or destroying Jim's school supplies. Jim is a contrastive character to Ronald on many levels, from swearing and spitting to being only afraid of his strict mom while Ronald's mother is the exact opposite. He also works as a certain template for Mad Ronnie, a stronger and fearless version of Ronald, who is uncertain and not confident enough.

He wants to become someone he essentially cannot become yet. He imagines being in the army, a powerful source of protection. Mad Ronnie is the first step to reach his goal, and he works hard to change and leave old, weak Ronald behind. When being buried in snow, he demands Jim would go away without him: “He did want to stay. ‘Leave me.’ If this was his, it would take him away, what was left of how he'd been, and he could disappear.”⁶⁵ Once fully buried, he feels invisible, which is his weakness at home, while he stands behind a locked door and is helpless. Despite the feeling, he

⁶⁴ A. L. Kennedy, ‘Bad Son’, in *Indelible Acts* (London: Vintage, 2003), 66.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 69.

pushes his fear away and reminds himself that this is his chance to grow and become someone better and stronger. He hopes that being at the limit of his comfort zone has the potentiality to somehow make his change definite: “Bits of him were burning, somehow, and this might fix the change in him, truly make him another person.”⁶⁶ The process of change, which necessarily involves going through pain or other physical and mental unpleasantness, is virtually successful and he is pleased to imagine he is someone new: “He was out of breath, but boiling with success, his joints easy, his arms and legs belonging to Mad Ronnie now – someone who was used to passing tests and having victories.”⁶⁷

Adrenaline helps him push out his distress of his head and be “[f]ull of a beautiful calmness.”⁶⁸ The uncomfortable unspoken is suggested right at the beginning of the story where he seeks comfort in the silent mind: “the less he could hear in his head, the more he liked it. Soon he’d find just the right speed where he’d stop having any words inside him, or any people, or bits of things he’d seen.”⁶⁹ Ronald’s way of character strengthening is supported by what he learned about the yogis. The concept of their particular coping mechanism taught him that if one lets things matter, they will hurt, which is what is happening to his mother.⁷⁰ The yogis are another role model who reminds him that that he can be numb to outside impulses. Being buried alive is not enough adrenaline for him to stop his thoughts: “Inside, he was still noisy, having to think. He wasn’t a yogi, Ronald realised, he wasn’t anything yet.”⁷¹ At first glimpse, his being buried in snow may be comprehended as an attempted suicide of a boy who wants to die a nice way, to simply fall asleep, rather than opposing the danger that is waiting for him at home. For his age, he is concerned with very mature topics such as how merciful are certain ways of dying: “If you died of cold it was nice, he’d read that.”⁷²

Ronnie’s character is introduced when he slides a dangerous slope on a sledge and hits a pine. When he flights up from the sledge after hitting the tree, the personified centrifugal force is presented as the power of God who symbolically left his side:

⁶⁶ Ibid. 70.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 72.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 66.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 65.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 87.

⁷¹ Ibid. 71.

⁷² Ibid. 70.

“When it let him go, he knew he would drop.”⁷³ This statement is the first alarm that signals that he is alone in his misery. He can only rely on himself to become the powerful person he needs to defeat the family’s brute.

There is no doubt what is going on behind the closed doors of Ronald’s home. It is only the magnitude of this living nightmare that one can contemplate. Kennedy offers a hidden hint at domestic violence through the hill he slid: “the slope didn’t look possible, it was far too steep and had rocks – bare, black rocks, dodging out from the snow.”⁷⁴ A resemblance to characteristic elements of abuse is apparent, i.e., dangerous attacks emerging from the innocent white cover of being sorry or kind on the surface.

In case of Ronald’s father, these explosions of anger are triggered by any little sparkle of what Ronnie or his mother could do wrong. The narrator uncovers that when Ronald realizes he had the best day because he “hadn’t make one mistake.”⁷⁵ When Jim offers Mad Ronnie a school book to throw out of a window and destroy it, ambiguity can be read as a simple narration of Ronald’s perception of Jim’s suggestion. Still, under a closer examination, it reveals how simple it is to make his father angry: “Ronald could tell he was asking for a nod, or an *aye*, or just a shrug, perhaps, and that would be enough to make him start.”⁷⁶ It is disclosed that Ronald and his mom are living in a constant fear that they could have missed something and if things were not in perfect order, the unspoken wakes. This goes as far as only being allowed to say yes: “‘Aye.’ Ronald always said *yes* at home, but Jim wouldn’t know that. ‘Aye. Mad as fuck’, which didn’t sound as shy as it could have.”⁷⁷ When his father picks him up after a dreadful night spent praying for his mother’s safety, Ronald gives himself courage by chanting the song of Mad Ronnie in his head. He finally makes the first step to become what he needs, a bad son, when he responds with an *aye* to the father’s query. At the same time, the reader can sense the threat in his father’s words when he has to repeat his question while Ronnie is silently chanting: “I said, did you have a good time.”⁷⁸ This is no longer a question, rather a warning before his anger takes over.

That very little is enough for him to get angry is also proven when Ronald considers how cleaned and tidy the Dickson’s household is, which is not typical for

⁷³ Ibid. 66.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 67–68.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 72.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 75. Italics in the original.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 68.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 87.

little boys. Not only is he not ignorant to cleanliness, but he also knows what would follow, had there not been tidy at home: “The place was a terrible mess: his mother would never let things be that way at home, she would know better.”⁷⁹ A horrifying insight into the unsaid is given when Ronald curls on a bed when left alone before dinner: “Curling helped you to be comfortable and quiet: his mother had explained that to him. It was something you only did at home, though, not with other people.”⁸⁰ Not having to be curled anywhere but at home, with other people suggests an image of a victim curled on the floor, protecting the vital organs and face while being hit or kicked. It also connects with a note about Ronald being good at secrets, uttered sooner in the story, explaining that Ronald is silent about the horrors at home. However, it feels like people sense that something is wrong with Ronnie when he is having dinner with Jim’s family, and “apart from Jim, every one of them looked as if they’d seen something in him that was unhappy, or maybe frightening.”⁸¹

Ronald’s need of strength has an apparent reason: “he couldn’t break the door when his father locked it – Ronald couldn’t hit him, not enough.”⁸² He hates the father as much as he fears him. The first image of the father’s character is offered when Ronald looks at the pine that stopped him from getting some rest from thinking: “it looked enormous, as if you couldn’t hit it and live.”⁸³ Ronald is helpless concerning his father. Until he acquires more power, he can only imagine hitting him or throwing objects at him, because until he becomes Mad Ronnie, he could not “hurt anyone he hated.”⁸⁴ He wishes the roles would switch to be the strong one while his father’s fate would depend on Ronald’s will. This is explained when he is aiming at the lake to throw Jim’s book there and imagines his father’s statue forming where he wants to throw it. This is a daily bread for him: “At home, he would practice for hours in the garden, concentrating, imagining he was aiming at a face.”⁸⁵

Ronald is a child whose only wish is to be able to protect his mother. In contrast to her, Ronald now understands that his father cannot be trusted, and the biggest fear is to be incapable of protecting her. For example, if he lost his arms: “Ronald started to picture how he’d lose them both at once, maybe fighting off a dog, or something like

⁷⁹ Ibid. 74.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 74.

⁸¹ Ibid. 79.

⁸² Ibid. 81.

⁸³ Ibid. 66.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 82.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 76.

that, maybe if he tried to stop somebody being hurt.”⁸⁶ When he chooses to stay at Jim’s overnight, his mind immediately fills with unbearable guilt of leaving her alone with his father to the point where he cannot sleep. As the time progresses, he loses the grip over his mind and is no longer able to escape his thoughts: “A proper yogi wouldn’t have that problem and neither would Mad Ronnie: he’d been happy with all this. Ronald though, couldn’t prevent the narrow slip of thought that he ought to be at home, that choosing to stay here had been a mistake.”⁸⁷ Despite not being physically strong enough to stop the abuse, he sometimes manages to stop it by screaming at the locked door as much as he can, which he certainly cannot do from Jim’s house. Ronnie wishes to be punished for being so selfish, but at the same time knows that all he wanted was a few hours of peace:

*I wanted to be away – not for a long time – just for a day – a quiet day.
It wasn’t my fault.
She’s there now, on her own.*⁸⁸

Eventually, it is not Mad Ronnie or adrenaline which allows him to adopt the swear word and execute it naturally. It is the terror and his father’s influence that is rooted deep in him:

*Please make her safe.
Fuck.*

It was part of his head now, his word, the way it was his father’s.⁸⁹

Although Ronald is traumatized by what he has been witnessing to the point where everyday things like more televisions playing at once reminded him of fights, because violence is daily bread for him, he does not surrender to his distress. His way to deal with it is to become as strong as possible to escape it and, if possible, save his mother, too. Although he is only a boy, he exhibits more vigorous emotional maturity than expected or seen in many other Kennedy’s protagonists. His affliction is based on the fact that no matter how hard he tries, he depends on time, which he cannot speed up and is thus forced to only prepare for the strength to come.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 74.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 79.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 80–81. Italics in the original.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 81. Emphasis and italics in the original.

2.1.2 “Wasps”

“Wasps”⁹⁰ is narrated through the point of view of a woman, wife and mother of two sons in the time frame of one morning. The idyllic weekend morning with the wife making breakfast for her family turns into a bitter scene of the husband’s departure. The official reason for his leaving presented to the sons is apparently a business trip, however the wife is well aware of the real reason, which readers gradually reveal to be the husband’s infidelity through many hints.

The opening line sounds almost innocent at first sight, yet it has some ominous foreshadowing to it: “Their da going away again, that’s all it was.”⁹¹ The morning is stormy, a characteristic Scottish windy weather which foreshadows the emotions of the protagonist and the state of her marriage in which her husband, Roy, repeatedly leaves his family to be with other women under the pretence of business trips, against which the sons are noisy.⁹² The storm is not only a pathetic fallacy but also becomes the embodiment of the punishing God later on.

The protagonist’s morning begins with a fantasy nightmare with elements of magic where she is drowning in “some kind of terrible amusement park,”⁹³ which seems to be a reflection of her sinking marriage. Her dream also offers a first sign of her wanting to leave her husband, when she is trying to find a safe space for her children: “There must surely be someone I could inform, a procedure to follow for complaints. What I need is a higher authority—one I would ask to set right.”⁹⁴ She wakes up with “a definite shame.”⁹⁵ The emphasis is on the word definite, which exhibits her awareness of the nature of her shame. She knows she is being cheated on, which she is ashamed of and which makes her trust in him almost non-existent. She does not even believe him that he is genuinely asleep but rather only pretends to avoid conversation with her. His affairs are no longer shocking her, and she expresses she is disappointed but no longer surprised: “Predictable, was Ray.”⁹⁶

⁹⁰ A. L. Kennedy, ‘Wasps’, in *What Becomes* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010), 23–32.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 23.

⁹² *Ibid.* 24

⁹³ *Ibid.* 24

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 24

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 24

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 25.

There are wasps on their windowsill every day, although it is unclear where they are coming from. This morning, she finds five dead wasps and thinks about the possibility of the house luring them and subsequently destroying them. Here, the wasps are an analogy to the people living in the house who are being destroyed. They are, however, mainly a metaphor for the mistresses, who are continually adding to her shame and anticipation of drowning every time Roy leaves. The unceasing regular appearance on their bedroom windowsill symbolizes continuous unfaithfulness, although the source of them is unclear. When they discuss the wasps the night before he goes away, they mean their conversation to be innocent small talk. However, it quickly spins into a bitter reminder of the reason he will leave the next day: “And this the point where it had happened again— *still they get in at me*— a safe conversation becoming unwieldy, changing its face. She’d tried not to consider if he thought this when he met the women, when he first saw in them whatever he needed, wanted and began the process.”⁹⁷

It is the wasps who, together with Roy, caused the ruined marriage. From a broader perspective, they even caused the silence that covered her, although Roy falsely attempts to blame his sons. His wife is well aware of the fact: “None of that letting the kids burrow in between their parents for the night — could ruin your marriage, nonsense like that.”⁹⁸ The children cannot ruin the marriage because the wasps already did. When she picks the dead wasps and lets the wind take them away, it is a freeing act for her since she is symbolically letting go of the traces of the women her husband has been with, even though she expects new ones to come back. The act can also be perceived as foreshadowing her becoming free of Ray once she leaves him.

The husband’s behaviour is affecting not only his wife but his children, too. Throughout, there are signs of his bad relationship with his sons, who are hurt by him leaving their mother. His connection to his children seems to be of poor quality, and he does not seem to care much about them. He even appears to fulfill a father’s role solely for manipulative reasons while treating them with astonishing toxicity. Despite knowing his behaviour hurts his sons, he shamelessly blames them for it. In the process of this emotional terrorizing of his younger child, he justifies his hurting actions by saying they are responsible for it. Blaming them for being too expensive, he

⁹⁷ Ibid. 29. Italics in the original.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 25.

simultaneously puts himself in the position of an indispensable member of the family as he is the only wage earner. By this, he not only makes himself seem a caring father and life provider but also chains them to him because without him they would be poor nothing. He scares the little boy to the point where he dares not speak:

“Would you want to be a homeless boy with nothing?”

Jimbo with no answer to this.

“Would you want to be cold and hungry?”

And she wanted to feel this kind of bullying might simply be what males did with each other.⁹⁹

The fact that this monologue is happening while he is putting the child to sleep only adds to the shocking terror of the scene, considering how contrasting it is to the expected calm time where fairy tales are told. It is revealed that he has already broken the older son by similar techniques, shaping both of them into emotionless beings by teaching them that love comes with pain. That he has little feelings towards his children is then proved when the wife stands up for Jimbo:

“I said don’t tell them that—don’t make it seem like their fault that you go away.”

“Well, it’s true.”

“Then particularly don’t say it to them.”¹⁰⁰

The sons are not allowed to the parents’ bedroom. The size of their bed explains this; all four of them could not fit. On this account, the protagonist notes that not even three people could fit in it. This remark is an ambiguous sentence that further develops that their bed is small for their children to sleep with them. It also hints at the existence of a third party by attributing the limited space to their marriage, where there is only enough space for two people and no more.

It is understood that she has given up trying to look attractive to him, because he considers her insufficient and unappealing after she gave birth to his children, the reason he blames the children for his affairs: “there she would be in unironed clothes,

⁹⁹ Ibid. 28.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 28

nothing to show what was left of her shape—as scruffy as her children, an inadequate
bloodline no doubt apparent in every fault the three of them displayed.”¹⁰¹

Although she contemplates separating from him and its impact on the children,
she is still with him. One of the most apparent reasons is his self-imposed financial
dominance. He manipulates her into staying. Despite wishing to talk about his affairs
and disrespect, she cannot mention them; “they have agreed this would be manipulative
and inexcusable.”¹⁰² The evident one-sided agreement proves she is being gaslighted so
that he has a simple way to do what he pleases without losing his stable certainty in the
shape of her and the sons. Roy feels so sure about his manipulation that he shockingly
tells his wife about the women. Besides this, there is an ongoing battle of a loyal wife
and a hurt woman who’s collecting strength to release herself from his grip:

“I hate him.”

“No, you don’t.”¹⁰³

Although one son is complaining about the other to her here, it also can be read as her
inner dialogue concerning Roy. The irony is her way of dealing with her pain and a
trace of her having given up. Her thoughts and resigned notions are bitter: “He never
did like hanging around,”¹⁰⁴ or “[h]e’d be gone before lunch and who knew what he’d
be eating while he was away.”¹⁰⁵

She has many things on her mind she would like to tell him but cannot because
of being gaslighted into silence. The pressure increasing with the forthcoming departure
eventually explodes in a burst of direct thoughts:

“This doesn’t work. You cannot keep telling me about the women,
because this doesn’t work. You can’t say that I’m happy with your
money and the house and that it’s easier for me this way and I get to
stay with the children and everything is familiar and stable and fine and
you’ll always come home and you’ll never stay and I am here doing
many, many things for which I do not respect myself. And you want
impossible things and I can’t do them.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 25.

¹⁰² Ibid. 31.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 26.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 30.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 25.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 31.

The silence remains. However, her mind is boiling with noise as she watches Roy leave. She is reconciled with the fact that one day, perhaps very soon, she will watch him leave forever with the children by her side and wish for the storm he stepped in to punish him for what he is doing to them.

2.1 Unprocessed Traumas

In some of Kennedy's stories, the protagonists' silence takes shape of their past. It is embedded in their memory to chase them in their lives even after their traumatic experience is long gone. The trauma has created a bubble of emptiness in the characters seeking ways to separate and dispose of it. The silence in these stories is a demon that follows them like a shadow, an inseparable and saddest part of them because they have not formed neurological pathways that work to cope with the traumatic event.

This is exemplified in "Translations,"¹⁰⁷ where the male protagonist is unable to come to terms with being sexually abused when he was younger, so he develops a habit of thinking about his past as a story with elements of fantasy, such as seeing the underworld. The more traumatic given parts of his past are, the more vision-like they are presented. The darkest point, the abuse, is dealt with by believing that the One Handed Man gives him magic, seeing it as something good and necessary. Because of this remarkably significant distortion of the truth, it can be difficult to fully comprehend his real past, and many interpretations are thus possible. For example, although the story is set mainly in a jungle, it can be interpreted as a story of a boy who ran away as a young man after his mother's death and was sheltered by a drug dealer who was taking advantage of him in exchange for providing him a place to stay.

In other type of stories, the characters endeavour to erase their trauma from their lives by various means, as in the case of "Saturday Teatime,"¹⁰⁸ which will be now analysed.

¹⁰⁷ A. L Kennedy, 'Translations', in *Night Geometry and the Garscadden Trains* (London: Phoenix, 1993), 9–23.

¹⁰⁸ A. L Kennedy, 'Saturday Teatime', in *What Becomes* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010), 53–69.

2.2.1 “Saturday Teatime”

“Saturday Teatime” is set in one room for less than an hour. However, the story’s core is a train of thoughts of an adult woman, whose name is not known, in a relaxation tank. She is trying to fall into merciful oblivion, but her childhood recollections constantly haunt her.

The protagonist expects her trauma to come to light while she will be floating despite going there to become happy: “I did foresee the absence of distraction will leave me alone with me, which isn’t always wise, but I’ve done what seemed necessary, sensible.”¹⁰⁹ She, nonetheless, comes prepared and armed with a technique to keep it under control: “Before I turned up I did need to consider my weaknesses and strengths, how best they’d be accommodated.”¹¹⁰

The protagonist herself admits the reason for her coming to a flotation tank. She forbids herself from escaping the tank because she wants to avoid the embarrassment of leaving too early and having to explain it is “because of the monsters you brought in with you, as if you’re a kid.”¹¹¹ She aims to erase all the horrible memories of her trauma and anything that could lead to remembering it, hoping that it will eventually cut the veins to it. She did not come there to come to peace with her mind: “I remember watching the boy’s face and thinking that I ought to forget more, clean things out.”¹¹² Although she came there to become happy, she did so with expectations, which is bound to disappoint her. The realization that the flotation room has a slight visual resemblance to a tank, but rather to a flooded basement, also breaks her hopeful expectation of acquiring any beneficial mental state improvement. Kennedy lets the character down immediately at the beginning of the story and foreshadows that the expected relief from memories will not come.

The beginning suggests that she was traumatized as a child. When she steps into the tank, a behavioural deviation is introduced when she inspects the dark space and makes sure nothing bad is lurking for her from the ceiling. It is later understood that the source of her scarring was usually coming from upstairs while she was watching television. While it may seem improbable for an adult woman to be afraid of monsters

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 56.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 55.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 57.

¹¹² Ibid. 59.

in the dark, this fear is a direct link to the roots of her mental bruising, which has been planted during childhood. It is further developed that it was caused by hearing noises of an attacked body trying to be silent and not reveal its suffering. She makes regular checks on her surrounding before she allows herself to relax and pays attention to whether or not there is any danger in the dark: “But a warm, wet *safe* cupboard—I’ve made myself entirely sure of that . . . , no overtones of drowning, suggestions of creatures that rise from unlikely depths, hints of noise underneath the silence, eager.”¹¹³ Since her demon hides in her memory, she strives to keep it under control. When she consciously manages to change what is on her mind, the first danger of losing the grip of her thoughts is successfully stopped:

And no way to stop the words.
No, there is, though.
There is.
I am in charge.
That’s right.¹¹⁴

She can be often caught trying to persuade, negotiate and even deceive her own mind throughout the whole stay in the tank. Although she may realize that strictly controlling her mind is not how relaxation is to be achieved, she continues doing so. She perceives relaxing as an unwelcome side effect of the relaxation tank. An example of how she controls her mind is when she avoids herself to think about what she is by wondering what she is not, since it could inevitably lead to facing her trauma. Not only is it a part of her, perpetuated in her mind, but the people who nested it there are her own parents, her flesh and blood. She observes where her thoughts bring her and decides whether or not it is a safe thought: “Oh, and now I’m remembering that kid at the party last week. Why not? I can let that happen.”¹¹⁵ This particular thought, however, unforeseeably brings back her childhood recollections through the boy’s hamster, which she held and let under her shirt exactly like she did with the one she had as a child: “I’d known it before, years ago.”¹¹⁶ She remembers the dilemma she had about who of the two, whether she or the hamster, was more afraid. However, they both were not ignorant of the feeling, exploiting that she was a child living in fear. The safe recollections are

¹¹³ Ibid. 57. Italics in the original.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 58.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 58.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 59.

becoming dangerous as she realizes where it would lead her. The hamster is not only a bridge to her childhood because it reminds her of her own pet; its physical dispositions are a more significant trigger for her for its resemblance to her little self or her mother: “that whole body reckless with life, the wild and tiny heart, everything about it too fragile.”¹¹⁷ Thinking about the party brings her to a stormy reconciliation concerning the scope of things under her control. She realizes that she can only control memories that are solely hers, unlike those including other people. The problem with this realization goes back to her childhood once again because of her knowledge of not being able to help when she was little.

Her observations of the family she was with at the party reflect her ability to move on or establish any emotional connection. She has created a parable of her young self to the boy with the hamster, which grants her a subjective perspective on his parents’ relationship, about which she is clueless in reality. While prophesying their future, she also displays and unveils the impact of her parents’ relationship on her as well as a significant part of her own history which shaped her into what she is today: “They are every excuse they could ever need to abscond and yet they’ll stay and, having ruined themselves and each other, they will grind on and on and their son will be worn down and hollowed at seventeen—a self-harmer, criminal, crackhead.”¹¹⁸

After witnessing the possible dangers of matrimony, she loses any belief in a beneficial stable relationship. Therefore, she rejects being tied to anyone as a means of prevention from finding herself in her mother’s situation and thus ending the endless cycle of becoming a victim. Her fear of commitment is suggested by her knowing by heart the awkward dialogue stuttered by both individuals interrupting each other while explaining that her accompaniment is not a serious relationship. She suffers from anxiety caused by not wanting to become closer with the other and then being disappointed when she registers no attempts at it from the company. However, she is comfortable with her status because being solitary is the equivalent of being free and in control of her actions.

Not only has her traumatic experience affected her life, but it also continues to sneak into her consciousness to torture her. The silence lets the mind free and she finds it more and more difficult to be in charge of her thoughts. It is her theory about laughter

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 59.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 60.

that carries too many connotations to her past to bear. Despite her efforts to fight it, she eventually gives in:

And then there's the other theory—the one about laughter.
No. Leave that one be. But I do have a theory about laughter.
Which isn't what I want to think of here
And, then again, I can't avoid it now.
So.
Laughter. The unmistakable sign of happiness.¹¹⁹

Laughter turns out to have been the protagonist's way of dealing with the horrifying moments she had to suffer through when her father was attacking her mother. By sitting in short proximity to television and forcibly laughing at Doctor Who, she tries to push the reality away to escape it and cover the noises from the other girl she is watching the show with. By returning and laughing again after she tries to stop it, she hopes to belittle the discomfort. It is not silence that was chasing her while she was little; it was the noises she tried to shout down. Silence only becomes frightening to her when she is a grown-up for creating the space the terror needs to sneak in. She cannot separate from the emotions she felt as a child during these horrifying moments.

Regarding the source of her turmoil, there are some apparent similarities to Ronald in "Bad Son." They both have a role model who can do what both of them virtually lack the capacity for. In case of the woman, the one she looks up to is The Doctor, who "shouts at important people who don't expect it and he makes them listen and be sensible."¹²⁰ Shouting at her father would not be of any help, so laughter is her only way to ventilate her frustration. Unfortunately, no matter how loud laughter is, it is only a reflection of her silenced self, an acknowledgement of her helplessness:

I cannot stand this any more. But I do have to. This is clear. It is also clear that I want to be able to shout at them, to explain, "There is nothing that fucking frightens me more than you, there never fucking was and never fucking will be. It's you I shouldn't have to fucking watch. And I don't want to be either of you and I know I will be both."¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 64.

¹²⁰ Ibid. 66.

¹²¹ Ibid. 67–68.

The protagonist was brought up to be polite and perfectly good, perhaps because her father and Ronald's father are of identical nature. This may be why she first excuses herself before running upstairs to try and stop him, only to be blocked by a locked door. She understands that she could not do much to help, even if she could get in for the same reasons as Ronald. In contrast to him, however, she feels glad she cannot go through the door: "This makes me a bad daughter I am lying with the whole of myself, pretending I've come to save her, stop him, when inside I know that I can't because I'm too frightened."¹²² Being a lousy child means different things to each of them. To him, it is the only way to end the suffering while to the her, it reveals her weakness and fear. Besides their differences, she has an opposite relationship with her mother than in Ronnie's case. She cannot stand her in her current state, being regularly attacked and allowing it to happen again, although she is petrified of the chance that her mother is dying behind the locked doors. The significant difference between the two characters is that, although the situation and cause of their troubles are very much identical, Ronald is stuck in the existing problem. However, this woman has gotten out of what had been hurting her and is continually stalked by her traumatizing experience, even in her adult life.

In order to free herself from her role of her demon's sufferer, she must conclusively silence her memory of the trauma she was initially trying to laugh over. Although she found herself bored at the party, she was at least not left alone with her mind, like she is in the tank. To this character, the silence surrounding her is an enemy that releases the demon she is trying to fight off in the course of the whole story. At the same time, she is ironically trying to quieten her mind to become free herself.

2.3 Elephant-in-the-Room Silence

In some stories, Kennedy's distrust in the power of words is more apparent than in others. These stories are usually concerned with the characters' past which affects the relationships even in present time. By placing the characters into one place, Kennedy creates an uncomfortable tension between them. It is caused by bringing the usually painful memories to present and not being able to address them for reasons which vary from personal incapability to communicate to being stuck in an event where it would be

¹²² Kennedy, 'Saturday Teatime', 66.

socially inappropriate. Although the awkwardness of the moment keeps them quiet, they find it hard not to leave the person who they share the past with, but on the contrary, they are attracted to the other inexplicably. Thus, the characters find themselves trapped in their revived mistakes and ended relationships, being forced to either deal with the elephant in the room or escape. Sarah and David choose the former in “How To Find Your Way In Woods,”¹²³ which will be closely analysed later, while the latter is the only option for the protagonist of “Not Anything To Do With Love.”¹²⁴ Although the protagonist and their ex-partner cannot stand each other’s presence in their close proximity, they are drawn to one another. They attend a funeral of someone they barely knew only because they know the other will use this opportunity to see them, too. Unable to actually speak to or see the other, they only exchange tortured expressions which are collectively understood as mourning for the late man.

2.3.1 “How to Find Your Way in Woods”

Sarah and David are trying to overcome their inability to communicate their feelings while determining whether they can overcome their pain from their previous relationship and come back together ten years later. At first, they are shy to talk about their past and are drowning in embarrassing silence and unclear utterances. Their behaviour is not confident, and it seems to be crucial for them to take baby steps not to scare the other or themselves. To speak openly is too much of a challenge for them, although it is precisely what they need. Hence, their only options are subtle flirting, exchanging meaningful looks instead of words and beating around the bush to test if the other has the same on their mind. They are both hurt and need to address their pain before they can move any further. They are individually questioning whether it is possible to make the relationship work again, considering they might be a different person than they used to be:

‘I might not be the way you remember. It’s been a while...’
‘Yes, I know. But you haven’t changed. Have you?’¹²⁵

¹²³ A. L Kennedy, ‘How to Find Your Way in Woods’, in *Indelible Acts* (London: Vintage, 2003), 193–212.

¹²⁴ A. L Kennedy, ‘Not Anything To Do With Love’, in *Indelible Acts* (London: Vintage, 2003), 53–61.

¹²⁵ Kennedy, ‘How to Find Your Way in Woods’, 197.

The discussed change has little to do with aging. Instead, it is an inquiry aimed at her capability to hurt him again by moving on, getting married, and moving back to America so soon after their split, which devastated him.

The major reason they could not be together is revealed to be their inconsistency in being capable of communicating openly. While she fancies herself an open book, she could never be entirely sure of his intentions, wishes or emotions:

*And I've got no idea what you **would** like. I didn't ever know that. And I tried to find out, you can't say I didn't try . . . I never understand what he means, he just isn't clear. And, whatever else he can say about me, I am that, I was always that – I do make myself clear. What I wanted and didn't, I said everything, it wasn't my fault that he didn't believe me, that he thought I'd intended something else. He put words in my mouth, in my mind.*¹²⁶

What caused the breakup in the first place is revealed to be the different views on the role of communication in a relationship. Sarah uncovers that she was not listened to, and what she looked for in a relationship was peace and simplicity, which he apparently could not offer. His inability to admit his feelings openly, unsurprisingly, has been a significant theme of their relationship.

The difference in the level of openness between Sarah and David is symbolized by how they show in the kitchen in the morning. While Sarah is perfectly comfortable with staying in her pyjamas until later in the day, he makes sure he appears fully clothed and prepared for the day during his stay. It can be understood either as an attempt to look good for her or nonverbally addressing the status of their relationship, which is now rather formal. However, neither of them seems comfortable with it. The Christmas card he sends her proves he has not learned to communicate even after ten years: “‘If you want to.’ David’s way of saying what he wanted and felt she should want, too.”¹²⁷ Once he learns that she moved back home, he falls into painful silence and leaves her to fill it with meaningless speech about postal services to avoid addressing their past, which eventually leads her to inviting him over: “And silence is only a silence, but she did remember that his seemed hurt.”¹²⁸

The whole situation is the best explained in the very first sentence. Despite wanting to try to give their relationship another chance, they lack the courage to openly

¹²⁶ Ibid. 200–201. Emphasis and italics in the original. .

¹²⁷ Ibid. 202.

¹²⁸ Ibid. 203.

do the first step, like when Sarah gives David a hint that she wanted him to check on her during the storm instead of waiting until she comes to him herself.

The weather becomes the subject of their small talk in the morning. The storm seems to have cleared out the air from an uncertain tension between them: “For the first time, she imagined that he might be glad he’d come.”¹²⁹ After the storm, which primarily serves an excuse for them to try to get closer, he comes unshaved. He signals that he is opening up and tries to make the first step in approaching her by indirectly indicating that he wished for her to come to his room: “I’m good at making people not scared.”¹³⁰ He closes up again after determining that she, in fact, has not changed and can still hurt him: “It’s OK. I heard. You’re no different . . . I should shave, get tidied up.”¹³¹

When she asks David whether he saw “anything worth the trip”¹³² after he returns from the walk, she hides her direct enquiry concerning his view on them having any chance behind a polite question about the nature. She finally decides to take the first step by making a romantic gesture, but only adds to his overall confusion of place and relationship by not clearly stating her wish as she is trying to get closer to him by doing the same thing he does: “But that doesn’t help . . . That makes me not know where I am.”¹³³ Although he understands her when she asks whether things are bad at the moment, he does not respond directly again.

Having to decipher his implications hidden in indoctrinations and silence constantly is what she cannot live with. She needs him to learn to communicate. If the relationship is meant to work now, he needs express his feelings. A chance to help him learn it is offered while discussing the details of his visit:

‘. . . the summer would be the best time. Would that be a good time?’
She did want him to be content, did want to help him be that way.
‘That would be a good time.’
‘That would be a good time?’
‘Yes. A good time. Yes.’¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Ibid. 195.

¹³⁰ Ibid. 196.

¹³¹ Ibid. 197.

¹³² Ibid. 205.

¹³³ Ibid. 205.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 203.

The ambiguous echoing of one sentence is not a meaningless repetition of words but rather his reassuring that the visit will be enjoyable for both parts.

The storm raised expectations to finally be able to talk in both of them in the morning. While he hoped to take the role of comforting support for her, she hoped that they will be able to deal with their situation in the morning. She also made him a good breakfast in case they finally managed to do so. After the failure caused by admitting she is still the same, she disposes of the evidence of her hope, although it is still perfectly edible: “after all, it hadn’t outlived its usefulness, but their argument would mean it wouldn’t taste right.”¹³⁵ When he wakes from his nap, she cooks it again as a sign of a trying to start again what they previously didn’t manage to do effectively and sets things right by proving she is worthy of his love. She proves she has changed, which finally causes him to break his silence and openly express how hurt he was by her getting married while letting him think she will come back. It is only now that they can officially settle that “[i]t’s definite So we should stick together.”¹³⁶ Once they finally admit the presence of the elephant in the room, they can admit their mistakes and apologize for them. It is clear now that they will spend the upcoming storm together.

2.4 Silence as a Wall between People

Like it was in the case of Sarah and David’s original relationship, the inability to communicate one’s feelings and wishes is most times the reason the characters grow distant. If the characters are kept in silence for too long, an invisible wall builds between them and the problem becomes insolvable. The solitude behind this wall causes emotional deprivation in the characters leading them to find another way to ease their soul.

For example, the insomniac protagonist of “Spared” is deprived of emotional connection to his indifferent wife to the point of finding himself a mistress in the hope she will provide what the wife couldn’t. Being trapped in a complicated web of lies to manage both relationships in secret from the other woman, he develops a psychosomatic rash from the stress of his secrets being revealed. Eventually, continuing this secret life enlarges the distance between him and his wife only to find out it was

¹³⁵ Ibid. 198.

¹³⁶ Ibid. 208.

never the mistress' intention to get emotionally attached either. This could have been revealed earlier had he been open to her. Ending up with two emotionally frigid women in his life, all he can do is wait for the end of the world to come to save him from his misery.

In case of "What Becomes,"¹³⁷ the silence is caused by a tragic event which uncovers the irreconcilable differences in the characters' way of dealing with it.

2.4.1 "What Becomes"

In "What Becomes," two very different ways of dealing with the daughter's death cause the married couple to separate. While Frank attempts to avoid the pain of losing his daughter and honour her, he keeps hurting his wife by acting normal. She needs her time to mourn and considers not grieving to be inappropriate and rude.

The story is sprinkled with hints suggesting that Frank lost his daughter. He is aware of what children could enjoy, or what could be a danger for them: "He didn't choose a seat immediately, wandering a little, liking the solitude, a whole cinema of his own—the kind of thing a child might imagine, might enjoy."¹³⁸ This, along with other similar notions, suggests that his mind remains preoccupied with the idea of how life would be if his daughter were still alive. The first obvious hint at the child's death comes in the shape of a bitter remark: "Tiny splashes hazed a power point in the skirting board, dirtying its little plastic cover—white, the kind of thing you fit to stop a child from putting its fingers where they shouldn't be. No reason for the cover, of course, their household didn't need it—protection from a hazard they couldn't conjure, an impossibility."¹³⁹

It is possible to find proofs that he is currently childless: "His own transfers were largely negative."¹⁴⁰ The transfer of his genes, a way to leave something behind him by which he could be remembered or prove his existence, has become unsuccessful with his child's death. When he cooks in the kitchen, he notes that he is there alone and thus reveals that a part of his habitual cooking was his daughter watching him make the meal for his family. When watching his blood drop from the wound, he does not

¹³⁷ A. L. Kennedy, 'What Becomes', in *What Becomes* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010), 1–20.

¹³⁸ Ibid. 4.

¹³⁹ Ibid. 7.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 6.

consider stopping the bleeding. Instead, he contemplates how much blood would have to gather on the floor to equal death. This comparison is subtly implied: “[the drops were] beginning to look like an almost significant loss.”¹⁴¹ His wound does not trigger him. He rather inspects it and continues watching his blood leave his body, reminding him of a much more important part of his life he lost. He is not used to tread his injuries because it used to be the daughter’s habit: “*The girl who isn’t there to mind when I hurt myself.*”¹⁴²

When watching the silent movie, he projects his relationship with his daughter to the two muted characters on the screen. The broken audio symbolizes such a relationship that no longer applies to him. The imagined dialogue of the two actors brings the reader closer to what Frank wishes he could tell his own daughter and regrets he did not, falling into feeling guilty for not being able to save her: “Silently, he was looking at a small girl and silently, he moved his lips and failed to talk. He seemed to be trying to offer her advice, something important, life-saving, perhaps even that.”¹⁴³ The quilt is further supported by his wife blaming him for the death. He was the one who was supposed to look after their daughter and keep her safe when the accident happened: “she blamed him for terrible things, for one terrible thing, which had been an accident, an oversight, a carelessness that lasted the space of a breath and meant he lost as much as her, just precisely as much.”¹⁴⁴

She feels he should be the one to blame because their daughter probably died during an operation. Frank uses an ironic tone when thinking about his work suggesting that he accepted the blame: “*Expert.* That’s what he was.”¹⁴⁵ His only wish is for her not to increase the necessary mourning for his sake.

Although he is crushed by his daughter passing away, he focuses on the positives, which is explored early in the story by comparing him to his travelling bag: “carry it the way he’d enjoy being carried, being lifted over every obstacle.”¹⁴⁶ His light in the dark is the fact that “[a]t least one person was still there.”¹⁴⁷ This approach is, however, aggressively rejected by his wife, whose coping mechanism is diametrically different. The passion witch which she declines his view on the situation leads Frank to

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 7.

¹⁴² Ibid. 17. Italics in the original.

¹⁴³ Ibid. 11.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 16.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 13. Italics in the original.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 6.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 4.

self-doubt and shame, even though he knows he cannot change how he deals with death: “Silly to think that way, but he did.”¹⁴⁸ The pair cannot fundamentally agree on the appropriate mourning as choosing their partner’s option only hurts them more. Aware that his wife needs her space to mourn, by submitting to her sadness, Frank would only drown in the deficit of positive things to see in the world and vice-versa. He needs the support of a close person, preferably the wife, considering she has suffered the loss with him but finds himself helplessly neglected by her individuality, which she deems the only way to honour the daughter. Although he misses the child as much as his wife does, he understands the sour reality of being unable to help the dead: “He was still human and still there.”¹⁴⁹ In his view, the love for his daughter is proved by continuing in habits like cooking soup on Friday: “It would be for her. It would be what he quietly thought of as an offering—*here I am and this is from me and a proof of me and a sign of reliable love.*”¹⁵⁰ That he is also deeply hurt by his child’s death is explained in the cinema: “As soon as the child disappeared, he was lost.”¹⁵¹ However, Frank decided to keep a positive mindset for the relationship he still has, i.e. the marriage. His wife, on the contrary, has fully submitted to her despair and finds him at fault for not doing the same: ““What the fuck are you doing.””¹⁵² The lack of a question mark symbolizes that this is not meant as a question, rather a statement of a person who is tired of being with him. It is unclear whether she is talking about the play with blood, afraid that he might have attempted to kill himself, or Frank acting like nothing has happened and cooking the dinner they shared, by which he causes her too much pain. The contrasting coping mechanisms are further developed by the unusual reactions to the other one’s impulses. He reacts with smiles and calm speech while she responds by attacking him with words and a potted plant. By ignoring her frustration and anger, he only adds to it.

This incompatibility of their current needs regarding the loss results in a silenced relationship. They both understand they cannot expect the other to help them deal with their pain. This results in a helpless silenced household, again nicely symbolized by the silent film: ““There is a problem with the film. The film is playing,

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 4.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 5.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 6. Italics in the original.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 11.

¹⁵² Ibid. 8.

but there's no sound."¹⁵³ The option of separating becomes more stressed as the only solution and is pointed towards in Frank's flashbacks, while the reader is already well informed that Frank left her. His wife looks at him the way she used to when making sure he was still the man she loved, whether his job has somehow changed him, which brings him to a realization that he will have to accept this pain has changed him:

"It'll be fine." . . .

"It's not all right. It won't be fine."¹⁵⁴

Frank's silence has the base in not fulfilling his wish to tell his wife all he wants to because even being near her enrages her, and they cannot speak. He knows the ways people deal with death of a close one from work all too well, so he can understand her frustration. He desires to ask her to consider him, too. But primarily, he wishes his wife would understand that he misses their child just as much as she does. His attempt at expressing his feelings and wanting the daughter back only ends up with another attack on his person. Frank flees from home to escape the unbearable emotional suffocation at home, where he only could hurt his wife, to find himself in an empty, muted cinema and all alone again.

2.5 Silence as a State of Mind

Some of Kennedy's characters find themselves in an inescapable turmoil. Even though they wish to speak, they cannot think of the right words to express their thoughts and experiences. Their inability to say anything is not caused by an external influence but rather their own thoughts. In the case of this type of story, silence results from not understanding the situation accurately, nor being fully reconciled with it, or the lack of vocabulary to voice it.

This silence differs from the one Kennedy's characters suffer from when they could not process their trauma, although it has many similar features. While in the latter, the characters attempt to silence their minds, in this case, the characters find themselves paralyzed by the silence filling their heads. It is usually not an option for

¹⁵³ Ibid. 12.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 9.

them to discuss it because of the complex nature of the trauma, but mainly because they lack the words to describe it.

The male protagonist in “Translations” has gone through such state and still cannot process what has happened to him. However, he is on the right course to handle his trauma and speak up, for which he prepares by telling his history to a sleeping woman next to him, who cannot judge him. “The Role of notable Silences in Scottish History” presents the mindset of the whole nation when the narrator makes up false stories to make the history more interesting than the actual history of a silenced Scotland.

2.5.1 “The moving house”

On her way to school, Grace does her best to avoid thoughts concerning her trauma by remembering the good things from her life, which all include her life with her Great Aunt. This remarkable episode of her life is interrupted when she returns to her mother’s after the aunt’s death, where her mother’s partner rapes her.

There is a striking resemblance in the way Grace and the protagonist of “Saturday Teatime” deal with their roaring minds. Contrary to the adult woman, Grace cannot use the right words to describe what has happened to her because her turmoil has been caused relatively freshly. In addition to that, she is trapped in her situation. The chaos is even further empowered by her mother’s boyfriend’s strong deterrence to speak up. Grace is imprisoned in her mind which is buzzing with safe but also painful thoughts. She feels it has traumatized her and knows she does not want to think of it. Her confused mind processes it is a nightmare even though she realizes one cannot have a dream without sleeping. The shock caused this way of thinking about it: “But the dream is sharp in her mind, as if it had happened again in sleep and she had seen what she always did see The familiar dream.”¹⁵⁵ The usage of words like again or familiar hint that the abuse has a repetitive character already. Kennedy never uses the word to describe exactly what Gracie has been through, perfectly showing the character’s inability to name it herself. Even though the act is never labelled explicitly, it is made clear what happened to her by stating that she could not wash away his touch

¹⁵⁵ A. L. Kennedy, ‘The Moving House’, in *Night Geometry and the Garscadden Trains* (London: Phoenix, 1993), 35.

from her skin, which is further supported by the remembered monologue of Charlie after he is done:

Grace was glad it happened in their room not her own. Not her bed
'Please, Grace, don't. You're a good girl. Don't tell her. If you tell her, she'll be angry. She'll be sad. Nobody has to know, Grace, please.'
She could hear that he was crying. As if he had taken everything now; even the sounds she would make.
'Please, Grace. Grace. Fuckun say it. You won't tell. You don't even think about it. Stupid cunt. Nobody's gonny believe you. Who are you? You're fuckun nothun. See if they do believe you; they'll say it was your fault. You. Pretty, Gracie, fuckun you. Just you fuckun sleep on that. You do not tell. Think I couldn't make it worse? You do not fuckun tell You'll get to like it, Gracie, all of us do.'¹⁵⁶

Chased by every detail, Grace is gradually confronted with terrifying visions, such as Charlie's grin, which she briefly analyses before likening it to a smile in an attempt to give the vision a touch of normality. Among other items occupying her mind is the bedroom which she fears going past lest she notified him of her presence. The room, but mainly its dweller, are the embodiment of evil. If it is not her mind reminding her of her pain, it is her physical pain that rushes in to do so: "Grace sits on the toilet and the pain seems suddenly fresh. She sees the blood, is sick, cold after."¹⁵⁷ The physical suffering only makes her fear other people could suspect something, start asking questions or even find out: "You mustn't be late. They'll ask why, if you're late."¹⁵⁸ Not only is she scared of admitting what has happened to her, a great deal of which is caused by Charlie's lectures and threats afterwards, but to do so, she would first have to be able to think about it and use words to name what has happened. The term rape, however, is too heavy and carries too many painful connotations for her to bear or admit.

Although she refuses to think about naming her trouble, she realizes what she lost and how it has changed her. When she puts on her uniform, she feels wrong in it, as if it was no longer for her because she is not a child anymore since Charlie stole her childhood from her: "It has stayed the same, a children's thing, it should be that it no

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 40–41.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 38.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 51.

longer fits.”¹⁵⁹ The act of pulling her out of her childhood is symbolically depicted when she is not allowed to talk to a friend of Ivy at her funeral. The old man is the last existing piece of the best part of her life, the last evidence of the life she liked living.

Grace forcibly remembers any other memories: “Think of something else to keep it away.”¹⁶⁰ She tries to keep positive thoughts: “More. You want more of that,”¹⁶¹ trying to stay “[b]ack at the start, the beginning. Remember that.”¹⁶² She desperately looks for more positive memories as the story progresses: “Something good. Something good.”¹⁶³ Despite her efforts, thoughts are swirling around in her head, making her mind a chaos in which she gets lost. She only tries to avoid the vivid recollections of being abused at all costs. It gets more and more difficult for her as the thoughts she rejected continue repeating themselves when they are not expected and steal into her consciousness. This is observable in the repetition of certain words or sentences: “Letting herself in was lonely. No, don’t remember that . . . Letting herself in was lonely.”¹⁶⁴ To Grace, coming to an empty home is obviously a trigger she wants to keep away from thinking about. The reason is unclear, and two possible explanations are rooting from two different contexts in which this particular sentence appears.

First, she forbids herself to continue the train of thoughts, which suggests that what she was going to think about next included the source of her suffering. To come to an empty house is horrifying to her because when she returns from school and her mother is not yet there, she is left alone with her rapist, her mother’s partner, who thus has no obstructions to use her. Grace is left alone in her misery, with no one to protect her.

The second possible interpretation is closely intertwined with the time when she was living with her Great Aunt Ivy. Although she may have felt lonely when she came from school and Ivy was at work, she could deal with such loneliness by keeping herself busy and turning on the television. What she wants to forget is the kind of loneliness she felt when she entered her Great Aunt’s room to find her dead, knowing that she lost someone she was truly happy with. Ivy’s death is the only reason she had to return to her mother’s, where the unthinkable is happening to her. Therefore, Ivy’s

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 51.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 35.

¹⁶¹ Ibid. 36.

¹⁶² Ibid. 37.

¹⁶³ Ibid. 39.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 37.

death created a connection between her best life with her lowest point in life yet, that she is currently living, which she knows she cannot escape yet: “If you had been older, if you could have left the school. With a Job, they would have let you stay away.”¹⁶⁵ There is no clarification about the protagonist’s age. Still, one can create a rough idea that she is a teenager who cannot work or live on her own, resulting in the Child Protection decision that she must return to her mother, and consequently failing to protect her. Grace has a plan to run away and avoid the next time Charlie promises her: “There are buses to take her anywhere It’s the bus that takes her home she wouldn’t catch.”¹⁶⁶

Grace is overwhelmed by two silencing elements at once, the one coming from the outside in the shape of Charlie’s threads and requests, the other being internal. Her own mind has shut down in order to protect her from coming to full terms with the reality of what happened to her, let alone remembering it.

2.6 Fear of Silence

The last type of silence discussed in this thesis is the one that the characters are avoiding. It is a unique portrayal and use of silence among Kennedy’s works, and there is particularly one story that represents this sort of silence. Although arguably many other stories contain the characters’ fear and efforts to avoid it, there are still some major differences between those stories and this kind of managing silence. First, many of these characters are not dealing with the physical silence surrounding and subsequently overwhelming them, but with the forces that keep them silent. This is the case of people who live in a family that has lost its purpose, people who have endured or are still surviving a traumatic experience, which they could not reconcile with yet, or people who are silenced by the situation. Although the protagonist of “Saturday Teatime” is reluctant to be left in the tank that can resemble this silence, her real fear lies in her traumatic memories, affecting her life decisions. Second, the type of silence that covers the theme of external silence is caused by two characters’ actions taken in the past, presently trapping them in awkward situations.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 38.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. 40.

This silence is interesting because it does not have the space to cause any damage because of the character's preventive measures. This story actually exploits the lack of silence to reveal the unspoken, which causes this story to deserve its own category.

2.6.1 "Sympathy"

A woman's fear of being left alone during the night and facing her loneliness after her mother's death causes her to spend the night with a man. "Sympathy"¹⁶⁷ is an interesting story with regards to silence. Dialogue makes the entire story, and it only comprises direct speech with no narrator's mediation of the plot whatsoever.

This dramatically emphasizes the protagonist's fear of silence. The readers do not know what exactly the characters are doing. The physical act is not important for the story; it is the dialogue that draws the attention. She is not trying to reach the point of silence, nor is she stuck in it, but she is afraid to stay in it too, lest she should remember her mother's recent death. She tries to escape silence by spending the night with a stranger in a hotel room: "I said—*is this wise?* Which is ... I just didn't want a silence—not right now. I think. Nervous."¹⁶⁸ She decided to do it knowing that this is only a one-night stand, even though they had done nothing like it before, liking the idea of being strangers and leaving in the morning, not knowing each other at all. They prove they are not a role-playing couple at the beginning of the story when discussing the man's preferences regarding women's bodies: "Are you likely to get fat between now and tomorrow morning?"¹⁶⁹ They agree that it is better if they remain strangers:

"Because, if we keep talking, we're going to end up—"
"Getting to know each other?"
"That wouldn't work."¹⁷⁰

Despite this being decided upon, they eventually learn many things about each other and get very close during the breaks when they had to stop because of her surge of

¹⁶⁷ A. L. Kennedy, 'Sympathy', in *What Becomes* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010), 147–70.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. 149. Italics in the original.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 151.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. 155.

emotions. These moments of sharing personal stories, which reveal why she fears being left alone to be her mother's death, usually come suddenly and therefore are foregrounded more. Ironically, it is the woman who starts asking about his life, even though she was the one who wanted to avoid getting to know each other, as seen by his surprised question before answering: "My mother? She taught me lots of things."¹⁷¹ She reveals that she is alone, which together with her questions concerning his relationship with his mother hint at the reason for her staying in the hotel, which she is not yet ready to share with him: "No. I'm not. Married. No husband. No kids. No one."¹⁷² As the night deepens, she opens more and more to him. As she is trying to express her emotions about their meeting, she is brought back to why she was in the hotel, i.e. being unable to sleep in her mother's house. Trying not to think about it only reminds her about how much she misses her mother, which brings her to tears again: "... It's not really that I'll miss..."¹⁷³ Her inability to finish a sentence informs him that there is something wrong, but they eventually return to talking about his life. Due to the fragmentation of the text, the readers find out that she told him what upsets her only after she did so:

"I didn't want to upset you. I didn't know."

"Well, how would you know? I'd taken off the sign from round my neck—*Mum's just died. In a mess.*"¹⁷⁴

Although he is trying to be kind and say what he thinks he should say, she rejects his attempts at being romantic and gentle. She eventually proves to need just that, and his cuddles turn out to be helpful during her reoccurring moments of crying. He is willing to offer her anything she needs: "Shit, I *am* complaining—you don't want it romantic, you don't want it horny... Could you be clear at *some* point and let me know how I'm meant to be here. For you."¹⁷⁵ They decide to find each other again in the morning because they enjoy the presence of each other. What they wanted to avoid has happened, as they could not help getting closer. She is lucky to find consolation in the

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 160.

¹⁷² Ibid. 161.

¹⁷³ Ibid. 164.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 165. Italics in the original.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 157. Italics in the original.

arms of the man who has no problem being sympathetic when it was not what he got to her room for.

The protagonist wants to forget her sadness by sleeping with the stranger; however, she is reluctant to get lost in the moment, which would require her being silent. She instead talks about unexpected things that are not appropriate for such a situation, like asking the man whether he would prefer to be a bed or a porridge. She talks through all his attempts to seduce her and changes topics suddenly only to keep talking. He responds with jokes and talks about other things, too, signifying that he is comfortable with talking because this is new to him, either: ““Jeez, they don’t give you many coat hangers, do they?””¹⁷⁶

She fears being left alone by him and then thinking about her mother to the point where even when he is only going to hang his coat, so she is nervous that he is going away. She will do anything to keep him with her, even if it includes sexual practices she has never done before and most likely would never do otherwise. She believes he could leave her if she refused something and is willing to submit even in spite of pain. For her fear of being on her own, she tried to spend the night with a strange man only to find out she needs someone close to her to be with her now that she has no one else left. As she comes to this realization at the end of the story, she shows some attempts to change the status of their relationship to something more permanent by inviting him to have breakfast with her in order not to be left alone again once the short time of the night passes. This is in conflict with their decision to leave in the morning and never see each other again. After all, she must sort her mother’s house and knows that his sympathy may come in handy later, which can be another cause for her sudden change of stance on their relationship: ““We’ve got time to, arrange things. Like ... if you did want to know my name and wanted to—””.¹⁷⁷

“Sympathy” reveals the human emotional fragility in the harsh environment of life and the fact that being left in silence and on our own can be not only relaxing as it was supposed to be in “Saturday Teatime.” It is also the most frightening image to someone who finds themselves in such a vulnerable situation as having to deal with their loved one’s belongings while being left alone, without having anyone to turn to for comfort.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 152.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 168.

Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to detect and categorize silence in A. L. Kennedy's short stories. The author and her work were firstly contextualized to better understand the political and social background of silence. Scotland has been silenced throughout history. The oppression leaked through into the contemporary literature, which only received the world's attention during the since 1980s when Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* started a movement referred to as the Scottish Renaissance.

The movement released the national literature from being trapped in English literary canon in correlation to the Scottish tendency to define in opposition to England. Authors from this era shifted their focus on marginalized people and their survival of the everyday. A younger generation builds on their experimental style and focuses on the oppressed and their demons. In contemporary literature, there has been a significant increase in the number of female authors who joined the previously male-dominated profession, which affected the Scottish literary environment either. This change meant a more significant literary focus on themes concerned with women's cause advocated for already by Virginia Woolf.

In spite of her displeasure, Kennedy is categorized as Scottish woman writer. She is a source of a certain silence, as she has created a construct of herself to present to the world by only sharing some aspects of her life, usually in a shocking way, and leaving the rest a secret. She refuses labels based on nation and gender, leaving a blank space to describe her, as she wants the focus to be on the texts rather than their author.

In the second part of the paper, the attention was paid to silence in Kennedy's short stories. The thesis has shown that silence is a reoccurring motif in her short stories, as Kennedy tends to showcase only a part of the situation. She only gradually hints the true and usually shocking nature of the characters' turmoil. Seven selected stories were categorized into six groups according to the type of silence they represented and consequently examined for possible intersections and differences.

In the chapter focused on silence occurring in stories about dysfunctional families, two stories represented two common types of dysfunction, i.e. domestic

violence and infidelity, and one representative story was chosen for each of the remaining categories.

Most intersections were found with “Saturday Teatime,” which shares the fear of silence with “Sympathy,” the theme of domestic violence from the perspective of the children with “Bad Son” and one of unprocessed trauma with “The moving house.” A mutual resemblance rose between categories of feared silence and the elephant-in-the-room one, where each representative story exhibited some features of the opposite category. In “Sympathy,” it is not addressed until the end of the story that that something is obviously wrong with the woman. Similarly, in “How to Find Your Way in Woods,” Sarah’s fear of awkward silence causes her to invite David over to America. David’s incapability to communicate has caused the pair to break up, building a wall between them which now must be broken down, connecting the story with another type of silence. Conversely, no resemblance was found between the analysed types of silence to the one caused by infidelity, represented by “Wasps.”

Despite the shared features among the categories, some differences argue for the existence of every category. Although both protagonists of “Sympathy” and “Saturday Teatime” fear silence, facing it can bring peace to the woman in relaxation tank but could only hurt the other. The distinctive feature which separated the woman in “Saturday Teatime” from Ronald in “Bad Son” was the timeline. While to Ronald, the abuse is a painful reality at the moment, the woman escaped it, but her memory of the incident torments her. Although both this woman and Grace in “The moving house” have not processed their traumatic experience, the woman can put her turmoil into words and has made precautions to deal with it again. The crucial distinction between “How to Find Your Way in Woods” and “What Becomes” is the possibility of resurrection of the relationship.

Because of the mutuality of the relationship between fear of silence and elephant-in-the-room silence, it could be possible for these two categories to merge into a broader one. As seen in “Wasps,” the topic of infidelity showed a lack of connections to other types of silence or resemblance to other analysed stories. Therefore, the category of silence in dysfunctional families could be divided into two smaller, more theme-focused, ones.

Infidelity is a reoccurring theme across Kennedy’s stories, particularly in *Indelible Acts*, where the theme is recycled in more stories. Therefore, it would be

interesting to look further into this area to see whether infidelity is approached similarly in every story or whether it could be also categorized. Regarding the phenomenon of silence and the takeaway of the paper, a compelling task would be to study whether the categories apply to Kennedy's novels or even works of other authors from the Scottish literary Renaissance.

The occurrence of silence in Kennedy's work is not unique in the context of the Scottish Renaissance. Still, it reflects the overall atmosphere of the literary environment of the Renaissance and of the whole nation, which adds to its importance.

Resumé

Bakalářská práce s názvem „Selected A. L. Kennedy’s Short Stories: Focus on Silence and the Unspoken” popisuje motiv ticha v povídkách A. L. Kennedyové a staví jej do politického a sociálního kontextu autorčiny tvorby. Dále reflektuje utlačování Skotska Anglií, především na jeho literární úrovni, a poukazuje na fakt, že tento jev je aktuální i v dnešní době.

První část bakalářské práce popisuje proces vyčlenění skotské literatury z britského literárního kánonu v osmdesátých letech a také zisk celosvětového uznání jako samostatného proudu. K jeho vyčlenění přispělo hnutí s názvem Skotská renaissance, jehož členkou je také A. L. Kennedyová.

Charakteristickým rysem těchto autorů je experimentální sloh a příběh zaměřující se na opomíjené jedince, jejichž hrdinství spočívá v každodenním boji se životem. Tato doba se pojí také s nárůstem autorek a díky tomu se i ve skotské literatuře častěji objevují témata zaměřená na ženy.

Kennedyová se také stala určitou metaforou pro ticho kvůli její snaze projektovat se do světa tak, jak chce ona sama. Pozornost čtenářů tak není upřena na ni jako na skotskou autorku, ale především na její díla.

Druhá část bakalářské práce se zaměřuje na motiv ticha v sedmi povídkách A. L. Kennedyové. V rámci komparace jednotlivých povídek bylo potvrzeno, že se jedná o opakující se motiv a Kennedyová jeho prostřednictvím často zobrazuje šokující tajemství, které je centrem příběhu. Povídky byly rozděleny do tematických skupin a následně analyzovány za účelem nalezení rozdílů a shod.

Cílem práce bylo popsat motiv ticha v povídkách A. L. Kennedyové a kategorizovat jej. Na základě věku postav, jejich společenského postavení, traumat a jejich příčin bylo zjištěno, že je zde několik možných kategorií pro tento opakující se motiv. Vybrané povídky pak byly roztříděny do šesti kategorií.

Následná analýza prokázala, že kategorii „strachu z ticha“ (Fear of Silence) a kategorii „ticha pramenícího z přehlíženého problému“ (Elephant-in-the-Room Silence) je možné spojit v jednu na základě shodných rysů. Kategorie „zaměřující se na disfunkční rodiny“ (Silence in Dysfunctional Families) by naopak mohla být rozdělena na dvě více tematicky zaměřené skupiny. U povídky „Wasps“ totiž nebyly nalezeny

žádné shody s jinými analyzovanými povídkami. Dá se proto argumentovat pro existenci samostatné kategorie pro povídky spojené s tématem nevěry.

Výskyt ticha v dílech Kennedyové není v kontextu skotské renesance unikátní. Přesto však jedinečně odráží celkovou atmosféru literárního prostředí tohoto hnutí a celého národa. V důsledku skotské renesance byl vytvořen specifický národní styl reflektující postoj Skotů vůči anglickému útlaku. Vliv Kennedyové se pravděpodobně projeví i v dalších generacích skotských autorů. Kategorie ticha jsou důkazem širokého záběru její tvorby, který je i dnes aktuální.

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Annotation

Author:	Soňa Vaničková
Department:	The Department of English and American Studies
Title of Thesis:	Selected A. L. Kennedy's Short Stories: Focus on Silence and the Unspoken
Thesis Supervisor:	Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D.
Počet stran:	65
Počet znaků:	128 588

Key Words:

Scottish Renaissance, Scottish literature, contemporary literature, A. L. Kennedy, short story, silence, categorization, comparison, literary analysis

Abstract:

This thesis deals with the motif of silence and the unsaid in A. L. Kennedy's selected short stories. The aim of the thesis is to describe and categorize the motif of silence. After politically and socially contextualizing the author and her work, seven selected stories are categorized according to their themes, and analysed. The silence found in the stories is then compared.

Anotace

Autor:	Soňa Vaničková
Katedra:	Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky
Název práce:	Selected A. L. Kennedy's Short Stories: Focus on Silence and the Unspoken
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D.
Počet stran:	65
Počet znaků:	128 588

Klíčová slova:

Skotská renesance, skotská literatura, současná literatura, A. L. Kennedy, povídka, ticho, kategorizace, komparace, literární analýza

Abstrakt:

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá motivem ticha ve vybraných povídkách skotské autorky A. L. Kennedyové. Cílem práce je popsat motiv ticha v povídkách A. L. Kennedyové a kategorizovat je. Po uvedení politického a sociálního kontextu autorky a její tvorby je sedm vybraných povídek rozděleno do tematických skupin a analyzováno za účelem nalezení rozdílů a shod. Nalezené ticho v povídkách je následně komparováno.