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James Kelman:
Class, Gender, and Identity in Contemporary Scottish Literature

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně a uvedl úplný seznam citované a použité literatury.

V Olomouci dne 11. května 2012 ……

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Introduction

James Kelman ranks among the most influential figures of contemporary Scottish literature which has recently experienced a tremendous boom. Combining uncompromising political radicalism with literary ingenuity, Kelman has become a controversial urban writer who challenges authority and readership in every possible respect. A Glasgow-based author who grew up in the city's slums, he is credited with introducing genuine working-class fiction powered by unorthodox approaches that question the traditional paradigm of the genre. His infamous Booker prize winning novel *How late it was, how late* (1994) has put him on the literary map as an adamant advocate of explicit working-class dialect and culture that are on one hand considered by many an outrageous violation of moral and artistic standards, whereas praised by others for its audacious authenticity. Kelman's prolific creative talent has proved him a resourceful writer who has produced a great number of short stories, essays, novels and plays that cover delicate topics ranging from sexuality to language and radical politics. Therefore, it will merit a good deal of thought to trace and explore Kelman's work and activism in order to account for the latest developments in Scottish literature and politics.

In fact, this paper draws largely on a former BA thesis by the same author who has now decided to revise and expand its form and content. Admittedly, there are reasonable grounds to do so. Unlike the previous version which covered Kelman's literary output until 2000, this study sets out to incorporate his most recent contributions and bridge the gap that prevented the author from providing a thorough analysis of Kelman's whole body of work. The original thesis' structure will be partly altered by reorganizing and breaking the chapters into smaller chunks whose arrangement will be easier to follow.

Besides updating and adding new information, a heavy emphasis will be laid on assessing the characteristic traits of Kelman's fiction from various previously absent perspectives to provide a detailed overview of his literary production. These criteria will cover the critical context as well as the formal features of Kelman's stories to date. In order to accomplish these goals, a combination of approaches to literary criticism will be utilized. Namely, these include particular aspects of materialism, structuralism, and formalism.

As far as the major recurring subjects and themes are concerned, this paper will largely deal with Kelman's autobiographical portrayal of modern capitalism and its pitfalls including the tricky nature of wage labour, distribution of wealth, and the inevitable divide between haves and have-nots. Leaving school at fifteen years of age, Kelman was forced to face the early hardships and take up various blue-collar jobs that initiated him prematurely into the world of economic

insecurity. Even though he took advantage of any job opportunity from picking potatoes in the Channel Islands to bus-conducting back in Scotland, he and his family repeatedly suffered from bleak periods of unemployment. Witnessing malevolence and human misery while slaving away in factories and building sites all over the United Kingdom, Kelman experienced everyday horrors of industrial labour that have tempered his rebellious spirit in return. Consequently, it is imperative to examine the issues of class antagonism and economic determinism that are omnipresent themes of Kelman's work.

Speaking of Kelman's unique presentation of working-class life, his particular treatment of characters stands out against the backdrop of traditional proletarian literature. Documenting life on the edge in post-industrial capitalism, Kelman introduces a brand new type of male protagonist who reflects the radical shift in the Scottish working class brought about by the new laissez-faire economy.

The ominous period of Thatcherism, which encouraged enthusiastic privatization of Britain's heavy industry in the 1980s, resulted in the exhaustion of the traditional reservoirs of workers' solidarity after many factories closed down in Scotland. Experiencing this turbulent era of economic ventures and political conservatism, Kelman's ambivalent characters show his sympathy with the underdog and the imminent tragedies that befall them. Therefore, a complex examination of Kelman's view of the working-class community and its agents' typology will provide an exciting insight into his uncanny ideas of modern workerism.

The scope of Kelman's unconventional approaches to working-class fiction also includes a peculiar depiction of relations between masculinity and femininity that challenge the traditional gender stereotypes concerning the unquestionable authority of the man. Kelman uproots the myth of a proletarian larger-than-life masculine hero who is usually seen as a responsible breadwinner and omnipotent decision maker. Instead, he frequently jumbles up the traditional notions of sex-determined division of labour and duties.

Such 'gender bender' aspects will consequently shed some light on Kelman's ability to compensate for the frustration that is characteristic of his main characters by a degree of comic relief. Furthermore, following Kelman's major male protagonists' interaction with women will demonstrate his commitment to giving female characters due credit and respect while doing away with the archetype of the self-righteous alpha male.

The critical assessment of Kelman's work will also address his attitude towards the concept of Scottish identity and nationalism in general. Merging post-colonial theory with specific implications of English hegemony, Kelman's stories are abundant with furious outcries over the inferior status of ordinary working-class people. Fortunately, his seemingly simplistic ruminations

about this proverbial cauldron of political and cultural anxieties do not lead to shallow conclusions. Far from taking an exclusively nationalistic stand, Kelman discredits the idea of a clearly designated national identity in a very particular way.

Utilizing the experience of his unsuccessful effort to leave Glasgow and settle in America after work in Scotland became scarce, Kelman addresses the disturbing nature of an artificial identity forged by bureaucracy to discriminate individuals on the basis of their nationality. His arguments concerning passportism and immigration agenda of modern states will comment on the limitations and disadvantages of the fanatic obsession with national identity.

In addition to Kelman's portrayal of modern class war, he denies the self-serving legitimacy of the State and its institutions to maintain and control society through various means of oppression. Pointing out the corruptive nature of power, Kelman frequently shows his characters suffering at the hands of tedious institutional bureaucracy and malevolence that entail total dehumanization. His stories that typically feature outsiders whose misery is multiplied by state violence offer a marvellous insight into modern totalitarianism.

Without a shadow of a doubt, Kelman's breathtaking criticism of agents of law enforcement is inextricably bound to his allegiance to anarchism with overtones of existentialist philosophy. Having read Kafka and Dostoyevsky extensively while following contemporary radical thinkers like Noam Chomsky at the same time, Kelman has come up with a diverse variety of stylistic and aesthetic means that mirror his controversial sentiments. Primarily it is the case of Kelman's (de)constructing the idea of plot as a matter of genuine representation of reality. Therefore, it will be essential to consider Kelman's opinions concerning genre fiction and his critical comments on the traditional structure of storytelling that are a ubiquitous underlying feature of his fiction and drama. Taking into consideration his philosophical and political views, an investigation of the reappearing structure of Kelman's narratives' setting and their (de)generation will help to identify his determination to explore the horrors of uneventful everyday routines.

Apart from examining the devises developing characters, their identity and plot in general, there are other equally challenging distinctive aspects of Kelman's work that make him remarkable, especially his linguistic idiosyncrasies. Born and raised in Glasgow, Kelman has been exposed to working-class dialect since his early age. Suffering from the dehumanizing effects of poverty and squalor whilst taking delight in the thick Glaswegian patois, Kelman has gradually managed to make the issue of language and its cultural implications the bottom line of his work. Influenced by the Glasgow Group of writers including Tom Leonard, who encouraged him to employ Glaswegian in his stories, Kelman has gradually become famous for his explicit use of Glasgow working-class dialect that abound with profanities. Immediately renounced by the

officially recognized literary authorities as a ludicrous act of transgression, Kelman's advocacy of gutter languages and excessive use of colloquialisms have made him a champion of the disposed, who is also thought to be a disgraceful enfant terrible of British literature.

Kelman's linguistic ventures are often accompanied by orthographic experiments that aim to achieve utmost authenticity rather than mere mimetic interpretation of reality. Blending demotic vernacular with frequent efforts to transcribe it graphically, Kelman's texts offer a spectacular opportunity to compare a local culture's endeavour to survive and be heard in the face of the imperious mainstream of English literary standards.

Moreover, Kelman's pursue of authenticity encompasses daring attempts to liberate his characters from the yoke of the omniscient narrator who stands for an artificial authority dominating the story. For that reason it will be interesting to see to what degree Kelman manages to introduce the class conflict on a textual level, and follow the key stages of this process.

Whilst the former version of this thesis focused on Kelman's literary output prior to 2000 for the sake of comparing it with the traditional paradigm of proletarian fiction, the current paper brings a suite of upgrades ranging from structure rearrangement to updating the sources. The aim of this thesis is to show the entire trajectory of Kelman's development and prove that there have been significant variations in his seemingly homogeneous work. Consequently, this paper will add a discussion of Kelman's novels and short stories that have come out since 2000, and address his three published plays in order to accomplish a complex overview.

I
Kelman and Capitalism

Capitalism and the economic divide between the affluent and dispossessed are two essential topics that reappear throughout the whole body of Kelman's work. Ranging from a realistic depiction of unemployment to the unequal division of labour, Kelman's endeavour to picture the life of the underprivileged makes his stories a bleak though insightful reading boosted with a specific sense of humour.

Kelman addresses the competitive nature of capitalism through downcast characters who struggle to get by in a hostile world that favours work efficiency and profit making. Contrasting the materialistic conditions of the rich and poor, Kelman interprets modern class anxieties and their deep psychological imprint on the individual's mind. Therefore, exploring various aspects of the inevitable consequences of a capitalist economy in Kelman's fiction such as destitution, poor work ethic, and industrial casualties will show his everlasting commitment to class-war politics and anarchism. Moreover, it will be interesting to see whether he modifies this pattern of economic determinism or sticks to it without any exception.

1. 'When skint I am a hulk': Unemployment and Poverty-stricken Freedom

Since the publication of his first collection of short stories *An Old Pub Near the Angel* (1973), economic insecurity has been a fundamental issue of Kelman's work. Having to cope with unemployment, a number of Kelman's protagonists surprisingly welcome the opportunity to leave their jobs and enjoy the tricky 'freedom' offered by this situation. Certainly, such a short-term relief is soon to be replaced by anxiety.

It is case of Kelman's early stories in *An Old Pub Near the Angel*, which depict individuals facing the dehumanizing effects of *laissez-faire* economy. In "The Cards," Jack Duncan, a local bus conductor, is fired for his inappropriate work ethic. He accepts the reality in cold blood:

> Well, that was that. It was good to be free again. Still December? Bad time of the year for the broo. Probably be barred for misconduct. Yes bad timekeeping Mr Duncan ah ha. The ultimate sin, matched only by raping the district superintendent's wife. . . . A wife and a child?[1]

Admittedly, paid work is here referred to as wage slavery and the only way to break out of such a vicious circle is to be fired. Unfortunately, these freedom-seekers like Duncan who resist the

[1] James Kelman, *An Old Pub Near the Angel* (1972; Edinburgh: Polygon, 2007) 2.

conventional model of a dutiful employee are denied any compassion. Moreover, those in charge of the company's human resources agenda seem uncompromising as Duncan's superior tells him off "I don't think you were suited for this type of job from the start you know."[2].

Conversely, the period of unemployment seemingly represents freedom without any imposed rules and routines devised by the authorities. Duncan believes that he "'could do with a couple of week's holiday anyway.'"[3]. Sad to say, such liberty is paid for by economic insecurity and ominous uncertainty as far as the breadwinner's responsibility is concerned. The merciless mechanism of wage labour leaves Duncan contemplating the bleak situation of his wife, who by all means "would be worried"[4] and a child apparently dependent on his regular income.

Nonetheless, Duncan accepts being laid off with a humorous remark about his superior's wife and enjoys his restored freedom, even though he admits that it was not "a bad job the busses. Hours were terrible right enough but you could knock up a decent wage if you put in the hours."[5].

Exploiting the ironic image of unemployment, "Abject Misery" features another outsider who happens to have difficulties coping with the capitalist logic that seems to side with economically productive agents of wage labour. At least that is the assumption of Charles, a young jobless misfit, who is thrilled by his "third month of poverty-stricken freedom."[6] Like Jack Duncan and many others of Kelman's characters he is also on the *broo* which is a Scots term for receiving unemployment compensation from the Labour Bureau.[7]

Charles knows the odds of not being able to make the ends meet and therefore assures himself that "one of these days he'd have to get a job" because he cannot believe how he has "managed to survive the past three days."[8] Eventually, he is forced to face the inevitable truth: "'This no money was becoming a problem. How was one supposed to eat?'"[9].

Consequently, Charles is haunted by the advantages of having a job and regular income. Everyone he runs into seems to disrespect the unemployed. When Charles tries to account for his troubles, the materialistic explanation is the first thing to cross his mind. In his opinion, wealth provides all joys and makes life unspeakably comfortable. If he had a job, he could perhaps "get a real good place with fitted carpets, refrigerators and TV sets. Easy to get a chick up then with a

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[2] Kelman, *An Old Pub* 2.
[3] Kelman, *An Old Pub* 8.
[4] Kelman, *An Old Pub* 3.
[5] Kelman, *An Old Pub* 3.
[6] Kelman, *An Old Pub* 19.
[7] see Stephen Bernstein, "James Kelman," *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* 10.3 (2000): 76.
[8] Kelman, *An Old Pub* 19.
[9] Kelman, *An Old Pub* 19.

bit of comfort around."[10]. Obviously, Charles agrees with the pragmatic idea that wealth provides happiness.

Kelman does not strive to draw a moral lesson or fight for a noble cause by means of sentimental condemnation of widely held consumerist truisms. On the contrary, he exemplifies Eagleton's materialistic conclusion that "people have all kinds of desires beyond wealth and power; it is just that wealth and power provide the material conditions essential for fulfilling most of them"[11]. In other words, Charles comes to find out that he needs money to buy the material conditions – carpets, refrigerators and TV sets – necessary to experience spiritual desires in the form of a relationship with a girl. For that reason, Charles' reasoning fits the Marxist *base/superstructure* theory which advocates the crucial influence of economic determination on human life.

Speaking of economic independence, Kelman's later works follow the suit and tackle the wealth-happiness dichotomy. Actually, it is not only the case of adults whom Kelman forces to wonder about the merit of being employed. "The wee boy that got killed" in *Greyhound for Breakfast* (1987) concentrates on Gary, a teenage boy who "shouldnt've been at school," because he was "past fifteen, the same age as his de when he started work and he was ready, he knew he was ready."[12] Sick and tired of school, Gary feels the family pressure that urges him to find a job and live up to his parents' expectations. Moreover, he is extremely sceptical about the effects of education which have to do with "them [male pupils] being bigger and having to stay on at school longer, to do with them no growing up or something because they dont do any work and just hang about and all that."[13] In Gary's opinion, schooling fails to produce mature men and encourages idlers. Consequently, he understands his entry into the world of work as an initiation into manhood and means to earn respect.

In a similar way, the eponymous hero of Kelman's latest novel *Kieron Smith, Boy* (2008) ruminates on the advantages of keeping his odd job. Distributing newspapers in the neighbourhood in his early teens, Kieron picks up where Gary left off because he is already an economically productive individual. Despite he still attends school and his wage substantially depends on tips, Kieron appreciates the job which "gave ye the money and ye did not need nothing off people. What could they say. Nothing. It was not their money it was yours. Ye worked for it, so there was nothing they could say, even yer maw and da."[14] Apparently, the

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[10] Kelman, *An Old Pub* 19–20.
[11] see Terry Eagleton, "Base and Superstructure Revisited." *New Literary History* 31.2 (2000): 232. JSTOR. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 12 Nov. 2010 <http://www.jstor.org>.
[12] James Kelman, *Greyhound for Breakfast* (1978; Edinburgh: Polygon, 2008) 151.
[13] Kelman, *Greyhound* 153.
[14] James Kelman, *Kieron Smith, Boy* (2008; London: Penguin, 2009) 398.

issues of economic independence and security are likely to be spotted throughout Kelman's whole body of work. Although they concern adult and teenage characters alike, Kieron's idea of self-sufficiency is somehow superficial compared to other protagonists because he is provided for by his parents whom he lives with.

Looking back to Kelman's earliest stories, Jimmy, a manual labourer in "Wednesday," wakes up a day before he receives his salary only to realize he is in financial difficulties. Unlike Kieron, Jimmy faces the reality soberly when he finds out that "today was Wednesday. Day before pay day. We had no money. No food. No cigarettes. Nothing at all."[15] His whole world shrinks to a few basic needs such as feeding himself and having a smoke. Jimmy's spirits do not seem to pick up after he cannot even boil water to make tea because of the unpaid electricity bill. By picturing Jimmy as a walking dead with no perspectives, Kelman shows the human tragedy of being penniless, a topic peculiar to a large part of his fiction. In fact, it all comes down to the matter of economic determinism again. Simply put, if there is no money, there is 'nothing at all.'

Concerning Kelman's interpretation of unemployment and its dehumanizing effects, his subsequent writings continue to deal with economically marginalized individuals who cannot cope with the capitalist imperative of ambition and productivity. Having experienced the everyday struggles portrayed in his stories, he gives a straightforward explanation why some of the readership cannot comprehend nor appreciate such unpopular topics:

> . . . this is one of the class things that people who are economically secure and stable don't understand – what not to be secure means. They don't understand what it is to be on the broo [dole] for instance; they don't understand these things except as temporary phenomena – they don't realize that it can be a permanent situation from which there is no get-out.[16]

In the light of Kelman's relentless railing against poor job opportunities and economic insecurity, the title story of his second collection *Not Not while the Giro* (1983) singles out a dispossessed loser who falls short of holding a steady job. Surviving day to day and waiting for the giro[17], the protagonist is left with oceans of time to contemplate his hopeless situation. His interior monologue resembles Charlie's materialistic reasoning in "Abject Misery." The narrator reflects on his miserable existence and wonders what could possibly make him happy and content. At length he arrives at a conclusion that "It's a meal I need, a few pints, a smoke, open air and outlook, the secure abode. (…) Satisfyingly gainful employment. Money. A decidable and complete system of life."[18]

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[15] Kelman, *An Old Pub* 42.
[16] qtd. in Bernstein 52.
[17] An amount of money that the government pays to people who are unemployed or sick.
[18] James Kelman, *Not Not while the Giro and Other Stories* (1983; Edinburgh: Polygon, 2007) 208.

Regretting that he has "So many needs and the nonexistent funds,"[19] the protagonist suffers from enormously poor conditions beyond imagination. The only positive prospect is his vision of the unemployment compensation that is due. Depressed economically and socially, he experiences a fit of verbal anger because "How can in the name of Christ one possibly consider suicide when one's giro arrives in two days' time."[20]

Exposing such anxieties, Kelman captures the essence of unemployment and its devastating impact on the individual. Appalled by the fact that he is starving and lacking any chances of future improvement, the protagonist-narrator considers committing suicide though he dismisses it immediately for the sake of the giro that is to arrive in two days. The question he is facing is how he is to survive until then. As a result, he is trapped in a vicious circle of desperate decision making. Endeavouring to highlight and account for such a bleak mood, Kelman argues that the readers will hardly understand it unless they become conscious of the fact that "your prospects won't improve next year, you can't borrow money on the strength of it because it's the strength of nothing."[21]

In the end though, the narrator discards the idea of achieving happiness through money. Instead, "When I have it I throw it away. Only relax when skint. When skint I am a hulk – husk."[22] Consequently the motif of the so called 'poverty-stricken freedom' emerges again. Hunter compares the appeal of this story to that in Herman Melville's tale of work and capital, "Bartleby the Scrivener", where the title character refuses to participate in a capitalist society. He argues that Kelman's character resembles Melville's Bartleby in the economic sense, and the subsequent challenge of the story is "to see beyond whatever repulsion, pity or amusement the narrator's admissions may provoke in us to the structure of values that creates that repulsion, pity or amusement at a man who fails to work"[23]. Addressing misery and economic insecurity, the surreal image of unemployment and its challenge reappears time and again to give the lowest of the low an opportunity to speak out.

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[19] Kelman, *the Giro* 208.
[20] Kelman, *the Giro* 208.
[21] qtd. in Bernstein 52.
[22] Kelman, *the Giro* 209.
[23] Adrian Hunter, "Kelman and the Short Story," *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman*, ed. Scott Hames (Edinburgh: EUP, 2010) 51.

2. 'these capitalist fuckers': The Breakdown of Welfare

Besides Kelman's chilling portrayal of unemployment and poverty, he also takes great pains to dispel the popular capitalist myth that hard work entails wealth and success. Focusing on common fallacies associated with the concept of wage, "No longer the warehouse man," introduces a frustrated father whose breadwinner's role is seriously threatened by his diminishing salary. The integrity based on his economic contributions has just fallen apart after he has realized that his low-quality job will not accommodate the family's tight budget. Taking his stand, he complains to his superior and tries to bargain for a better wage:

> A small wage. I told the foreman the wage was particularly small. . . . This is barely a living wage I told him. Wage. An odd word. . . . I am at a loss. At my age and considering my parental responsibilities, for example the wife and two weans, I should be paid more than twenty five pounds. I told the foreman this. It is a start he replied. Start fuck all I answered.[24]

Nevertheless, he decides to step down after the authorities refuse to yield. In contrast to the previous case, the reason of doing so is not motivated by any aspiration to experience 'poverty-stricken freedom' here. Indeed he is horrified by the idea of unemployment because he will no longer be able to provide for his family.

First he tries to raise an objection against the inappropriate amount of money he is paid because he believes he is not treated fairly. Such a naïve notion of fairness is often criticised by Kelman who unmasks the underlying contradictions of capitalism. Even though it teaches people a sophisticated system of work ethic, it defies itself at the same time. Kelman reveals the fact that employers do not offer jobs because of their good nature or altruistic attitude. Instead, they need workforce to achieve their own goals. Once the human resources are worn out, they are thrown away because they cannot be utilized any more.

The same principle applies to the concept of wage, that nature of which is questioned by the protagonist. He brings up the absurdity that accompanies its availability and distribution. In brief, the employer always tries to maximize profit while minimizing expenditures – that is the bottom line of capitalism. Kelman's point here is not to question the moral perspective but to state a fact. The protagonist learns he cannot expect any compassion, and his responsibility to ensure his family's living standard does not make a difference. There is hardly any scent of moralizing because Kelman believes that a lesson lived is a lesson learned. That is why he lets his characters tell their stories without any narrator's intervention.

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[24] Kelman, *the Giro* 151–2.

Apart from stressing the treacherous nature of wage, Kelman's characters frequently comment on the negative impact of capitalism in general. In particular, they berate the state and its agents for being corrupted and profiting at ordinary people's expense. Kelman's later novel *You Have to be Careful in the Land of the Free* (2004) presents Jeremiah, a member of the Scots diaspora in America, who is about to leave for Scotland after several years of working in the United States. Musing on his experience as an immigrant, he admits America "was good land," although "these capitalist fuckers and their money-grabbing politico sidekicks had turned it into a horror."[25] Furthermore, Jeremiah cannot help noticing how monarchs and governments "steal the people's wealth and make assets out of it, then they fucking sell it off to their sidekicks."[26] Evidently, Jerry is not partial to corporate agenda that is driven by pursue of wealth and power.

Kelman's concern for public places and environment which are being gradually privatized and sold to property developers is also reflected in his latest collection of short stories *If it is your life* (2010). In "A Sour Mystery," community-conscious Mike honestly believes that streets belong to the people who actually live there. However, following a clash with the authorities, he sobers up acknowledging "The banks owned the street. Oh well, that is capitalism. Now they were selling the adjoining street and no one batted an eyelid."[27] Watching in awe the rapid conquest of people's autonomy by the state and capitalism, Kelman's characters remain paralysed in a system of centralised decision making and corporate domination.

As far as Kelman's critical appraisals of corporate welfare are concerned, Jerry in *You have to be Careful* describes an exceptionally illustrative example of its breakdown. Working at an anonymous US airport, he observes with a growing concern the belligerent attitude of the authorities towards the homeless who are a common sight in the vicinity of the airport. He ponders the brainwashing agenda of the local media which depict the vagrants as "scum of the earth, no-good cheats who preyed on hardworking Uhmerkins," and discouraged foreign tourists and well-off persons from visiting the country because "Airport terminals were no longer safe havens for people with dough. Once upon a time elites could have exhibited their wealth freely. No now."[28] Consequently, the homeless who are no longer referred to as human beings demonstrate the gap between haves and have-nots perpetrated by capitalism. On the one hand, these underclass individuals remain there as a testimony of a deteriorating system that fails to accommodate people's needs. On the other, they become parasites who spoil the fancy image of a happy corporate society.

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[25] James Kelman, *You Have to be Careful in the Land of the Free* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2004) 2–3.
[26] Kelman, *You Have to be Careful* 15.
[27] James Kelman, *If it is your life* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2010) 71.
[28] Kelman, *You Have to be Careful* 247.

Moreover, the airport is haunted by an uncanny homeless person who navigates his/her grocery cart through the halls and arouses everyone's imagination. Even though the gender of this individual is never identified, "s/he"[29] turns into a grotesque spectre that keeps evading the airport security staff. Lehner contends that "the grocery-cart pusher becomes an indelible reminder of the radical instability and underlying horror of a patriarchally structured capitalist system."[30] Stimulating general paranoia among the authorities and mass hysteria in the VIP lounge reserved for financial elitists, the grocery-cart pusher underlies Kelman's commentary on the most pungent drawbacks and deficiencies of capitalism.

3. 'On the margins of the traditional working-class life': Past and Present

Despite Kelman's consistent treatment of topics that reflect the conditions of modern proletariat, it is impossible to pigeonhole him as an old-fashioned blue-collar writer. Conversely, he is believed to have tremendously challenged the traditional paradigm of working-class fiction and influenced later generations of Scottish authors. Compared to his less experimental predecessors, Kelman's stories "take place not in the traditional sites of the working class struggle for power", such as industrial factories and mines, "but along the margins of that traditional working class life"[31].

A typical example of the diachronic shift in setting and character typology is found in *A Chancer* (1985), a novel featuring Tammas, a twenty-year-old worker and gambler who prefers spending time at dog tracks and casinos to slaving away in heave industry. Although the opening shows Tammas employed in a factory, he leaves the job after seven months with a sarcastic relief that he will be the "last in first out. I'll be heading as soon as the redundancies start."[32].

Even though Kelman started the novel in the 1960s, it is important to note that along with his other works it came out during a period of a radical transformation of British industry and politics. Considering the fact that the infamous era of Margaret Thatcher, who served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1979 to 1990, "attacked consensus politics on every front," because "her government stood for privatization and a free-market economy, and for the

[29] Kelman, *You Have to be Careful* 249.
[30] Stephanie Lehner, *Subaltern Ethics in Contemporary Scottish and Irish Literature: Tracing Counter-Histories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) 94.
[31] Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (1999; Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2002) 100.
[32] James Kelman, *A Chancer* (1985; Edinburgh: Polygon, 2007) 46.

reform of trade union law,"[33] it is fairly predictable to come across its reflection in Kelman's work.

Consequently, the workers in Tammas' factory are constantly threatened by the onset of redundancies which were the result of a new industrial agenda initiated even before Thatcher came into office. Tammas becomes one of those uprooted individuals who wander 'along the margins of that traditional working class life', which has been redefined in the wake of the latest economic developments.

Instead of being held up as a traditional noble proletarian who cherishes his working-class honour, Tammas is enchanted by the world of gambling and idleness rather than that of industrial steam and sweat. He represents a widely disputed paradox that stems from authoritarian division of labour.

It seems to be a mysterious riddle why workers willingly indulge in physical labour after coming home drained from a shift of hard work in factories. Paradoxically, they are excited to spend their leisure time digging in their gardens or doing some other mentally and physically challenging activities instead of going to bed straight away. According to Ward, the answer is simple:

> He [the worker] enjoys going home and digging in his garden because there he is free from foremen, managers and bosses. He is free from the monotony and slavery of doing the same thing day in day out, and is in control of the whole job from start to finish. He is free to decide for himself how and when to set about it. He is responsible to himself and not somebody else. He is working because he *wants* to and not because he *has* to. He is doing his own thing. He is his own man.[34]

Ward's common sense assumption can assist in identifying Tammas' drive to leave the factory for the betting shop. In contrast to the tedious nature of his regular job that does not encourage any initiative, working out complicated calculations to place his bets is a matter of total self-management. Substituting *betting* for 'digging in a garden', Tammas is free to develop his unique autonomy. He is no longer a subject to corporate surveillance and therefore he achieves freedom generated by his mathematical genius.

Eventually Tammas confides in his sister that he has decided to leave his second job in a copper factory because it was "really terrible you know I mean God sake, hh, terrible. You'd have to be crazy to work at it, that rolling machine – terrible!"[35]. Experiencing a minor safety accident

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[33] Dominic Head, *Modern British Fiction, 1950–2000* (2002; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) 30.
[34] Colin Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (1973; London: Freedom Press, 2008) 117.
[35] Kelman, *A Chancer* 359.

during which his shoe is burnt, he concludes "I would never've got used to it."[36]. On top of experiencing a minor safety accident during which his foot is almost burnt, Tammas feels suffocating by the monotonous drone of the factory and he figures out "I would never've got used to it."[37].

Either unemployed or disaffected by the meaninglessness of their blue-collar jobs, Kelman's characters stand for what Craig calls "the leftovers of the collapse of working class life"[38]. Even the eponymous anti-hero of Kelman's first full-length novel *The Busconductor Hines* (1984) fits the 'leftover pattern' of working-class life. Employed far from the traditional sites of proletarian power, Rab Hines, a bus conductor in his late twenties, suffers from the hideous sameness of his job and daily routines. He is a typical Kelmanist pariah who frequently contemplates the pros and cons of his job which he finds dull and imprisoning:

> It has never been acutely necessary to think. Hines can board the bus and all will transpire. Nor does he have to explain to a driver how the bus is to be manoeuvred. Nor need he dash out into the street to pressgang pedestrians. . . . Hines simply has to stand with his back to the safety rail beneath the front window and await the jerk of gear or brake to effect his descent to the rear and, with machine at the ready and right hand palm outwards to take in the dough, the left hand is extracting a ticket and dishing it up to the smiling person.[39]

Admittedly, Hines' insightful analysis of his intellectually unchallenging occupation proves that its lack of creativity results in his growing apathy. Although his description of the job takes on a brainwashing note, Hines manages to resist the idea of corporate thought control. Judging from his frequent anti-capitalist remarks and repeated absenteeism, there is no doubt he despises the concept of wage labour and its claim to provide happiness.

To see how Kelman's work differs from the traditional pattern of working-class fiction, it is worthwhile to draw an analogy between *The Busconductor Hines* and a particularly related novel by Alan Sillitoe *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958). This angry-young-men proletarian classic features Arthur, a twenty-two-year-old lathe operator, who works in a factory only to earn enough money to cover his furious drinking sessions and dating married women. Similar to Hines, Arthur also ponders his routine job and what it takes to carry it out:

> The minute you stepped out of the factory gates you thought no more about your work. But the funniest thing was that neither did you think about work when you were standing at your machine. You began the day by cutting and drilling steel cylinders with care, but gradually your

[36] Kelman, *A Chancer* 359.
[37] Kelman, *A Chancer* 359.
[38] Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel* 100.
[39] James Kelman, *The Busconductor Hines* (1984; London: Orion Books, 1992) 154.

> actions became automatic and you forgot all about the machine and the quick working of your arms and hands and . . . If your machine was working well – the motor smooth, stops tight, jigs good – and you spring your actions into a favourable rhythm you became happy. . . . Everybody's happy. It's a fine world sometimes, if you don't weaken, or if you don't give the bastards a chance to get cracking with that carborundum.[40]

At first glance Hines' and Arthur's accounts of their humdrum jobs seem identical. Firstly, neither demands a creative spirit nor much thinking. Secondly, both contribute to deepening apathy and numbness as far as the participants' mental potential is concerned. However, they do not match in one crucial aspect – whilst Arthur embraces capitalism as long as the authorities leave him alone, Hines is not happy at all; none of Kelman's characters are.

The major difference between Sillitoe and Kelman largely derives from their historical backgrounds. Whereas the former experienced the idealistic post-war reconstruction era, during which "Britain's people had enormous faith in the power of the state," because "social infrastructure was indeed dramatically improved by the welfare state, with centrally planned government intervention profoundly changing the relationships between state and society,"[41] Kelman grew up to see the sweeping advance of privatization and dissolution of 'the traditional sites of the working class struggle for power' where Sillitoe's classic takes place. Compared to Arthur, whose *raison d'être* is associated with pure consumerism, Kelman's characters can hardly make ends meet. Unlike Sillitoe's protagonist, they do not think it is a 'fine world' because they have to cope with nightmarish living conditions.

To sum up, Kelman explores the aftermath of the new wave of laissez-faire economy which accelerated the process of the disappearance of Scotland's traditional heavy industry in the 1980s[42]. Consequently, his idiosyncratic treatment of modern proletarian life is in stark contrast to previous patterns of working-class fiction.

4. Stealing and Reading: New Perspectives on Workerism

Speaking of Kelman's unorthodox approach to working-class literature, he has come up with a number of dramatic challenges to the traditional stereotypical views of workers' ethics and culture. Contrary to the workerist archetype of a law-abiding sentimental worker who entertains physical labour and a code of honour that condemns stealing, Kelman's characters frequently advocate violation of private property and become agents of spontaneous expropriation.

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[40] Alan Sillitoe, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958; London: Flamingo, 1994) 38–40.
[41] Rab Houston, *A Very Short Introduction to Scotland* (New York: Oxford UP, 2008) 107.
[42] see Houston 107–8.

In "not not while the giro," the protagonist owns up straight away that "I steal. In supermarkets I lift flat items such as cheese and other articles."[43] Suffering from financial breakdown and pathological unemployment, the narrator introduces shoplifting as a basic means of survival. The situation refers to Kelman's previous statement about the fundamental influence of economic security on class distinctions. The protagonist's matter-of-fact confession shows no acknowledgement of moral imperatives because his misery is a permanent condition. He exemplifies Kelman's assumption that traditional moral principles are recognized and reinforced by the economically secure part of society, whereas those at the bottom have no reason to do so because they have nothing to lose anymore. Consequently, the protagonist does not come up to the moral standards of workerism. For one thing, he does not glorify physical labour. And for another, shoplifting is not something he is ashamed of. It is simply part of his existence.

Obviously Kelman does not try to please the reader at all. Conversely, he does not "bother about alienating readers," because "the priority was to write the story properly. The readers could take care of themselves."[44]. Rather than moralising, Kelman defies long-established notions of workers and private ownership.

Even Kelman's most controversial Booker prize winning novel *How late it was, how late* tackles the issue of stealing. Sammy, a shoplifter and an ex-convict, whose rebellious nature resonates throughout the entire book "redefines economic activity so that stealing is part of the exchange economy," although he "functions almost entirely outside of the official labour market."[45]. Despite considering his criminal past silly, he believes stealing to be economically advantageous and continues to perpetrate petty crime. Compared to the narrator in "not not while the giro" who is never caught be the authorities, Sammy eventually ends up in prison. His self-invented aphorism "ye do yer crime ye take yer crime"[46] underlies the unsentimental theme of most Kelman's stories.

In comparison to such an outspokenly pragmatic attitude towards expropriation, Tammas in *A Chancer* is characterized by an ambiguous moral split. On one hand he decisively turns down a tempting offer to participate in a burglary. Since he has "never fucking done anything like that before I mean Christ screwing a place like man,"[47] Tammas is immediately conscience-stricken by the nature of such a transgression.

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[43] Kelman, *The Giro* 200.
[44] Kelman, afterword, *An Old Pub* 129.
[45] Marry McGlynn, "How late it was, how late and Literary Value," *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman*, ed. Scott Hames (Edinburgh: EUP, 2010) 28.
[46] Kelman, *How late* 171.
[47] Kelman, *A Chancer* 316.

Conversely, his moral commitment proves hypocritical because he keeps on stealing a few shillings every now and then from a bowl where his sister stores money to pay the electricity bill. Consequently, Tammas' attempt to act morally comes short of the expected workerist standards, and contrasts him with the traditional paradigm of working-class (anti)heroes.

In addition, Kelman's latest novel suggests expropriation has remained one of the topics addressed by his characters. In case of *Kieron* though, shoplifting is seen as part of 'innocent' juvenile delinquency. Judging from the stolen items, which include "chocolate and sponge cakes,"[48] Kieron is stimulated by peer pressure rather than an economic deficiency. On the other hand, he dreads to be caught by his father, a former merchant sailor, whose pockets Kieron searches for change. According to him, there is nothing worse than "stealing off yer shipmates"[49]. Theoretically, such a statement makes allowance for stealing off those outside the community as a result of class anxieties.

Besides Kelman's characters' peculiar affinity with expropriation, their reading habits are another important feature which does not fit the traditional set of proletarian stereotypes. Contrary to the popular workerist myth of an illiterate noble savage that is class-conscious, Kelman's major protagonists are well-read and self-educated.

In fact, their indisputable attachment to pub culture is often accompanied by considerable passion for reading. Despite the central character of *The Busconductor Hines* reckons "books are fucking hopeless," he admits that "maybe he was reading the wrong ones."[50]. Deciding which shelter would be appropriate to avoid a heavy rain, he eventually makes up his mind to visit the library and pub respectively. Even though Hines does not strike the reader as a prototypical intellectual, Kelman argues that he is "someone who has read Dostoyevsky and Camus"[51].

Concerning Kelman's drama, *Hardie and Baird: The Last Days* (1991) is a historical play that takes place in the aftermath of the doomed weavers' rebellion of 1820. Supposed to be his "most established dramatic piece,"[52] it shows another example of a literate working-class hero who is a passionate reader and revolutionary. Awaiting his death sentence in the dungeon of Edinburgh Castle, Hardie spends his last days by reading religious and philosophical books and receiving visitations from a local clergy. Prompted by one of the ministers to study the scriptures, he modestly affirms that he has "aye been a reader anyway."[53].

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[48] Kelman, *Kieron* 141.
[49] Kelman, *Kieron* 257.
[50] Kelman, *Hines* 101.
[51] McGlynn *How late* 25.
[52] David Archibald, "Kelman's Drama," *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman*, ed. Scott Hames (Edinburgh: EUP, 2010) 66.
[53] James Kelman, *Hardie and Baird & Other Plays* (1991; London: Martin Secker & Warburg Limited, 1994) 124.

Furthermore, even Sammy the foul-mouthed champion of Glasgow working-class culture in *How late* seems to be partial to reading. Blind and beaten in the cell where he has been confined after a street clash with the police, he tries to overcome his anger by furious storms of swearing. Nonetheless, amid his fits of uncontrolled verbal rage his mind happens to wander into the realm of literature. Trying to soothe his temper, Sammy recalls a "story about the guy doing time and he keeps going on these mind-trips," but he has trouble remembering "Who the fuck wrote it? Jack London?"[54]. For that reason, Sammy ranks among those Kelman's characters that transcend the stereotypical workerist idea of pastime embodied in pub culture.

Last but not least, Kelman's interpretation of unemployment is not exclusively associated with hardship and frustration. In "The Best Man Advises," Mick, a man in his forties with a wife and child, proudly announces that he is happy to be unemployed because it provides him with "Plenty of time to read and that, it's not a bad life."'[55]. Surprisingly, he does not feel any remorse to be economically insecure. On the contrary, he is startled and amused by the fact that "'Nobody believes me I'm really enjoying life. Fuck them all!"'[56].

Therefore, Kelman redefines the traditional notions of workerism in a very particular manner. On one hand, his characters' moral standards regarding expropriation deviate from the previous paradigm. Stealing is no longer perceived as a bad quality *per se* but rather an inevitable consequence of capitalism which entails a big economic divide between the rich and poor. Moreover, Kelman debunks the myth of an industrial hero who toils in filthy factories to suit an apologetic left-wing party propaganda. Instead, his proletarian characters have developed a liking for book culture and abhorrence of working in heavy industry. Consequently, Tammas' statement "I don't really want to work in factories any more"[57] serves as an epitaph to Kelman's radical challenge of workerism.

5. 'wealthy fuckers and rich cunts': Class War and Beyond

Based on countless references to economic and social injustice, Kelman's fiction is deeply rooted in uncompromising class-war politics. Having started publishing in the early 1970s and continued during the peak of the British class conflict in the 1980s Scottish miners' strike, Kelman's formative period has defined his anti-establishment attitude in writing and political activism.[58] Focusing on the all-pervasive anxieties nurtured by unequal distribution of wealth and privileges,

[54] Kelman, *How late* 29.
[55] Kelman, *An Old Pub* 71.
[56] Kelman, *An Old Pub* 73.
[57] Kelman, *AChancer* 360.
[58] Simon Kövesi, *James Kelman* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2007) 4.

Kelman fans the flames of class-oriented wrath that is a key characteristic of capitalism. Consequently, his characters suffer from growing frustration in the face of economic inequality which reminds them of the unbridgeable difference between haves and have-nots.

Apart from tackling the topic of unemployment, Kelman makes every effort to criticize the uneven mechanism of labour market which determines the value of work. As far as the ratio of work done to wage paid is concerned, *The Busconductor Hines* includes a specifically didactic lecture on the class-determined division of labour. Educating his small son on class issues, Hines takes him to work where they meet an office girl who "earns more money that I do for fewer hours."[59]. Observing that this is not instructive enough, he decides to make his lesson especially enlightening by showing him a man who "earns an awful lot more than I do; and he works fewer hours as well. He's a Clerk, a Wageclerk. See; he has to wear a shirt and a tie and the rest of it."[60]. Pointing out the paradox that working longer hours does not necessarily earn more money, Hines basically comments on the new wave of free-market economy and job re-development that brought about a decline in working-class wage. As a matter of giving full vent to his class animosity, Hines ridicules the office staff by associating better salary with a fancy dress code.

A similar situation occurs in *Kieron*, whose eponymous hero faces the pressure of labour division at an early age. Pushed by his mother to get educated and climb the social ladder, Kieron notes that "White-collar jobs were the best to get, and if ye could get one as a clerk," because "they did not get their hands dirty and it was short hours."[61] Even though he is yet too young to enter the world of full-time work, he is bright enough to notice that his "da worked in a factory and did not like it."[62]. Dealing with the issue of class anxieties on one hand, there is also a continuity of Kelman's previous concern about the conditions of modern Scottish working class, which has gradually moved from its traditional sites to the margins.

Concerning wealth as a stimulus of class-war attitude, "Gardens go on forever" introduces a horticulturalist who is assigned work in a rich man's garden. Wondering about the riches of the garden's owner, he shares his opinions on white-collar professions with his co-worker:

> When I followed him inside the gate the size of the place took my breath away. It's like a fucking national park. This guy must be a millionaire.
>
> He's a multi-millionaire ken he's a dental surgeon. He's got private practices all ower this place.
>
> . . .

[59] Kelman, *Hines* 190.
[60] Kelman, *Hines* 190.
[61] Kelman, *Kieron* 186.
[62] Kelman, *Kieron* 186.

> Has he got a swimming pool out the back? cause if he has I'm gon for a dip. . . . I didnay know dental surgeons made this kind of money, I said, so they're wealthy fuckers eh![63]

Despite his unrestrained feeling of anger, the gardener is not a narrow-minded hater but rather a contemplative class thinker. Before he even enters the garden to behold the surgeon's wealth, he questions his role in a system which favours ambition and ruthless profiteering. He cannot help wondering "Why should everything be defined by work that returned financial profit?"[64]. Instead, he longs for "work that was great in itself" that would result in "profit to the individual person"[65].

Interpreting the nature of work as a process of self-realization and accommodation of ones' capacities, Kelman examines the merit of wage. The gardener suggests that paid job does not necessarily stimulate ambition and profit because the worker turns into a wage slave who thinks only in terms of 'financial profit'.

Nevertheless, wealth and its class significance remains a fundamental theme even in Kelman's latest output. In "The Third Man, or else the Forth" an elderly man reflects on vandalizing activities of local football hooligans, who trouble his neighbourhood. He disapproves of such anti-social behaviour directed against his own community because the poor do not deserve to be harassed. In his opinion, they should go "someplace where the rich cunts live," if they wish to cause damage. Apparently, violence should not be perpetrated recklessly against members of the same class but aimed at the wealthy and privileged.

Yet another striking example of Kelman's commitment to class-war politics is found in *Hardie and Baird*. The two imprisoned radicals are supposed to represent two different worldviews; while Hardie finds comfort in the Bible and enjoys the visits of the local ministers, Baird refuses to follow up their prompts to repent and pursues his belief in class struggle as a meaning of life.[66] In the final hours before his execution, he remains steadfast in his determination to advocate class war: "They've never gave us nothing wioot it being wrested from them, never. We've aye had to fight. Every bit o progress, it's had to get tore aff them, they'd have gave us nothing if we'd left it to them – nothing."[67]

In comparison, Patrick Doyle in *A Disaffection* (1989) gives a different perspective on class anxieties that originate in the economic divide. Enjoying a flat and car of his own, he is definitely the most affluent of Kelman's characters. Conditioned by higher education, he is willing to make compromise as far as rich nonconformists are concerned. From his perspective, wealthy

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[63] James Kelman, *The Good Times* (1998; Edinburgh: Polygon, 2009) 16.
[64] Kelman, *The Good Times* 10.
[65] Kelman, *The Good Times* 10.
[66] see Archibald 67.
[67] Kelman, *Hardie and Baird & Other Plays* 180.

eccentrics such as Picasso, who was "a multimillionaire communist. So what,"[68] deserve to be given credit because they challenged conservatism. In contrast to the gardener in "Gardens go on forever" who expects the dental surgeon to be a 'wealthy fucker', Patrick makes allowance for rebellious rich individuals.

Therefore, Kelman defies postmodernism because it "attempts to tie in with the political agenda, the whole idea of the classless society, the argument that somehow we've moved along from the possibility of structural political change."[69]. His characters who constantly address the topic of wealth from various perspectives show that as long as the gap between a privileged few and a dispossessed majority exists class war rages on.

6. 'Places where humans might perish forever': Victims and Casualties

Having first-hand experience with industrial accidents and safety risks during his numerous menial jobs, Kelman has incorporated the horrors of hazardous labour in his stories that frequently take place in industrial sites. He depicts the horrendous consequences of poor working conditions that stem from corporate malevolence and lack of respect for unskilled workforce.

Consequently, Kelman's protagonists are subjects to ruthless exploitation as in the case of "The bevel," whose narrator along with his two associates are stripping away the old filling of a chlorine tank. All of a sudden, he accidentally becomes aware of the inappropriate workplace safety conditions when he discovers that "we were not supposed to stay longer than 30 minutes without at least having quarter of an hour break out in the open"[70].

Facing a pending health hazard, one of the narrator's co-workers describes the antipathies of their superiors who "must be sick of the sight of us in this fucking place. Fucking boilersuits and breathing-masks by Christ we're never done."[71]. Even though the authorities neglect their management responsibilities, it is the workers who are considered villains if they dare to request proper equipment that is costly.

Eventually, the narrator blames their lethargic chargehand who sometimes "treats us as if we were the three fucking stooges"[72]. Criticising the mistreatment of ordinary workers, he illustrates the dehumanizing effects of corporate negligence. As a result, the workers and further victimized because the superiors mock their misery instead of providing a prompt remedy.

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[68] James Kelman, *A Disaffection* (1989; London: Picador, 1990) 169.
[69] Tom Toremans, "An Interview with Alasdair Gray and James Kelman," *Contemporary Literature* 44.4 (2003): 574. *JSTORE*. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 21 Mar. 2010 <http://www.jstore.org>.
[70] Kelman, *the Giro* 37.
[71] Kelman, *the Giro* 37.
[72] Kelman, *the Giro* 39.

At the end of the story, a foreman arrives and urges the men to go and finish their job in the chlorine in shorter time. However, they have misgivings about the stability of the platform they are supposed to stand on. Therefore, he decides to participate in the job to encourage the workers but the structure nearly collapses. Balancing on the verge of death, the domineering foreman "yelled, but managed to twist and get half onto the edge of the platform, clinging there with his mouth gaping open. . . . His face was really grey."[73]. After he experiences a panic attack for the first time, he realizes his mistake to expose himself and other workers to such a safety hazard. Having tasted his own medicine, the foreman finally acknowledges the workers' worries about inhaling intoxicating fumes inside the tank which he had previously ignored.

Concerning Kelman's commitment to unfolding the unspeakable horrors of industrial employment, his one-paragraph short story "Acid" is perhaps one of the most disturbing examples of industrial atrocities. It focuses on a father who witnesses his son's tragic death caused by unsatisfactory workplace safety conditions:

> In this factory in the north of England acid was essential. It was contained in large vats. Gangways were laid above them. Before these gangways were made completely safe a young man fell into a vat feet first. His screams of agony were heard all over the department. Except for one old fellow the large body of men was so horrified that for a time not one of them could move. In an instant this old fellow who was also the young man's father had clambered up and along the gangway carrying a big pole. Sorry Hughie, he said. And then ducked the young man below the surface. Obviously the old fellow had had to do this because only the head and shoulders – in fact, that which has been seen above the acid was all that remained of the young man.[74]

Judging from this short story, Kelman's brief narrative resembles Hemingway's terse telegraphic style where only a few lines suffice to convey an ideologically challenging idea. He makes much effort to emphasize the absurdity of the situation; despite the imminent safety risk, the management took no precaution and let the young worker die. Surprisingly, the tragedy is concluded in a matter-of-fact style with the adverb 'obviously', which "breaks down the illusion of consensus between the reader and the impersonal narrator."[75] The less descriptive and emotional expressions Kelman uses, the more ontological its message is. Reflecting on the story's underlying structure, Hunter believes that "Kelman makes us conscious of the superstructural economic forces at play behind this passing human drama, so that we are forced, for example, to consider the curious indifference and sense of resignation in the father, not as the reaction of an

[73] Kelman, *the Giro* 43.
[74] Kelman, *the Giro* 121.
[75] Hunter 46.

individual as such, but as the emanation of a class condition, of the lot of those trapped on the wrong side of the labour-capital equation."[76] Therefore, Kelman forces the reader to ponder the context of the story which includes the existential conditions of the whole working class represented here by a single individual.

A similar though not equally gory accident happens in *A Chancer* where Tammas does not manage to correctly manipulate a hot copper rod. After his arrival in the factory, Tammas is not warned by the foreman to mind workplace safety conditions including wearing proper protection. As a result, a man who is supposed to give Tammas his initial training points out that "they shoes you're wearing, they're fucking no good. Surprised the gaffer didn't tell you."[77].

Furthermore, as soon as Tammas is ready to set to work, he is approached by two of his co-workers who comment on the imperative of wearing a necessary safety outfit:

> Where's your gloves?
>
> Gloves?
>
> Jesus Christ. You cant expect to work the fucking clamps without them – I do it but I'm fucking used to it I mean it takes a fucking while to get the heat. You'll no manage without a pair in the beginning.
>
> He [the foreman] never mentioned it.
>
> Peter shook his head. He went behind the roller and began to speak to the other guy. The two of them returned. Tell him, said Peter.
>
> What?
>
> Tell him, about the gloves and that.
>
> Naw just, the gaffer, no mentioning them.
>
> Fuck me!
>
> And the helmet, muttered Peter, tell him about the helmet.
>
> Aye, he never mentioned it either. And the shoes, nothing about them.[78]

As the reader learns later on, the lack of the foreman's concern results in Tammas' accident which involves dropping the hot copper rod and burning his shoe. Even though the foreman did not care to endorse management responsibilities in the beginning, he eventually reminds Tammas to wear protection when the accident is over. Pointing out the management's incompetence, Kelman criticises the corporate agenda of industrial sites where workers endure indifference and workplace safety violations.

Compared to the less fortunate victims of industrial labour in Kelman's fiction, Sammy in *How late* survives a health hazard in a building site to witness an absolutely irresponsible conduct

[76] Hunter 46.
[77] Kelman, *A Chancer* 322.
[78] Kelman, *A Chancer* 323–4.

of his superiors. Following a malfunction of an automatic air-hammer, he is forced to break an enormous granite stone manually using only a chisel and sledgehammer. A chargehand is sent in by the management to assign the task to Sammy and his associate. Sammy is appalled by the chargehand's bizarre attempt to decide who is going to handle the hammer: "What he done was he went up to the other guy and felt his wrists, then he done the same to Sammy, his thumb digging into the veins and tendons and wee bones, pressing and rubbing." [79].

Nonetheless, Sammy cannot be fooled by the chargehand's "very scientific"[80] method of assessing the workers' ability to manipulate the hammer. His sarcastic remark underlines his disrespect for authorities who intentionally expose workers to health risks because "they needed this particular job finished ten minutes ago"[81].

In the end, Sammy prudently avoids carrying out the task because he refuses to put his workmate's life at risk. Instead, he comes up with a storm of criticism directed against the management whom he considers to be a bunch of "cowardly bastards," who "were probably in the site-clerk's office waiting for the screams."[82]. Sammy's critical opinion about his superiors mirrors Kelman's efforts to denounce authorities who pursue their corporate agenda at the expense of workers' safety. Moreover, he depicts how they refuse to take responsibility for any potential accident by sending in a proxy to inform the workers about the dirty job.

In contrast to his previous stories such as "Acid," Kelman's characters in *If it is your life* seem to have learned their lesson as far as the disadvantages of industrial labour are concerned. Consequently, the job-seeking protagonist of "I am as Putty" prefers working in the open air to factories which he associates with "desperate places wherein we humans might perish forever."[83]

Bringing round the unspoken victims of capitalism, Kelman gives evidence that industry is not dominated by technical expertise but by authorities who exploit the workforce to the full with no intention to take responsibility for their flawed decisions.

[79] Kelman, *How late it was, how late* (London: Secker & Warburg Limited, 1994) 289–90.
[80] Kelman, *How late* 290.
[81] Kelman, *How late* 289.
[82] Kelman, *How late* 290.
[83] Kelman, *If it is your life* 275.

II
Kelman and Working-Class Community

Despite some minor differences, Kelman's characters all share their indelible working-class background. Conditioned to withstand economic hardships and tempered in class battles, they are likely to be identified as typical underprivileged proletarians whose identity is inextricably bound to their communities. Yet their attitudes towards parental responsibilities and gender stereotypes betray the traits commonly associated with their origin. Therefore, it is essential to explore their idiosyncratic features which differ from the traditional functions of working-class protagonists.

Moving away from the predictable pattern of superficial cardboard characters whose dispositions stem from schematic behaviour, Kelman introduces a fresh set of unique individuals who question the validity of sex-determined expectations and ambitions. They no longer seek comfort in repeating prescribed routines of female dependency. Conversely, they embody equally competent representatives of modern relationships.

Besides dealing with sexually frustrated male characters, Kelman examines serious anxieties generated by social climbing which eventually lead to class estrangement. Consequently, he addresses the decay of traditional working-class communities whose once strong belief in workers' solidarity and radical syndicalism has dissolved into a shadow of helplessness.

7. 'When men expect women to stop work': Challenging Masculinity

All Kelman's main characters and narrators are almost exclusively working-class males whose age varies between their twenties and late thirties. Perplexed and self-loathing, they repeatedly ponder their waning roles of former breadwinners and powerful decision makers whose authority is challenged by their more ambitious and active female counterparts. With no exception, "the masculine condition in the contemporary period"[84] is a fundamental topic that can be traced throughout Kelman's fiction from start until the present. This condition is primarily reflected in the effect of women's increasing involvement in the world of labour. Therefore, it will bear fruit to observe how the changing pattern of economic responsibilities affects the masculine identity of Kelman's protagonists.

[84] Carole Jones, "Kelman and Masculinity," *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman*, ed. Scott Hames (Edinburgh: EUP, 2010) 111.

Speaking of the radical about-face over gender stereotypes, *The Busconductor Hines* represents the best case of Kelman's exceptional approach to social and economic expectations. Although the protagonist Rab Hines holds a demanding full-time job to provide for his wife Sandra and a little boy called Paul, who all live in a dilapidated flat, he manages to carry out nearly all the domestic chores that are usually attributed to women's responsibilities. Seeing Hines run their home and take his son to the nursery, "the novel as a whole fights against the gendered stereotype of exclusively female management of domestic and parental responsibilities"[85]. Apart from tidying up the flat while his wife is at work, Hines is also asked by a nursery supervisor to stay and play with the children because it is the nursery's policy. Forced to stand in for Sandra, he explains why she cannot fulfil her role this time:

> Yes, she [the supervisor] said, indicating a list of names. Your wife actually should be here this afternoon.
>
> She's working.
>
> O.
>
> She works part-time in an office.
>
> Mm. The Supervisor nodded. She did say she would be able to arrange things if and when her turn arose. You see Mr Hines we really do require parents to play their part occasionally – even if it is only once in a while. We feel it's important.

Apparently, Sandra does not follow the stereotype of a domesticated housewife who raises her child and runs the house. Instead, she enjoys her part-time office job and suggests she could switch to full-time.[86] Consequently, Hines' ambiguous all-in-one role of a breadwinner, housekeeper, and child raiser shows gender imperatives as invalid social constructs that give way to economic necessity. Depicting Sandra as an economically active individual who prefers financial contribution to parental responsibilities, Kelman further illustrates the diachronic change in women employment. Admittedly, Sandra's preference of white-collar jobs "simply reflects social factors: men have been encouraged to undertake physical and outdoor work, to participate in sport and to conform to a stereotypical 'masculine' physique"[87].

Speaking of women's participation in the world of work, Heywood clarifies how the information age has radically changed gender roles in society:

> However, although physical strength is important in agricultural or early industrial societies, it has little value in developed societies where tools and machinery are far more efficient than human strength; the heavily muscled male may simply be redundant in a technological world of robots

[85] Kövesi 52.
[86] Kelman, *Hines* 24.
[87] Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies: An Introduction* (London: MacMillan, 1993) 224–5.

> and micro-chips. In any case, physical hard work, for which the male body may be better suited, has traditionally been undertaken by people with low class and status positions, not by those in authority.[88]

As a result of Sandra's middle-class office job and income, Hines is not the sole head of the family anymore. Bereft of his breadwinner's authority, Hines has to cope with the polarization of their relationship. However, he does not act like a typical masculine patriarch who strives to deprive his female partner of her newly acquired identity. Instead, he decides to stay in the nursery and accepts the exchange of gender roles propelled by society's development.

In addition to the defiance of patriarchal attitudes, Kelman also twists the image of an attentive wife who tends her worn-out husband after he arrives devastated from work. It is actually Hines who attends to Sandra when she comes home after an exhausting day at work. He offers her a cup of tea and gets his son undressed. Consequently, it is the man who now carries out maternal responsibilities while the woman shares the privileges associated with the breadwinner role.

Kelman's sympathy for women who endure social and financial hardships reflects his own experience of an economically unsuccessful writer who had to work as a busconductor to earn money for his family so that "the burden of looking after the children didn't fall solely on my partner's shoulders. I didn't expect her to have three economic burdens, the two children and myself."[89].

Drawing on Kelman's efforts cope with his family responsibilities, *A Chancer* revisits the theme of women's pursuit of economic independence. It is embodied in the strong female character Vi who struggles against men's patriarchal drive to command her life. At one point, Tammas suggests Vi to leave Glasgow with her daughter and live with him in Peterhead, where he is planning to find a well-paid job. As a result of his naïve patriarchal idea to turn her into a domestic housewife, she immediately experiences a fit of righteous anger:

> And you wouldn't need to work.
>
> But I like working.
>
> Okay.
>
> I hate being in the house all time.
>
> Fine I mean… he shrugged.
>
> God Tammas Wylie never liked me working either. He always thought men were looking at me. Even before we got married he was wanting me to stay at home in my mother's – imagine! All day – sitting in the bloody house!
>
> Hh.

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[88] Heywood 225.

[89] James Kelman, *And the Judges Said...: Essays* (2002; Edinburgh: Polygon, 2008) 53.

> God.
> I wouldn't mind you working at all.
> O thanks, I'm very grateful.
> He looked at her.
> Naw really, I'm very very grateful.
> Christ Vi sometimes you take the needle hell of a quick.
> I take the needle!
> Well so you do, Christ, sometimes, I can hardly get talking.
> Aye well no bloody wonder. It's bad when men expect you to stop work just to suit them.[90]

Showing a fierce resistance against the traditional gender stereotypes concerning women's exclusion from economic activities and their condemnation to the domestic sphere, Vi challenges the notion that "A woman's physical and anatomical make-up is thought to suit her to a subordinate and domestic role in society; in short, 'biology is destiny'."[91]. She wants to break free from the domestic slavery imposed by her husband Wylie who represents a patriarchal archetype of imperious masculinity.

In comparison to Tammas' deficient manliness, Wylie stands for a typical macho tyrant who exercises absolute control over his wife. Wylie's authoritarian attitude is exemplified by his insistence on Vi's confinement to her mother's household. Securing his position of an economically productive masculine agent, Wylie enhances the traditional gender division. Jealousy is most probably not the only stimulus to deprive Vi of her public life as a woman and worker; allowing her to share the public arena could possibly polarize their relationship and challenge his breadwinner's authority. Having experienced domestic slavery under Wylie, who is currently in prison, she strives to avoid making the same mistake twice with Tammas. As far as Wylie's patriarchal belief in Vi's sex-determined inferiority is concerned, Heywood explains that such

> Gender differences are manufactured by society, which conditions women to conform to a stereotype of 'feminine' behaviour, requiring them to be passive and submissive, suited to a life of domestic and family responsibilities. In precisely the same way, men are encouraged to be 'masculine', assertive, aggressive and competitive, prepared for a world of work, politics and public life. In a patriarchal society, women are moulded according to men's expectations and needs, they are encouraged to conform to one of a number of female stereotypes, all the creation of men: the mother, the housewife, the Madonna, the whore. In so doing, the personalities of both sexes are distorted.[92]

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[90] Kelman, *A Chancer* 382.
[91] Heywood 224.
[92] Heywood 226.

With no doubt, Vi disapproves of such a biased patriarchal agenda. She dislikes being a housewife and abhors playing the Madonna for her husband, whose purpose is to sentence her to 'a life of domestic and family responsibilities'. Moreover, Vi ridicules her role of the whore by mocking her husband's paranoid idea of men looking at her with lust if she went to work. She seems not to have faith in men anymore while she ironically expresses her gratitude to Tammas for allowing her to work.

Therefore, Kelman's female characters like Sandra and Vi demonstrate men's fading masculine imperative to provide and dominate. Their patriarchal economic function is challenged by ambitious women who yearn to shake off the gendered stigma of passivity and domesticity. Challenging the enslaving notion that 'biology is destiny,' they aspire to attain control and success.

8. Emasculated Men and Empowered Women

Facing the rise of women to prominence, Kelman's male protagonists consistently withdraw from their assertive masculinity and retreat into helpless resignation. Paradoxically, they do not resort to misogynistic attitude but look up to women who represent admirable symbols of reason and control.

Kelman's third full-length novel *A Disaffection* contrasts the disempowered and doubting teacher Patrick Doyle with his decisive colleague and platonic lover Alison who personifies the capacity of absolute control. He repeatedly undermines his already deteriorating masculine identity by delusional ruminations on Alison's ability to manipulate men into her schemes. During one of his paranoid fantasies, Patrick ponders a possible sexual relationship involving her and another male teacher in Patrick's school. As far as mating habits are concerned, he associates Alison with a predatory alpha woman because she "wasni really succumbing at all but was remaining firmly in control viz. she would be in control, he would be in her power."[93].

Nonetheless, Patrick's infatuation with Alison is not based on her beauty but the fact that she is "in control of the world."[94]. Indeed, he is rather preoccupied with her dominant character and confident spirit. Consequently, his obsession with Alison, who is "so totally in control,"[95] results in Patrick's self-repression and inferiority. Defying the stereotype of a passive and submissive woman, she is held up as a model of authority.

[93] Kelman, *A Disaffection* 18.
[94] Kelman, *A Disaffection* 98.
[95] Kelman, *A Disaffection* 147.

Besides Alison, there is yet another woman who exerts a strong influence on Patrick. It is his brother's wife Nicola, who confronts his sentimental view of women. Unlike Patrick, she entertains a realistic perspective on gender roles in society and their unjust implications. Reproaching Patrick's delusional mind, Nicola contends that

> Women have to listen more than men, that's why they've got a sense of peace as you call it; they're used to listening – that's what they have to do all the time, listen to men talking. Yet to hear them you'd think it was us did it. And not only listen to them, women have to watch them all the time as well, they've got to study their moods, they've got to see it's alright to speak if this is the bloody time you can ask a question or no, is it the wrong time and you'll have to wait, because half the time men just areni willing to listen to something if they dont want to hear it, it gets ye down. I canni be annoyed with it. I'm not criticising you Pat but I think you've got a glamourised view of women which is wrong, it really is wrong.[96]

Nicola manages to show Patrick the brutal truth of patriarchal relationships which design women to be submissive, passive and domestic listeners. As far as she is concerned, sex inequality renders woman's role in communication with men inferior since it is the woman who must be attentive to her man's needs. She points out that her gendered potential is limited in a world dominated by men. Therefore, Nicola criticises the established way how men treat women as though they were merely their masters' pets. In her opinion, it seems that the woman merely fulfils the role of an attentive companion who must cherish her master and avoid any attempts to displease him.

Although Nicola accuses Patrick of having a 'glamourised view of women', he is conscious of the gender stereotype entertained by the society he lives in. Concerning the education differences between boys and girls, he comes up with a peculiar theory how society moulds the individual with respect to the gender criteria and how sex dispositions are reflected in one's intellectual capacity. Discussing girls' poor school performance and results, Patrick explains that "it's to do with sexuality and the competitive nature of society; how males are aye supposed to win and lassies are aye supposed to come secondbest, and the way the education system colludes entirely"[97].

In comparison, Sammy in *How late* resembles Patrick with his excessive respect for women who radiate prudence and determination. Throughout the whole book Sammy frequently meditates on his girlfriend Helen who has recently left him for an unknown reason. In his eyes, she "wasnay a woman that jumped into things," because she was "Too fucking experienced."[98].

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[96] Kelman, *A Disaffection* 314–5.
[97] Kelman, *A Disaffection* 288.
[98] Kelman, *How late* 231.

Obviously, Helen represents an icon of rational reasoning similar to Nicola in *A Disaffection*, and helps Sammy to tame his impatient and hot-blooded temper.

Furthermore, Sammy is captivated by Helen's contemplative character. She is portrayed as a "worrier" [99] who was "good at silence."[100] Keeping her thoughts to herself, Helen is the complete opposite of Sammy who always shares his ideas aloud. In other words, she is a powerful symbol of self-control and that is why Sammy regrets she has left. There is no female authority who can guide him anymore. Reflecting on his own incompetence and restlessness, he eventually gives women credit:

> All people get ideas but women get them in particular. Ye don't know what to make of them, especially when ye're young. Ye wonder what they see in ye as well I mean being honest; men – christ almighty, a bunch of dirty bastards, literally, know what I'm talking about, sweaty socks and all that, smelly underpants. Course they've got nay choice, no unless they're lesbian…[101]

According to Sammy, women are experienced intellectuals which makes superior. He deliberately describes men as a breed of base varmints whose hygiene mirrors their deficient capacity to think. Despite Sammy's critical assessment of his own sex, he concludes that women have to submit in the end. Moreover, he confirms Nicola's dismal observation in *A Disaffection* that women have to listen to men because "Women have to know; men have to tell them"[102]. Therefore, Sammy appreciates women as powerful though passive allies.

The theme of women's intellectual superiority appears already in *The Busconductor Hines* where Sandra fuses her economic ambition with ability to think and organize. Compared to the indecisive Hines, she is "set in her ways, determined, thinking things out. Not like him. Hines is a fucking idiot: but she isnt, she's fucking – the way she thinks things out."[103]. Consequently, she is a forerunner of Kelman's strong female characters who keep control of men until his latest collection *If it is your life*.

The collection's title story deals with a young university student who is mesmerized by his fellow student Celia. She stands for a modern emancipated woman who defies sexual taboos and gender expectations. She no longer follows the doctrine of a cowed and passive woman. The protagonist admits that he "respected her more than anyone, more then myself. Much more. I learned from her, even being in her presence."[104]. In becoming his guru – often identified with masculine imperative – Celia has finally crowned the reversion of gender stereotypes.

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[99] Kelman, *How late* 62.
[100] Kelman, *How late* 139.
[101] Kelman, *How late* 64
[102] Kelman, *How late* 138.
[103] Kelman, *Hines* 166.
[104] Kelman, *If it is your life* 120.

Although Kelman's male protagonists share a common working-class background associated with masculine authority, they are no longer the alpha males who dominate their communities. With their masculinity at stake, they are consumed by their nearly hysterical seizures of self-loathing. Instead of boosting their masculine identity, they remain disempowered in the face of autonomous women who command reason and control. These women temper their men's sentimentality and emotional pathos which eventually highlights their withdrawal from the notions of hegemonic masculinity.[105]

9. 'Middle-Class Wankers': From Ambivalence to Estrangement

Working-class identity and sense of belonging are undeniably essential components of Kelman's fiction. However, his portrayal of these qualities associated with the dispossessed does not emphasize their bonding effects on his protagonists. On the contrary, Kelman examines the anxieties that have risen and split the proletariat which once used to be a homogeneous collective forged in poverty and resistance. Prompted by social and economic ambitions, Kelman's characters depart from their communities which originally provided them with confidence and integrity. Having severed these strong links, they experience class ambivalence which eventually leads to estrangement from their families.

The most illustrative example of intra-class tensions between individuals of a common underprivileged descent occurs in *A Disaffection*, a bleak novel about a teacher haunted by the idea of betraying his working-class origin. Compared to his uneducated brother Gavin who suffers from chronic unemployment, Patrick's middle-class profession makes him a relatively affluent person without any commitments. Nonetheless, Patrick's job does not provide much comfort because it is an omnipresent remainder of his alienation from his working-class family. Even though he is conscious of the gap between him and his brother, who represents a typical disempowered proletarian, he endeavours to seek a compromise which would bring the brothers together. Unfortunately, Gavin refuses to reach reconciliation and condemns Patrick as a working-class sell-out:

> All your teachers and all your fucking students and pupils and all your fucking headmasters and your cronies from the fucking staffroom. Fucking middle-class bunch of wankers ye cunt! . . .
>
> What do you mean middle-class wankers? said pat.
>
> Gavin shook his head. He replied, I didni mean them all.
>
> You fucking said it.

[105] see Jones 117–8.

> Well ye fucking must've meant something.
>
> Aye, I meant something, I meant middle-class wankers; middle-class wankers, that's what I meant. Okay? Middle-class wankers.
>
> Who exactly?
>
> Whoever you fucking like brother.
>
> Do you mean me? Are you fucking calling me a middle-class wanker?[106]

Ironically, Patrick's economic security and conventionally acknowledged job contribute to his deteriorating relationship with Gavin, who remained uneducated but loyal to his proletarian background and community. Consequently, Patrick's ambivalent attitude towards his middle-class job – he admits to be a teacher but cannot bear to be labelled as such – transforms into agonising estrangement because "It was them wanted him to go to uni and no him, his parents and his fucking big brother."[107]. Bewildered and betrayed, Patrick finds out that he has been rejected by his own family that formerly encouraged him to get higher education and climb the social ladder.

Kelman continues to explore the alienating effects of education on people who left their working-class background in "Lassies are trained that way," where an anonymous protagonist marvels at the way higher education turns people against their own roots. Although he avoids sweeping statements about students in general, he believes that "the danger was aye the same for kids from a working-class background, that it turned you against your own people."[108]. In his opinion, institutional education turns working-class individuals into somebody who would spend "the rest of their lives keeping other folk down."[109].

Such a view is justified by the protagonist of "If it is your life," who comes from a Glaswegian working-class family but studies at university in England. Coming back home for a holiday, he ponders the striking differences between his native background and the intellectual environment of the university. Contrasting his evasive attitude towards his proletarian origin with his brother's and father's, he admits that "I did not show my class but Eric did. This is what it was. My dad spoke about it; to him it was everything. It explained everything. He believed in Karl Marx."[110]. Therefore, the protagonist serves as a link between his family's sincere working-class loyalties and the corrupting influence of elitist education which has turned Patrick Doyle against his own community. He acknowledges his growing ambivalence about class allegiances by the fact that unlike his brother he tries to conceal his proletarian roots.

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[106] Kelman, *A Disaffection* 281–2.
[107] Kelman, *A Disaffection* 53.
[108] James Kelman, *The Burn* (1991; Edinburgh: Polygon, 2007) 160.
[109] Kelman *The Burn* 160.
[110] Kelman, *If it is your life* 127.

Apart from intra-class anxieties brought about by education, class estrangement also divides Kelman's married couples whose delicate balance is disturbed by the implications of their job preferences. Criticising his wife's lack of class consciousness, the husband in "talking about my wife" explains that she "had never experienced the actuality of work. Genuine work. . . . In her whole life she had never worked in an ordinary hourly paid job. Office stuff was all she did."[111]. In the end, his alienation leads him to a judgmental conclusion that this "was a thing about women, they were all middle-class."[112].

In addition to fraternal and marital breakdowns, Kelman introduces the crisis of working-class identity in *Kieron Smith* where the boy's ambitious parents and brother stand against Kieron, who wants to maintain friendship with his proletarian mates. Under his mother's influence, he is pushed to join a middle-class grammar school and opt for friends among his fellow pupils. As a result of his enforced conversion to middle-class aspirations, Kieron ends up alienated from his own mother whom he thinks "just a snob,"[113] and grandmother who tries to indoctrinate him with her lectures on a "high-up family"[114].

Depicting personal animosities within working-class communities, Kelman shows how the colliding notions of class allegiances and social ambition lead to estrangement that leaves its victims completely uprooted.

10. The Collapse of Workers' Solidarity

The working-class depicted by Kelman is no longer an organized body of committed individuals who stand united against capitalist exploitation. Exhausted and atomized by socio-economic policies of the new world order, they cannot summon enough strength to put up collective resistance. Instead, they are left disarmed and powerless to see their rebellious spirit die out.

Despite some desperate efforts of a few radical individuals who try to stir up direct action against the management, they are eventually silenced by their indifferent fellow workers or union authorities who prefer negotiation to militant strike.

Such is the case in "New Business" which is set during a worker's union branch meeting. When the discussion gets down to salaries, a young passionate worker called Tam suggest that they ask the management for more money. Unfortunately, the chairman dismisses Tam's motion saying they should wait and see if the other union branch follows the suit:

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111 Kelman, *If it is your life* 17.
112 Kelman, *If it is your life* 17.
113 Kelman, *Kieron* 333.
114 Kelman, *Kieron* 333.

> 'Brothers,' said the Chairman at last, 'this has been gone into very carefully. We are asking fifteen and that's that. Waste of time asking more. Let's wait and see what happens through at Kilmarnock first eh?'
>
> A few of the members nodded their agreement.
>
> 'Think you should withdraw the motion,' stated the Chairman after a short pause.
>
> 'Aye,' agreed Tam's neighbour without hesitation.
>
> Tam sat down shaking his head in disgust.[115]

The union official refuses to support Tam's enthusiasm for a collective action, through which they could achieve rise in their wages. The union members let the chairman tame the rebellious Tam and hence fail to act upon their instincts of mutual help and solidarity. They resign to stand up for their rights themselves and allow the representatives to negotiate on their behalf. Tam is disillusioned to see nobody willing to question the chairman's decision. He gives in to a world where workers are represented by treacherous lobbyists who wish to avoid radical class clashes.

The Busconductor Hines concludes with a most ominous memento of working-class defeatism which resembles Tam's failure in "New Business." A union branch meeting is called because Hines accuses his management of mistreating him. Although a strike is voted unanimously to support Hines against the authorities, there are some workers who do not agree with taking such a radical course of action. One driver speaks out against Hines and tells him to "give us all peace. . . Bloody strikes! Christmas coming and no wages! murder polis. *You* can go and explain it to the wife."[116]. Apparently, not all the workers stand united in solidarity with Hines because they are afraid of the strike's consequences.

Furthermore, Hines suddenly decides to exit the meeting and forget about staging a walkout. In the end, he sets off for home confessing "that's me resigned."[117]. From a radical unionist he turns into a defeatist who leaves his comrades open-mouthed. Therefore, Hines epitomizes the breakdown of working-class solidarity which has crushed the modern post-industrial proletariat.

As far as workers' unity is concerned, Tammas in *A Chancer* follows the theme of a divided working class that no longer sustains its representatives. A crucial discord between workers emerges as a consequence of different perspectives on their proletarian identity. Due to underemployment, Tammas is assigned a task that ranks far below his qualification. Along with his fellow workers, he is told to unload a wagon full of heavy batches while some of them complain about the management's malevolent exploitation of skilled workers, who should not do such a menial job:

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[115] Kelman, *An Old Pub* 91.
[116] Kelman, *Hines* 205.
[117] Kelman, *Hines* 211.

> Away and fuck yourself son, muttered Ralphie. He walked away in the direction of the skip. Tammas and the other two followed. We they had caught up to him he spat before saying: We're fucking machinemen, we shouldnt have to be doing this.
>
> The man with Murdie smiled: Aye, he said, it's a labourer's job! He smiled again.
>
> Ralphie replied after a moment. Ah well you know what I fucking mean.
>
> We're all labourers, said Murdie. That's the fucking point.
>
> Aw thanks for telling me. Ralphie nodded. Thanks.
>
> Well so we are – eh Tammas?
>
> Tammas shrugged.
>
> The quiet man eh![118]

Obsessed with his delusional superiority, Ralphie expresses outrage at having to do a menial job which he thinks below his qualification. His ego is badly hurt when Murdie brings up the fact that they are all working-class even though they have received a formal training. However, Tammas does not acknowledge Murdie's hint at proletarian solidarity and common background. He remains silent and fails to identify with his associates. Consequently, Tammas' lack of enthusiasm to unite and protest resembles Hines' defeatist attitude which spoils the attempt to get organized.

Tammas and his interactions with other victims of the workers' vanishing unity in *A Chancer* demonstrate how "traditional [working-class] life has been decimated: founded on heavy industry and on a mass society whose masses could be brought into solidarity, it has been wiped out by the destruction of the traditional Scottish industries"[119]. Therefore, he is not motivated to answer Murdie's desperate appeal to a common proletarian identity.

Concerning the basic human need to socialize and bond with individuals who share fate of the dispossessed, Jerry in *You Have to be Careful* tries to communicate with a taxi driver who appears to be an underprivileged immigrant. Unfortunately, his attempt to befriend the taxi driver falls through as soon as Jerry mentions the word *immigrant*:

> I didnay say "an immigrant like you" or "unlike you I am an immigrant" or "I am not an immigrant, like yourself, or unlike yourself'. Nayn of that stuff. I didnay say fucking nothing. Ah but conversations are fraught, deadly dangerous. Then too the poor guy, the driver, just out for his 12- or 14-hour shift trying to earn a dollar and he gets hit by me.
>
> The chat was now at an end.[120]

Not unlike Murdie in *A Chancer*, Jerry instinctively tries to establish a link based on solidarity and shared identity. Ranking among the immigrant underclass himself, he appeals to the taxi driver's

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[118] Kelman, A *Chancer* 40.
[119] Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel* 100.
[120] Kelman, *You Have to be Careful* 6.

sense of belonging but his answer is the same as Tammas' – silence. As a result, the American working class does not seem to enjoy more optimistic perspectives on solidarity and mutual aid than that of Scotland. Post-industrial capitalism appears to have devoured workers' autonomy everywhere.

Sammy in *How late* counts as another example of Kelman's estranged characters whom Craig labels "the leftovers of the collapse of working class life"[121]. Recalling his experience of a young exploited worker employed at a construction site in England, Sammy describes his inability to speak out and protest against injustice. He admits that "it was up to Sammy; it was him to speak. For some reason he couldnay. He waited and waited."[122]. Instead of taking extreme measures and rising against the corporate oppression, Sammy eventually submits to the management's malevolence and keeps quiet like Tammas.

Speaking of the gradual decline of working-class solidarity, "A Sour Mystery" gives an intimate insight into the changing pattern of proletarian perspectives on relationships. The protagonist expresses discontent over the noncommittal attitude of modern working-class couples who do not follow the enduring legacy of unity and loyalty. Comparing the past with the present, he points out that "People spent their life together. It was taken for granted. Working-class people, blue-collar communities. . . . They could not be separated."[123]. He testifies to the collapse of working-class solidarity which has fragmented people who used to take comfort in their unity.

Judging from these dreary examples, Kelman presents "a working class that is powerless, sundered, and eventually incapable of effecting change or any sort of social renewal."[124]. Even though some of his characters struggle to revive the romantic spirit of solidarity and resistance, they are swept by the tide of modern anonymity and indifference.

[121] Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel* 100.
[122] Kelman, *How late* 289.
[123] Kelman, *If it is your life* 77.
[124] Hunter 48.

III
Kafka on the Clyde

As far as narrative devices are concerned, Kelman follows a repetitive pattern of uneventful plots that foreground concrete everyday situations. This tendency to focus on the ontological aspect of human condition underlies Kelman's affinity with the European existentialist tradition. Drawing on works by Kafka, Dostoevsky, and Camus, Kelman has perfected his technique of plotless narratives that avoid abstract descriptions and contextualization.

Despite Kelman's structurally limited choice of story setting, there is a sense of development in his seemingly recursive work. Employing the existentialist strategy of episodic tales that highlight the uneventful nature of daily routines, he refuses to accommodate conventional expectations imposed by realism. Instead of entertaining his readership by stories of reason and meaningful outcome, Kelman resists giving explanations or cohesive clues. Alluding to the modern existentialist tradition of Delueze and Beckett, Kelman's disjoint narratives contrast a lack of progress with pursue of change. Consequently, his experimental approach to the plot and characters' actions prompts a challenging analysis.

11. 'Wee horrors': Authentic Stories and Abnormal Events

Dealing with impoverished characters that inhabit unhealthy environments, Kelman's minimalistic style reflects the microstructure of ordinary urban life in slums. His protagonists are constantly forced to cope with their poor living conditions and repeatedly relive the unspeakable agony of their uneventful existence.

"Nice to be Nice" represents a fine example of Kelman's commitment to portraying fleeting moments of everyday torment. The short story features an elderly man who decides to complain against a pending eviction of his neighbour, a mother of four who cannot afford to pay the bills. The opening lines of the story allow no context to locate the plot: "Strange thing wis it stertit oan a Wedinsday, A mean nothing ever sterts oan a Wedinsday kis it's the day afore pay day in A'm skint."[125]. Without any proper introduction, the reader learns only later that the 'strange thing' is a cataphoric reference to the man's effort to confront the housing corporation that owns their neighbourhood. In the end though, he does not succeed in persuading the corporation's clerk not to evict the mother. Instead, he wakes up in a hospital a few days later only to realize that he suffered a heart attack while shouting at the clerk. He concludes the story with his worries about

[125] Kelman, *An Old Pub* 106.

the mother and her children because "is far is A know they've still nae wherr tae go. A mean – nice to be nice – know whit A mean?"[126].

Speaking of the outcome, nothing happens because the man does not manage to avert his neighbour's eviction. As a result of not achieving any productive effect at the end, the story foregrounds the momentary situation of human existence rather than its aftermath. Moreover, there does not seem to be any proper beginning or end at all. Refusing to accept Wednesday as an appropriate starting point, the protagonist ironically comments on the absence of a conventionally contextualized beginning of the story. Pointing out the absurdity of the issue, he actually voices Kelman's narrative theory that

> You don't need any beginning, middle and end at all. All you have to do is show this one day in maybe this person's life and it'll be horror. And it's a case of artistic selection in the sense that – O.K. you've got know when to begin and when to stop. When to allow the camera to begin and when to cut the camera off. That will assume the artistic mind or perception behind it. But that's all. There's no need to be saying or thinking 'When's the murder or bank robbery going to happen?'. No such abnormal event will occur – the kind of event that seems to motivate almost all mainstream fiction whether in book or screen form. In reality these events are abnormal. The whole idea of the big dramatic event, of what constitutes 'plot', only assumes that economic security exists.[127]

Contrasting the uneventful nature of ordinary life with artificially invented dramatic plots, Kelman gives evidence that authentic fiction stems from everyday experience that is far less exciting than popular crime stories. Kelman shows the contradiction between readers' unsatisfying reality and their obsession with larger-than life heroes they can identify with. Replacing their everyday nightmares with illusions fostered by popular fiction, they forget about the superficial quality of such mimetic interpretations of 'real' life. In Kelman's opinion, only economically successful writers who do not face the horrors of ordinary life can produce literature that deals with rare events such as thrilling murders or bank robberies.

Kelman's distaste for 'abnormal' dramatic fiction materializes in *You Have to be Careful*, where the protagonist Jerry dreams of becoming a crime writer. He desperately strives to write a detective story but time and again he finds out that his efforts are fruitless, especially "when I read the stuff the day efter it wasnay good craic, it was boring shite."[128]. Therefore, it is likely to assume that Kelman turns Jerry into his mouthpiece as far as his thoughts on genre fiction are concerned. For one thing, Jerry is an impoverished immigrant who suffers from tedious low-

[126] Kelman, *An Old Pub* 114.
[127] qtd. in Kövesi 9.
[128] Kelman, *You Have to be Careful* 48.

quality jobs and poor housing conditions. Consequently, he fits Kelman's belief that artificially crafted dramatic events such as crime stories are 'boring shite' because they are not based on genuine life experience. Conversely, Jerry does not realize he already lives the most authentic story there is – his own dreadful life of an underprivileged working-class individual who endures economic insecurity.

Focusing on the tiniest facets of daily routines, Kelman advocates stories that lack conventional structure of the plot. Concerning the absence of a contextualized beginning and plot development, "Wee horrors" resembles "Nice to be Nice" in its acute minimalism. It describes appalling living conditions in an urban slum inhabited by a family whose father is looking for his children. Ruminating on the dilapidated neighbourhood that is littered with infinite piles of rubbish, the father stresses the perpetual threat of infections spread by ubiquitous armies of filthy parasites. Without any introductory beginning, the short story opens: "The blackcourt was thick with rubbish as usual. What a mess. . . . Fleas were the problem. It seemed like every night of the week we were having to root them out once the weans came in."[129]. Although a pest-control assistant arrives to deal with the vermin, there is no conclusion because the situation is not resolved – the family remains in the slum without any future improvement.

Deliberately omitting beginnings and conclusions, Kelman emphasizes the continuous nature of life that cannot be divided into individual segments. Instead of nourishing the illusion of formally structured narratives to provide navigation, Kelman's fiction takes advantage of "the existentialist notion of 'throwness': the idea that we simply find ourselves, without explanation, within a situation."[130] Therefore, the reader faces disorientation caused by absent contextualization as in the case of *How late* where the protagonist Sammy wakes up in an unknown location with amnesia:

> Ye wake in a corner and stay there hoping yer body will disappear, the thoughts smothering ye; these thoughts; but ye want to remember and face up to things, just something keeps ye from doing it, why can ye no do it; the words filling yer head: then the other words; there's something far far wrong; ye're no a good man, ye're just no a good man.[131]

The lack of descriptive expressions highlights the impossibility to identify the context of the situation which does not offer any coherent links. Kelman throws the reader into this moment at the very outset of *How late* without any pretext. Even though this paragraph triggers the story at the microstructure level, the reader cannot specify the actual beginning of the narrative because it

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[129] Kelman, *the Giro* 188.
[130] Laurence Nicoll, "Kelman and the Existentialists," *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman*, ed. Scott Hames (Edinburgh: EUP, 2010) 122.
[131] Kelman, *How late* 1.

is only referred to later on. Consequently, Sammy's initial awakening and amnesia mirror Kelman's strategy of selecting a particular sample of one's life and scrutinizing its nightmarish implications.

In addition to the notion of 'throwness', *How late* is a masterpiece of Kelman's plotless narrative. Stretching over the period of approximately one week in Sammy's life, the reader follows the protagonist's mistreatment inflicted by various state authorities while he roams the streets and seeks refuge in local pubs. During that short period of time nothing actually happens at all. Sammy wakes up with a hangover, is prosecuted by the police and tries to come to terms with his newly acquired loss of sight. Eventually, he gets in a taxi and leaves. Sammy's problems are far from resolved; he does not receive any financial benefit for his new handicap nor does he learn the whereabouts of his partner Helen. Instead of a properly structured plot, *How late* is a sequence of Sammy's episodic situations that do not contain any 'abnormal' events. As far as the existentialist overtones of Kelman's narrative strategy are concerned, Nicoll argues that

> Attention to ordinary common incidents that comprise the diurnal reality of ordinary common people entails a literature with no extravagant plots, no grand progressive narratives where the poor orphan discovers that she is in fact an heiress. Instead, literature is built from, around and within small, applauseless, individual lives.[132]

Indeed, *How late* does not leave the line of Kelman's uneventful stories that stem from ordinary lives of undistinguished individuals. Portraying seemingly insignificant events of a common life such as poor housing conditions and industrial accidents, Kelman highlights their motionless nature. Hardly any of his stories is concluded because they describe a reality that stands still and condemns the individuals to relive their daily *Sisyphean* ordeals. Consequently, these ordinary events, which Kelman describes as "very routine horrors, the things that make up everyday reality for such an enormous proportion of population,"[133] are pivotal to his fiction that foregrounds the sinister significance of casual situations and their numbing effect on the participants.

12. Concrete Facts and Genre Fiction

Speaking of Kelman's attention to 'routine horrors,' the one-paragraph short story "Acid" epitomizes his endeavour to stress the bare facts without any evaluative judgment. Instead of charging the story with melodramatic pathos, Kelman depicts an emotionally detached father

[132] Nicoll 122.
[133] qtd. in Bernstein 52.

who pulls half of his son's dead body out of an acid vat while a group of onlookers stand wordless before the horrific scene. Kelman delivers the story in an indifferent fashion, which reflects his opinion that

> . . . if you can put forward the fact, then you can put forward the hair-raisingness of the experience, you know, which is why I go after all those wee effects, such as no abstractions – everything's concrete. It's only through the concrete that you actually get the terror. … If you state those terrible things that go on in a factory, if you just put them down, then you'll get the horror of it, you don't have to say 'This is horrible.' . . . That's what Kafka does.[134]

Admittedly, the short story produces a substantial amount of 'hair-raisingness' thanks to Kelman's brief documentary style that avoids any authorial judgments. Presenting the reader with absolutely concrete events which lack momentum, Kelman's stories share "the existential statement of a basic situation."[135]. Concerning "Acid" in particular, he deliberately omits appraising expressions because the unsettling image of the son's mutilated body and resigned father suffice to elicit horror. There is no need for any extra aesthetic devices – a mere statement of the fact conveys the intended message.

Kelman's method of revealing the absurdities and horrors of everyday life through the detailed image of an individual who experiences daily hideous routines, gives us an idea about Kelman's attitude towards realism. Speaking of authentic representation of reality, Davies argues that

> The relation between realism, as a literary form, and the reality it represents appears . . . rather like that of Marxism, which is after all the healthy child of philosophical realism, and which aims, too, to strip away the superficial appearances of things in order to reveal the real relations of 'typical characters under typical circumstances'.[136]

Therefore, Kelman takes advantage of raw literary realism to emphasize the existentialist aspect of human condition. Avoiding contextualization and authorial judgments, he produces genuine stories that are rid of any artificial interventions from the author. Certainly, Kelman aspires to show the real relations of 'typical characters under typical circumstances', which differ from the traditional paradigm of working-class fiction. The majority of his protagonists defy the expectations imposed by social and literary conventions.

For example, Tammas in *A Chancer* does not want to work even though his relatives urge him to do so. Refusing to live up to the proletarian stereotype, he challenges the myth of a productive

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[134] qtd. in Bernstein 52–3.
[135] Nicoll 125.
[136] Tony Davies, "Unfinished Business: Realism and Working-Class Writing," *The British Working-Class Novel in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jeremy Hawthorn (London: Edward Arnold, 1984) 129.

masculine worker. Correspondingly, Patrick Doyle in *A Disaffection* is far from fulfilling the role of a state-sponsored agent of education. Furthermore, other Kelman's characters are supposed to be economically productive too, but they choose to stay unemployed instead. In other words, Kelman's protagonists might appear to live under typical circumstances associated with their urban underclass status, but they are by no means typical characters who comply with working-class stereotypes.

With respect to popular modes of English literature, Kelman remains extremely critical of their mimetic claim to represent authentic reality. He believes that it intentionally produces stories and characters that are far removed from everyday experience. Therefore, Kelman denies any link between genuine reality and traditional English literature, especially genre fiction in particular. He insists that reality and conventional literary realism are contradictory:

> Ninety-nine per cent of traditional English literature concerns people who never have to worry about money at all. We always seem to be watching or reading of emotional crises among folk who live in a world of great fortune both in matters of luck and money; stories and fantasies about rock stars and film stars, sporting millionaires and models . . . Or else we are given straight genre fiction; detectives and murderers and cops . . . The unifying feature of all genre fiction is the way it denies reality. This is structural – in other words, if reality had a part to play in genre fiction then it would stop being called genre fiction.[137]

Kelman's criticism of mainstream English literature draws on his rejection of the so called *abnormal events* which occur only in writings of those who are economically secure. He argues that genre fiction is based on unrealistic narrative structures and larger-than-life characters, who are not occupied with daily concerns but schemes designed by elitist writers. In other words, economic security produces literature that disregards the uneventful nature of reality, and favours 'abnormal' events which tend to be misinterpreted as genuine realism.

Conversely, McGlynn contends that Kelman's conception of realism is more challenging because he "makes us aware that although we have come to accept certain modes as more realistic than others, any act of writing involves so many conventions that the claim of approximating reality may be misdirected"[138]. She basically reinforces Kelman's view that not all literature labelled as Realism must have necessary anything to do with reality. For that reason, he employs the existential strategy of plotless narratives to achieve ultra-authentic representation of reality, and question popular mainstream fiction.

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[137] Kelman, *Judges* 70–1.
[138] Mary McGlynn, "'Middle-Class Wankers' and Working-Class Texts: The Critics and James Kelman," *Contemporary Literature* 43.1 (2002): 52. *JSTORE*. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 21 Mar. 2010 <http://www.jstore.org>.

13. Lack and Becoming: Changing Kelman?

Kelman's consistent implementation of uneventful narratives begs an important question whether his fiction experiences some developmental changes or follows a completely uniform pattern. Judging from the motionless effect of his stories that seem to deny any noticeable progress, it is extremely tempting to conclude that Kelman's fiction has not changed at all. However, his recent output indicates a rather ambiguous answer. Therefore, a generalized assessment of the existentialist imprint on Kelman's work will shed some light on the course of his fiction.

As far as Kelman's philosophical affiliations to the existentialist thought are concerned, Gardiner associates his Booker prize winning novel *How late* with Deleuze and Guattari's most renowned book *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), which identifies lack as an obstruction to desire imposed by capitalism rather than an original state generated by desire.[139] Sammy unquestionably lacks a number of things ha has lost or never had. He repeatedly regrets that his girlfriend Helen has gratuitously left him destitute with nobody he can rely on. Moreover, Sammy has also lost his sight as a result of a violent collision with the police.

Nonetheless, he refuses to accept lack as a permanent handicap. The fact that Sammy has gone blind does not seem to bother him at all. In fact, he welcomes this unfortunate condition as part of his life progress. Surprisingly, Sammy does not yield to gloomy spleen but expects new exciting experience:

> He was definitely blind but. Fucking weird. Wild. It didnay feel like a nightmare either, that's the funny thing. Even psychologically. In fact it felt okay, an initial wee flurry of excitement but no what ye would call panic-stations. . . . Christ it was even making him smile, shaking his head at the very idea, imagining himself telling people; . . . Even in practical terms, once the nonsense passed, he started thinking about it; this was a new stage in life, a development. A new epoch![140]

Instead of accepting his blindness with resignation, Sammy perceives this lack as a challenge to test his abilities. The very idea of coping with a new situation lifts his spirits immensely because it is a remarkable change, which defies the static nature of his humdrum existence.

Despite the initial awkwardness, Sammy immediately starts to adjust his life and accommodate all his needs with respect to his new condition. Due to his adverse experience with police brutality and tiresome bureaucratic procedures, he learns to trust no one. Following his

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[139] see Michael Gardiner, "Kelman * Deleuze * Beckett," *Journal of Irish Scottish Studies* 1.1 (2007): 241–2. 20 Jan. 2012 <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/riiss/JISS/Gardiner_Kelman_Deleuze_Beckett.pdf>.

[140] Kelman, *How late* 10–11.

resourceful instinct, Sammy makes his own walking stick and sets off in quest of his financial compensation for being blinded by the police. He does not give in even when a doctor and government clerks refuse to treat him with respect. Therefore, "rather than accepting his lack and seeking a Freudian cure," Sammy "takes each of the innumerable problems the law hands him as another starting-point for an endless *becoming*."[141].

Indeed, every obstacle he faces represents a new situation he has to get accustomed to. These encounters keep Sammy in motion and stimulate his drive to overcome them. Therefore it is likely to interpret the vicious circle of endless mistreatment as a process that prevents Sammy from being paralysed. With a stubborn countenance, he fiercely resists to stop and surrender: "He kept going. A battler man that was what he was. One thing about the Sammy fellow, a fucking battler. If ye had asked him he would have telt ye: nay brains but he would aye battle like fuck."[142]. Consequently, the ostensible immobility of Sammy's life is counterbalanced by the dynamism of his personal creed that urges him to 'keep going'. Drawing a comparison between the effects of lack and Sammy's perpetual becoming, Gardiner argues that

> Where lack fixes the person to a life of working for some final purpose, of earning her way back to normality (in Freud, the 'normally neurotic'), for Sammy, as for Delueze's schizoids and for Beckett's oddly contextless somnambulists, the only thing that really never changes is that things are always changing. Sammy continues to batter on without any nostalgic or clinical wish for things to be as they once were, or as the law in its many forms may want him to believe they once were.[143]

The fact that Sammy is determined to move forward and jettison his past is justified in the novel's conclusion. He decides to leave to leave the city, which implies the ongoing process of becoming. Abandoning the known territory and past experience, Sammy overcomes his lack by pursuing endless struggle to 'batter on'.

From the formalist perspective, leaving/becoming is a peculiar quality shared by all Kelman's major protagonists and therefore it could be identified as the fundamental form of his fiction. Speaking of his preceding novels, *The Busconductor Hines* shows its protagonist thinking of immigrating to Australia to escape the horrendous conditions of a Glasgow slum. Moreover, the theme of leaving turns up again towards the novel's end when Hines decides to leave the union meeting that is called in his behalf and start working again. Even though Hines refuses to participate in a collective direct action against the company's management, he frequently mocks

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[141] Gardiner, "Kelman * Delueze" 245.
[142] Kelman, *How late* 47.
[143] Gardiner, "Kelman * Delueze" 247.

his superiors and questions their authority. For that reason, his rebellious spirit that impels him to keep going resembles Sammy's stubborn insistence on rejecting the remainders of his lack.

In a similar fashion, Tammas in *A Chancer* considers emigration to "Any fucking place!"[144], because he is penniless and frustrated by the sameness of his life. Refusing to accept lack, he leaves his girlfriend and job respectively only to realize that the only solution is to leave the city entirely. Eventually, the novel closes with Tammas on the road ready to hitchhike away. The act of his final departure exemplifies Tammas' pursue of change/becoming which defies the paralysing effects of Delueze's lack.

Conversely, Kelman's later novels mark a watershed in the development of his fiction. With *Translated Accounts* (2001) Kelman finally managed to leave the typical urban setting of Glasgow and Scotland in general. The desire of his previous protagonists to leave their hometowns crystallized into an episodic novel that takes place in an unknown foreign country under military occupation. Nevertheless, the anonymous characters whose accounts make up the novel suffer even more than Kelman's urban protagonists. Exposed to atrocities and military harassment, the narrators in *Translated Accounts* lack freedom and justice. Therefore, they try to escape their inhuman conditions and refuse to accept lack just as Sammy in *How late*. Some of them oppose the merciless authorities who perpetrate ruthless oppression while others yearn to leave.

Kelman stays with his next novel *You have to be Careful in the Land of the Free* abroad, namely in the United States where the Scottish immigrant Jeremiah relates his experience of living in America. Disaffected by his immigrant's inferior status and poor job opportunities, Jerry opens the story with saying "I had been living abroad for twelve years and I was gaun hame, maybe forever, maybe a month."[145]. Consequently, the theme of leaving arises immediately at the beginning and aligns Jerry with the rest of Kelman's protagonist, who reject lack for the sake of becoming.

In addition, *You have to be Careful* allowed Kelman to retreat from the episodic structure of his previous books and pursue a rather fluid continuous form, which Nicoll compares to Sterne's existentialist method of narratives based on associations rather than chronological order.[146] Other than that, the novel indicates a return to a familiar territory populated by his idiosyncratic Scottish protagonist(s). This backward move is further reinforced by his most recent books *Kieron Smith, boy* and *If it is your life*, which take place in Glasgow and revive Kelman's urban topics with episodic structure.

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[144] Kelman, *A Chancer* 21.
[145] Kelman, *You Have to be Careful* 1.
[146] see Nicoll 127.

To sum up, Kelman's fiction is anchored in the existentialist thought represented by Kafka's method of concrete uneventful narrative. His protagonists embody Delueze and Guattari's modern interpretation of lack and becoming, which is reflected in their efforts to move on and abandon paralysing nostalgia. Despite Kelman's recent variations of story setting and structure, the form of endless becoming has remained central to his fiction. As a result, Kelman's unique approach to uprooted characters who appear to be nonpersons, together with his contextually deficient technique of 'throwness' have given rise to Kelmanesque, which has become a "byword for a new "social surrealism," gritty renditions of post-industrial working-class life, particularly as experienced by lone – and lonesome – males who "lose the plot" and are prone to furious flights of fancy."[147]

[147] Willy Malley, "James Kelman," The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature, ed. David Scott Kastan, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford UP, 2006) 190.

IV
Kelman and Demotic Language

I was born and bred in Glasgow
I have lived most of my life in Glasgow
It is the place I know best
My language is English
I write
In my writings the accent is in Glasgow
I am always from Glasgow and I speak English always
Always with this Glasgow accent

This is right enough[148]

Kelman's commitment to working-class life in and around Glasgow has become his genuine trademark that distinguishes him from other urban writers. Relentlessly defending the right of his culture to exist, Kelman has made the anxious relation between the English language and its varieties a key topic of his fiction. Namely, it is the Glasgow patter – the local working-class accent – that Kelman sees as the fundamental feature of his culture. He advocates the usage of colloquialisms and local patois, which in his opinion constitute one's cultural background. Consequently, his stories are pervaded by numerous variations of four-letter words that comprise a large proportion of demotic Glaswegian.

However, Kelman's advocacy of profanities goes beyond the ordinary façade of language controversies that attract publicity and financial revenue. His depiction of the conflict between Standard English and Glasgow dialect aims to emphasize the oppressive nature of modern power structures. Kelman introduces language as a means to help his underclass characters maintain their fading integrity in the face of the establishment's efforts to enforce uniformity.

Despite its political implications, Kelman's treatment of Glasgow vernacular suggests yet another dimension. Paradoxically, he interprets profane expressions as an abundant source of confidence and intellectual activity. Rethinking the meaning and distribution of swear words, Kelman offers a fresh perspective on social taboos and cultural prejudices.

[148] qtd. in Kövesi 58.

14. Unity of Language: The Clash between English and Scots Vernacular

Even though the majority of Kelman's stories are not exclusively written in pure Scots, they largely employ the local dialect as a means of contrast to Standard English. Exploiting the Glasgow patter in particular, Kelman's passionate enthusiasm for demotic speech draws on a long-established tradition of Scots vernacular in Scottish literature. As far as Scots is concerned, its incorporation in literature is not a matter of recent invention. The contemporary Scottish writers who embrace local patois profit from the heritage of Hugh MacDiarmid (1892-1978), the most famous activist of the so called Scottish Literary Renaissance that introduced modernism into Scottish literature in the early twentieth century. Promoting the beauty and innovativeness of the Scottish vernacular, MacDiarmid presently became a well-known literary figure, who endeavoured to follow Ezra Pound's modernist concept of 'make it new'.[149] He aimed to rejuvenate and liberate the Scottish literary tradition from the yoke of the nineteenth-century 'Kailyard' (cabbage-patch) literary movement, which had chiefly indulged in stereotypic pastoral and peasant topics. Refusing to conform to the prevailing influence of Standard English, MacDiarmid believed Scots an essential key to modernist literature:

> The Scots Vernacular is a vast storehouse of just the very peculiar and subtle effects which modern European literature in general is assiduously seeking. . . . The Vernacular is a vast unutilized mass of lapsed observation made by minds whose attitude to experience and whose speculative and imaginative tendencies were quite different from any possible to Englishman and Anglicised Scots to-day.[150]

MacDiarmid's fervent advocacy of the vernacular's beneficial effects materializes in Kelman's fiction, which treats Scots as an inexhaustible reservoir of ordinary people's confidence and identity. He allows his characters to voice their 'speculative and imaginative tendencies' through their own language variety that challenges the hegemony of Standard English. Consequently, Kelman's stories abound with Scots grammatical and lexical features that frequently give rise to social and cultural clashes.

A particular tension between the two language configurations occurs in *The Busconductor Hines*, where the protagonist wonders why his little son Paul prefers saying 'yes' to the Scottish traditional affirmative variant 'aye':

> Heh, listen, how come you say yes instead of aye all the time? Naw son, seriously.

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[149] see Roderick Watson, *The Literature of Scotland: The Twentieth Century* (1984; Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007) 35.

[150] qtd. in Gerard Carruthers, *Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2009) 59–60.

> Paul glanced at him, and then back to television. A child is a dwarfish entity.[151]

Perplexed by his son's Anglicised vocabulary, Hines grows sceptical about the negative influence of English TV channels on Paul. Compared to Hines' imaginative mind that is positively stimulated by the vernacular, his son joins the ranks the assimilated Scots whose speculative potential is affected by Standard English. Therefore, Hines is distressed to witness his son's changing accent that has the power to disrupt his family's integrity and alienate its members.

Kelman revisits the topic of language assimilation in working-class families again in his latest novel *Kieron Smith*, though from a different perspective. In contrast to Hines who questions his son's vocabulary change, Kieron's mother represents an ardent assimilationist who encourages Kieron to drop his vernacular accent for the sake of social climbing. Due to his mother's patronizing interventions, Kieron suffers a minor identity split:

> She did not like me saying aye, and if I said maw, maw was awful and just horrible, she hated it. If I said it to her, Aye maw. Oh she would have hated it. I could never have said it. Aye maw. I said it into my head, Aye maw.
>
> But if it was my pals and I spoke to them, I would just say it then if it was my mother, Oh it is my maw. And they would say it to me. That was how they spoke, and their maws and das too, some of them, that was how they spoke. I said it to my maw.
>
> Oh yes Kieron but they are keelies. My maw said, Do you want to be a keelie all your life? . . . They will be stuck here till they are dead. They will never go anywhere and never amount to anything.[152]

Kieron's attitude towards his accent borders on paranoia because his mother's entreaties contradict the language milieu of his peer community. Without a shadow of a doubt, her suggestions to conform to Standard English and give up Kieron's vernacular are exclusively motivated by economic and political ambitions. She makes it obvious by pointing out the unpromising prospects of Kieron's friends whose demotic language condemns them to underclass life. Even though the parents' approaches to their children's usage of Scots vernacular in *The Busconductor Hines* and *Kieron Smith* are qualitatively opposite, they achieve an equally alienating effect.

Furthermore, Kieron is exposed to assimilationist efforts at school where he faces institutional language racism. While one of his teachers insists that "only you must speak the Queen's English,"[153] another one openly ridicules the children who speak Scots vernacular. In particular, Kieron describes his PE teacher who "had a posh voice and ye had to speak in a posh

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[151] Kelman, *Hines* 214–15.
[152] Kelman, *Kieron* 92.
[153] Kelman, *Kieron* 207.

voice back to him else he kidded on he did not hear ye or else in yer own voice mimicking ye. I didnay dooo it please surr it wisnay meee droaped the bawww."[154]. As a result, Kieron experiences subtle indoctrination by power structures represented by educational authorities, who ensure language uniformity and discipline. Kelman's depiction of such language animosities implies that the difference between the standard form and its dialects is structural, and serves a political agenda.

Speaking of the relationship between standard language and its hybridised versions that are considered deviations from the established norm, Delueze and Guattari dispel the myth of language unity:

> The unity of language is fundamentally political. There is no mother tongue, only a power takeover by a dominant language that at times advances along a broad front, and at times swoops down on diverse centers simultaneously . . . universals in linguistics have no more existence in themselves than they do in economics and are always concluded from a universalization or a rendering-uniform involving variables. Constant is not opposed to variable; it is a treatment of the variable opposed to other kinds of treatment, or continuous variation . . .[155]

Apart from the political implications of enforced language unity in education, Kelman also examines the tendency to prefer the standard form over colloquialisms in bureaucratic procedures. Colloquialisms tend to challenge the dominant language form especially when the Glasgow patter confronts the official language of state authorities. Such is the case of Sammy in *How late* who visits a hospital to report his recent vision loss and receive the appropriate treatment. Relating the circumstances of his medical condition caused by police brutality, Sammy is asked by a female hospital clerk to redefine his colloquial statement:

> She carried on talking: What's entered here is the phrase 'they gave me a doing', and it's entered expressly as a quotation. But it's a colloquialism and not everyone who deals with yer claim will understand what it means. I felt that it was fair to use physical beating by way of an exposition but if you prefer something else…is there anything else ye can think of?[156]

Sammy's demotic speech is not compatible with Standard English and therefore he is redressed by the official to rephrase his original statement. He encounters a striking example of the language hierarchy which treats local dialects and colloquialisms as inferior variables. In fact, the clerk, who is employed by state power structures, implicitly attacks Sammy's identity that is represented by his communication skills.

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[154] Kelman, *Kieron* 319.
[155] qtd. in Kövesi 29.
[156] Kelman, *How late* 103.

Concerning the significance of Sammy's verbal confrontations with state authorities, Craig contends that "Standard language, by having rules which give us the illusion of a shared and stable world, conceals the nothingness from which language emerges; dialect, by breaking those rules, unveils the emptiness from which standard language defends us."[157]. Despite Sammy's bold refusals to accept the 'illusion of a shared world', he is eventually forced to reinterpret his own words 'they gave me a doing' as "It was a fight."[158]. Consequently, the bureaucratic process coerces him to acknowledge the fallacy of presumed superiority of Standard English.

Conversely, Kelman's most experimental novel to date, *Translated Accounts*, departs from the issue of Scots vernacular altogether. Set in an unknown militarised territory, the novel's preface informs the reader that it comprises of individuals' accounts, which "have been transcribed and/or translated into English, not always by persons native to the tongue."[159]. Consequently, none of the accounts/chapters include expressions explicitly associated with any dialect, Scots in particular. Instead they are often written in broken English that resembles a mechanically processed translation carried out by a computer. The mechanic reproduction of the accounts undermines the validity of language differentiations that have become meaningless:

> And for how many languages? One may know all languages thus inferior to all peoples. I know all languages, I am inferior to all peoples. It is not sarcasm. I am capable of sarcasm, this is not it. They spoke a dialect that rendered them inferior, but they were not inferior, they did not allow of it. But myself, yes. If it mattered, it did not.[160]

As the preface suggests, the accounts may be unreliable due to their poor translation. As a result, the paragraph cited above does not give any unambiguous clues what language renders what speakers inferior. In fact, there is a sense of totalitarian control imposed by the translators who possess the power to mediate and interpret the accounts. Therefore, the novel underlines the biased notion of the unity of language that is maintained to achieve uniformity and control. The broken language of the translated accounts shows no hints of any mother tongue because they had been processed and decanted. Despite the fact that it is Kelman's only novel that does not specify the dialect of the speakers, it marks a significant break with his otherwise explicitly vernacular stories.

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[157] Cairns Craig, "Kelman's Glasgow Sentence," *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman*, ed. Scott Hames (Edinburgh: EUP, 2010) 85.
[158] Kelman, *How late* 103.
[159] James Kelman, *Translated Accounts* (London: Vintage, 2002) ix.
[160] Kelman, *Translated Accounts* 317.

15. 'ah jist opens ma mooth and oot it comes': Language of the Gutter

> A letter came from a schoolteacher of English with an antipathy to 'the language of the gutter'. She found my stories disgusting and unreadable and did not see why they should have been forced upon her. She and her friend were among the small number who left the class never to return.[161]

Kelman's recollection of the censorious comments he faced at the beginning of his career in the evening classes of creative writing epitomizes his controversial advocacy of the *explicit* language. Employing a variety of four-letter words in his stories, he has become well-known as a passionate defender of what has been labelled 'gutter languages'; languages that are typically abundant with expletives.

Kelman introduces vulgar words such as 'fuck' or 'cunt' as part of his characters' cultural heritage which makes them acquire the properties of plain expressive words without their offensive connotation. However, they are a source of conflicts that arise between speakers of different social and political backgrounds. For example, Hines frequently uses expletives while dealing with annoying passengers. His explicit vocabulary then causes minor misunderstandings every now and then, especially when the bus is full and he refuses to take any more passengers:

> Sorry mrs you'll have to get off.
> Dont give that, I've been standing since half-past one waiting on you.
> Come on, off the bloody bus.
> The woman snorted.
> Fuck sake.
> I beg your pardon – dont you dare use that kind of language with me.[162]

Apparently, the middle-aged woman is appalled by Hines' gutter language. Unfortunately, there are no clues suggesting her social or economic background to come to a conclusion based on the differences between Standard English and its dialects. Nevertheless, her feminine role is more important because she ranks among Kelman's female idiosyncratic characters who remind men of their linguistic transgressions.[163]

Concerning explicit language, Kelman highlights women's admonishing role again in *A Disaffection* where Patrick Doyle's gutter language offends his colleague Alison. In contrast to Patrick's rebellious nature, she represents a typical role model of a young teacher who takes her

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[161] Kelman, afterword, *An Old Pub* 125.
[162] Kelman, *Hines* 27.
[163] see Jones 117.

educational responsibilities extremely seriously. Even though Patrick's offensive language is not meant to insult her in particular, she dislikes it:

> It was the word of course, arse, she didnt like it and hadni been able to cope when he had said it. It was an odd word right enough. Arse. There arent many odder words. Arse. I have an arse. I kicked you on the arse. This is a load of arse. Are-s. It was an odd word. But in this life there are many odd things, an infinite multitude of them.[164]

Eventually, Alison makes Patrick reconsider and apologise for his profane language. Although he submits to her will, he marvels at the insignificance of the word 'arse' with respect to the infinity of other vocabulary items. Reflecting on Patrick's obsession with semantic meanings, Craig argues that he is "sentenced by language to a life sentence in language, a tragic sufferer from the 'linguistic turn' in modern thought that sees humanity necessarily trapped in 'the prison-house of language'."[165]. Therefore, Patrick arrives at a promising conclusion; 'arse' is definitely a disturbing expression, but it appears inconsequential compared to the great number of other disturbing and hideous matters in human life.

In contrast, Sammy in *How late* does rarely reflect on his offensive language. In most cases, the moment he opens his mouth a cadence of expletives ensues with the word 'fuck' and its modifications in particular. Sammy's linguistic (in)competence represents his resistance to state power structures that treat him as their inferior.

Besides Sammy's previous humiliation in the hospital clerk's office, he experiences further mistreatment from his general practitioner. Instead of helping Sammy and providing medical opinion, the doctor's evasive answers explicitly provoke Sammy who erupts into fury in return. He cannot stay calm and respectful anymore because the doctor malevolently exploits Sammy's inarticulate questions concerning his medical condition:

> So ye're no saying I'm blind?
> It isn't for me to say.
> Aye but you're a doctor.
> Yes.
> So ye can give an opinion.
> Anyone can give an opinion.
> Aye but to do with medical things.
> Mister Samuels, I have people waiting to see me.
> Christ sake!
> I find your language offensive.

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[164] Kelman, *A Disaffection* 146.
[165] Craig, "Sentence," 83.

> Do ye. Ah well fuck ye then. Fuck ye! Sammy crumpled the prescription and flung it at him: Stick that up yer fucking arse!
>
> Yes good morning.
>
> Ye fucking eedjit! Sammy stood there. He started smiling, then stopped it. Fucking bastard!
>
> Yes, thank you.
>
> Fucking thank you ya bastard.[166]

There is a blatant linguistic divide between the reserved educated doctor and Sammy, whose language turns out to be an endless sequence of expletives. The doctor is an articulate person, who uses the standard 'yes' affirmation compared to Sammy's marked 'aye'. He is able to control his temper whereas Sammy is easily carried away by the doctor' vague and infuriating answers.

Ironically, it is the doctor who happens to be offended, even though Sammy is the victim of the doctor's insidious verbal manipulation. In the end, Sammy's lack of self-control and language refinement reveals his powerlessness.

Consequently, the proper standard language becomes a means of control and manipulation, whereas a minor underclass accent is rendered secondary. Despite the fact that Sammy retains his cultural identity represented by words like 'eedjit', which is a Scots term for an idiot, he can resist but not overcome the dominance of Standard English. Expletives are Sammy's only defence system, which enables him withstand the overwhelming pressure of power structures as he keeps smiling after insulting the doctor. Four-letter words help to maintain Sammy's integrity and supply him with self-confidence. Sammy's endless struggle against official authorities that refuse to acknowledge his language reflects Kelman's idea of the direct relation between one's language and culture. He argues, that

> language is the culture – if you lose your language you've lost your culture, so if you've lost the way your family talk, the way your friends talk, then you've lost your culture, and you're divorced from it. That's what happens with all these stupid fucking books by bad average writers because they've lost their culture, they've given it away. Not only that, what they're saying is it's inferior, because they make anybody who comes from that culture speak in a hybrid language, whereas they speak standard English. And their language is the superior one. So what they're doing, in effect, is castrating their parents, and their whole culture, and saying 'Right, that's fucking rubbish, because it's not the language of books. I speak the language of books, so does everyone I meet at, so do the lecturers and so does my new girlfriend, and they all speak the real way.'[167]

Kelman's outrage against the efforts to suppress minor languages and cultures is mirrored in Sammy's experience with state authorities in particular. During his arrest, Sammy is interrogated

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[166] Kelman, *How late* 225–6.
[167] qtd. in Kövesi 52.

by the police officers whom he calls 'sodjers'. While giving an account of his regular routine in pubs, he is told to avoid saying four-letter words:

> Ye meet guys and ye sit on blathering. That Glasgow scene man cunts buy ye drink and ye have to buy them one back.
>
> Dont use the word 'cunts' again, it doesnay fit in the computer.[168]

He is forced to succumb to the authorities and official procedures represented by the impersonal system of computer-managed bureaucracy, which recognises only Standard English. Consequently, Sammy has to adjust his language and therefore part of his cultural identity. He becomes inferior to the culture and language of the official state institutions which do not acknowledge his demotic dialect. The only difference between his experience with the hospital clerk and the police's reproach is that the latter is imperative – this time it is an order and Sammy has to yield.

However, it is also important to note that Sammy and Kelman himself actually speak the language of the power structures they defy, though not in the standardized form. Therefore, Scott suggests that the word 'language' be replaced by the term 'sociolect' because Kelman attacks the economic and social effects of Standard English rather than the language itself.[169]

16. Abrogation: Resisting Power and Cultural Marginalization

Speaking of *How late* in the post-colonial context, Sammy's unfortunate language escapades may be easily interpreted as a struggle against a colonising power. Apart from the bureaucratic pressure on Sammy to adjust his demotic speech, he is also encouraged to use Standard English as the language of a superior ideology. Due to his visual handicap, he is offered to be represented by a person called Ally who would speak on Sammy's behalf to arrange for his financial compensation and medical treatment. Even though Ally's metaphoric name suggests he is Sammy's assistant, he functions rather as a link between the colonising power structures and the colonised minority embodied in Sammy. Consciously adopting the assimilationist agenda, Ally explicitly urges Sammy to abandon his language in order to cooperate with the establishment:

> Right… Look eh pardon me; just one thing; ye're gony have to watch yer language; sorry; but every second word's fuck. If ye listen to me ye'll see I try to keep an eye on the auld words.
>
> . . .

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[168] Kelman, *How late* 160.

[169] see Jeremy Scott, "Talking Back at the Centre: Demotic Language in Contemporary Scottish Fiction," *Literature Compass* 2 (2005): 5. 20 Jan. 2012 < http://kar.kent.ac.uk/3262/1/j.1741-4113.2005.00148.pdf >.

> I'm no meaning nothing; it's just it's a good habit to get info for official purposes.
>
> . . .
>
> See what ye have to understand about repping; I need to think the way they do. I've got to know all the minutae, the wee details, the words naybody else looks for, the fine print as they say. . . . It's how they think and how they act, the authorities I'm talking about, how they breathe; how they hold their knife and fork, the kind of car they drive; where they stay – which is hard by the way cause they hate folk knowing where they stay. And that's afore ye reach the rules and regulations and all the different procedures; the protocols and the formalities, when ye bow and when ye scrape; when ye talk and when ye hold yer wheesht – ye follow me, when to shut the auld gub: all important – when to wear a tie and when to loosen the top button. . . . It's them that make the rules.[170]

In fact, Ally gives a brief overview of the process of colonisation that imposes its own habits and rules on a native culture. He describes the individual stages of assimilation, which starts with imitating the speech and culture of the colonising power, and ends with shutting 'the auld gub' – complete submission. He represents an integrated individual who tempts Sammy to follow suit and restrain his identity by correcting his language. Despite Ally's eloquent speech, Sammy refuses to become assimilated: "Aye, well you're no me. There's a difference between repping somebody and fucking being somebody; know what I'm talking about, being somebody?"[171]

As far as Sammy's refusal to give up his language and identity is concerned, Kelman employs the post-colonial theory of 'abrogation':

> Abrogation refers to the rejection by post-colonial writers of a normative concept of 'correct' or 'standard' English used by certain classes or groups, and of the corresponding concepts of inferior 'dialects' or 'marginal variants'. The concept is usually employed in conjunction with the term appropriation, which describes the process of English adaptation itself, and is an important component of the post-colonial assumption that all language use is a 'variant' of one kind or another (and is in that sense 'marginal' to some illusory standard). Thus abrogation is an important political stance, whether articulated or not, and even whether conscious or not, from which the actual appropriation of language can take place.[172]

Judging from Ally's failure to convince Sammy to relinquish his dialect and submit to the colonising power, Kelman ranks among post-colonial writers who reject the concept of 'correct' English. Instead, Sammy makes a clear distinction between 'representing' somebody and 'being' somebody. Unlike Sammy, who takes pride in his unique identity based on his dialect, Ally's

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[170] Kelman, *How late* 238–9.
[171] Kelman, *How late* 241.
[172] qtd. in Kövesi 169.

purpose is to temporarily take on identities of his clients and become a detached impersonator. He is a homeless parasite who profits from serving the colonial ideology, whereas Sammy mirrors Kelman's belief that "my culture and my language have the right to exist, and no one has the authority to dismiss that right."[173].

Conversely, in the wake of his winning the Man Booker Prize for *How late*, Kelman's interpretation of the relationship between language/sociolect and culture has been questioned by literary authorities who were shocked by the fact that expletives could be identified with culture. Gerald Wagner, one of Kelman's most censorious critics, openly rejected the claim of How late to be a product of culture:

> That the novels which are the main contenders for the [Booker] prize should be characterized respectively by expletives and anal sex speaks volumes about the values of 'serious' literature today. Kelman has defended the monotonously foul-mouthed vocabulary of his books: If the language is taboo, the people are taboo. A culture can't exist without the language of the culture.'
>
> He fails to recognize that, in reality, what he is describing is not properly a 'culture', but the primeval vortex of underdevelopment that precedes culture. If the literary gurus who consider his work 'daring' had any real instinct for adventure, they would unfashionably proclaim that there is a good cultural case to be made for Kelman's people remaining taboo.[174]

Consciously or not, Wagner takes a typically colonialist stand by comparing Kelman's fiction to an underdeveloped stage which cannot be termed 'culture'. Somehow he feels entitled to set the criteria of culture and dismiss entirely Kelman's claim to represent marginalised dialects. Condemning Kelman's explicit fiction as primitive, Wagner actually validates Kelman's criticism of elitist attitudes towards literature.

Nevertheless, Kelman's subsequent novel *Translated Accounts*, published seven years after *How late*, examines the post-colonial discourse even more explicitly. Despite the sudden withdrawal of expletives and local dialects, the novel carries serious anti-colonial overtones. Living in a country that has recently suffered a military invasion or occupation, the anonymous characters are tyrannized by government authorities that impose martial law. The authors of the accounts share a common quality – they comment on the atrocities and injustice committed by the power structures which disregard the natives and their culture:

> I did not love these people. I might have become bitter. They did not love me. They had no regard for me. They saw the mountains I saw the mountains, they saw the mountains of home as I also, yes, I saw home, as they say "their", their mountains I might say "mine", my mountains,

[173] qtd. in Bernstein 47.
[174] qtd. in Kövesi 158.

> our mountains, they say land I said ground. They knew nothing of my language yet believed that they did, believed from that ignorance. They were taught that they knew, their familiarity with that language, yet I was the inferior, become so as also she did[175]

The narrator depicts the appropriation of his homeland by anonymous invading forces that automatically treat the conquered territory and its inhabitants as an underprivileged colony. He stresses the effects of territorial and cultural imperialism, which render the native dialect and its speakers inferior to the colonising power. Bereft of his land and language autonomy, the narrator epitomises the colonial experience of marginalised peoples whose culture Wagner indiscreetly brands 'underdeveloped'.

17. 'enerfuckinggetic': Language Play and Invention

As far as the language of the gutter is concerned, Wagner's judgmental appraisal criticises Kelman's usage of expletives from a single limited perspective. Although four-letter words may be widely held unacceptable and primitive, there is yet another more daring angle to them. They can also be viewed as a source of joy and creativity, which stem from the speakers' ability to modify their language and generate new items.

In the aftermath of Kelman's winning the 1994 Man Booker Prize, he faced countless disputes over the legitimacy of expletives in literature and his right to secure one of the most prestigious literary awards in the world. His victorious novel *How late*, which includes nearly four thousand variations of the expletive 'fuck,'[176] outraged numerous critics and academics who rejected its literary or cultural value. In particular, Rabbi Julia Neuberger, one of the prize-committee judges, stepped down in protest against the novel's success because she was revolted by its "broad Glaswegian dialect, littered with F-words," which "was too much, too inaccessible, and simply too dull."[177] Furthermore, she complained that the novel is a "disgraceful" and "unreadably bad" book, which does not amount to anything but "a drunken Scotsman railing against bureaucracy"[178].

However, there is a reason to believe otherwise. *How late* shows that Glasgow slang does not only incite conflicts with speakers of Standard English and government authorities, but also a rampant smile and delight. Sammy is aware of the playful nature of his dialect which he associates

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[175] Kelman, *Translated Accounts* 320.
[176] see Nicola Pitchford, "How Late It Was for England: James Kelman's Scottish Booker Prize," *Contemporary Literature* 41.4 (2000): 701. *JSTORE*. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 21 Mar. 2010 <http://www.jstore.org>.
[177] qtd. in MacGlynn 50.
[178] qtd. in Bernstein 47.

with the spirit of the city. He relishes roaming the streets that resonate with the exhilarating sound of the Glasgow patter:

> So he liked going out, he liked the pub, no just for the bevy, he liked the crack as well, hearing the patter. . . .
>
> I'm no kidding ye, he said, even just out walking first thing in the morning, ye forget where ye are, then that first Glasgow voice hits ye; it makes ye smile, know what I'm saying, cause it's a real surprise.
>
> And ye feel good, ye know, ye feel good, cheery.[179]

Apparently, Sammy' identity is inextricably bound to the local patois. His allegiance to pub culture far exceeds the purpose of intoxication with alcohol because absorbing the cheerful voice of the locals is a marvellous social experience for Sammy. Engulfed in the coarse but entertaining stream of his dialect, Sammy perceives Glaswegian as a lighthouse that guides him through the streets he can no longer see. Sammy's recent blindness has sharpened his remaining senses and he is able to appreciate a new dimension the amusing rhythm of the Glasgow patter.

Moreover, Sammy also plays with the language and invents new words that prove his creative attitude. Musing about his physical fatigue, he indulges himself with playful variations of lexical items:

> Fuck it but he was tired, he was just bloody tired; knackered and drained, knackered and drained; nay energy; nay fuck all; he just wanted to sleep; to sleep and then wake up; refreshed and fucking enerfuckinggetic, enerfuckinggenetised.[180]

Sammy engages in mentally challenging activity by modifying 'fuck' to create new words. McGlynn argues, that Sammy's ability to operate with the parts of speech and their grammatical functions shows that "Kelman's pyrotechnic profanity challenges marginalisation of certain words and displays an art form that has been regularly and strategically devalued."[181]. Therefore, Sammy's exploitation of expletives in *How late* illustrates their linguistic and social contribution.

Moreover, Kelman's coined expressions consisting of the inserted 'fuck' reflect his political and linguistic affinities with Noam Chomsky. In particular, Sammy's neologisms mirror Chomsky's argument that "one does not merely repeat what one has heard but produces new linguistic forms – often new in one's experience or even in the history of the language – and there are no limits to such innovation."[182]. Indeed, Sammy does not try to imitate and reproduce

[179] Kelman, *How late* 160.
[180] Kelman, *How late* 174.
[181] McGlynn *How late* 26.
[182] qtd. in Kelman, *Judges* 156.

Standard English at all. His clashes with the language of the authorities demonstrate Sammy's rejection of linguistic limitations imposed by power structures.

Concerning the creative nature of the Scottish accent, Kelman introduced the entertaining aspects of gutter languages in his fiction even before the Booker Prize controversy. With respect to the sound quality of the Scottish dialect, Derek's comments in "events in yer life" foreshadow Sammy's enthusiasm for the Glasgow patter:

> He turned off the television. He never usually watched it, he had been out the habit for a long time. Watching it in the morning was especially awful; it was only the Scottish accents made it interesting.[183]

Kelman interprets Scots as a language that positively stimulates human mind, especially in comparison to the ordinary accent of Standard English. Obviously, Derek does not watch the television because in his eyes the Standard English accent of the TV channels is boring. In fact, Kelman depicts the 'correct' form of Standard English as a 'dull' drone, which is exactly the same quality Rabbi Julia Neuberger attributed to Glaswegian dialect a few years later in her critical appraisal of *How late*.

Kelman's advocacy of swearing and its playful effects appears already in *The Busconductor Hines*, where the protagonist's explicit complaints about his job amuse his little son Paul:

> Naw, really I mean it's a piece of nonsense the way some doctors are okay and others – him we've got, baldy bastard, I'm beginning to think he's a C.I.A. plant or some fucking thing.
>
> Paul was watching him; he grinned and Hines ruffled his hair and gave him back the painting. Sandra mouthed something. Eventually she said, It's your language Rab, that's why he's laughing. I'm always expecting to be told he's swearing at the women in the nursery.
>
> Serve them right.[184]

Comparing their company's doctor to 'some fucking thing,' Hines' Glasgow voice affects his son who instinctively smiles at the sound of his dialect. While Hines represents Kelman's claim to associate swearing with one's culture, his wife Sandra stands for a censorious critic who strives to restrain Hines' expletive vocabulary. Using Hines and Sandra's opposite attitudes towards swearing, Kelman depicts the gap between the apologetics who appreciate the entertaining benefits of four-letter words, and their adversaries such as Wagner and Neuberger who wish to censor them. Consequently, Sandra is worried about Hines' negative influence on Paul who could imitate his father and oppose the authorities in the nursery, whereas Hines welcomes the idea as a compensation for his frustration.

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[183] Kelman, *The Burn* 196.
[184] Kelman, *Hines* 23.

Speaking of unorthodox approaches to expletives, Patrick Doyle in *A Disaffection* employs swearing as an educational method. Waging a personal guerrilla warfare against the state educational system, he deliberately encourages his pupils to violate the school's policy by cursing and smoking in the class:

> Now weans, he said, today is Friday and tomorrow is Saturday. I am demanding a bit of order, a bit of order, otherwise I'm closing the pub early. Okay! Right: open your fucking jotters and get scribbling.
>
> . . .
>
> The smiling faces. Pat smiled back at them. . . . I'm a man who is fucking sorely bemused, sorely bemused. And I'm standing here in front of you, right out in the bloody open.[185]

Patrick tries to do away with the authoritarian relationship between the teacher and pupils, and replace it with a rather egalitarian attitude. He uses swearing to produce a relaxed atmosphere, which amuses his pupils and stimulates their critical thinking.

Despite Kelman's argument that vernacular in his fiction is an authentic manifestation of his culture, it is well worth to note that he uses the language as a crafted tool or weapon to achieve his goals.[186] Therefore, the expletives and colloquialisms in his stories are stylized to a certain degree, which is also demonstrated by the fact that Kelman himself does not usually use four-latter words during his interviews.

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[185] Kelman, *A Disaffection* 23–4.

[186] see Scott Hames, "Kelman's Art-Speech," *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman*, ed. Scott Hames (Edinburgh: EUP, 2010) 91.

V
Kelman against Establishment

Kelman's fiction reflects his radical political views that defy authority basically at all levels. His disempowered masculine characters face oppression carried out by state institutions and agents of law enforcement. They are repeatedly victimized by modern government structures which appear to wield an enormous amount of corruptive power over the individual, whose personal liberties are threatened by the emerging framework of authoritarian control. Kelman pictures a claustrophobic world where omnipotent bureaucracy and institutionalization have pervaded all sectors of society, and extended the ominous influence of ruthless state authorities.

Bordering on dystopia, Kelman explores issues of current importance such as mass surveillance and centralized decision making, which result in violations of privacy rights and social control. His endeavour to challenge the establishment and expose its horrendous crimes goes well beyond mere mimetic efforts to describe the injustice they entail. He has developed a particular narrative style that embodies his radical criticism of authoritarian principles as far as politics and literature are concerned. Blending audacious narrative experiments with the absurdist tradition of Beckett and Pinter, Kelman's stories systematically attack the pervasive totality of state structures and their impenetrable hierarchy.

18. 'Fucking officialdom': Bureaucrats and Elitism

Much of Kelman's fiction focuses on his outrage at government institutions and their coercive measures. He frequently contrasts the powerlessness of an individual in the face of imminent threats from various authorities, which exploit the inferiority of the disposed to achieve its goals. Stan, an elderly man in "Nice to be Nice," represents Kelman's typical masculine character that refuses to submit to such threats. Following his spirit of solidarity and compassion, he decides to help his neighbour Moira and her children, who are ordered by a local housing office to leave their flat or else face eviction. Instead of succumbing, he reaches one of the corporation's officials and appeals on Moira's behalf. In the end, Stan realizes that bureaucracy does not allow compromise:

> A done ma best tae see ixplain bit he wisny botherin much in afore A'd finished he butts in sayin that in the furst place he'd ixplained evry thin tae Mrs Donnelly (Moira) in the department hid sent her two letters – in the second place it wis nane I ma bisuness in the he shouted:
>
> Nix please!

> Will A loast ma rag it that in the nix thin A know A'm lyin here in that wis yesterday – Thursday – A'd been oot the gemm since A grabbed the snidey wee clerk by the throat. Lucky A didny strangil him tae afore A collapsed.[187]

Infuriated by the corporation's indifference, Stan eventually gives vent to his anger and physically assaults the clerk who dismisses Stan's entreaties. He learns that an individual cannot reason with power structures because their decisions are not motivated by mutual help but profit. In comparison, Stan is a compassionate person whose sincere concern about human condition and solidarity drive him to assist his poor neighbour regardless any reward or consequences. Therefore, he cannot control his violent emotions when the clerk ridicules his futile efforts.

Contrasting Stan and the corporation's different attitudes, Kelman draws a comparison between the helpless but humane individual and the detached bureaucratic system, which is powered by efficiency rather than sympathy. Moreover, Kelman's decision to transcribe Stan's dialect stresses "the powerlessness of the central protagonist in his attempt to wrangle with forces threatening his immediate community."[188]. As a result, the reader may have difficulties comprehending Stan's narrative due to the phonetic transcription of his encounter with the housing authority. The relative incomprehensibility of the text provides the reader with a unique opportunity to experience Stan's anxieties. While Stan cannot comprehend the clerk's indifference, the reader experiences a similar impression by following Stan's orthographically flawed narrative.

As far as criticism of bureaucracy and elitism is concerned, Kelman's later stories revisit the conflict between underprivileged individuals and empowered authorities. "In with the doctor" features a patient who comes to a doctor to have his back examined. His hostile attitude towards authorities becomes evident at the very beginning, especially when he addresses the doctor 'sir.' Immediately after thus acknowledging the doctor's authority, he regrets doing so: "It was really incredible I could have said such a thing; I dont think I've called anybody sir in years."[189].

Instead of doing his medical duty, the doctor laments the ignorance of ordinary people whom he considers inferior because they do not appreciate his efforts. Consequently, the protagonist is disgusted by the doctor's arrogant speech because "there was a certain amount of elitism showing in his talk and I didnt appreciate it, not one bit. And no just the thing itself but the way he was lumping me in the same boat as him. I felt like saying: What about them ben there man they're fucking sitting suffering!"[190]. Refusing to side with the conceited doctor, the protagonist

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[187] Kelman, *An Old Pub* 114.
[188] Paul Shanks, "Early Kelman," *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman*, ed. Scott Hames (Edinburgh: EUP, 2010) 11.
[189] James Kelman, *Greyhound for Breakfast* (1987; Edinburgh: Polygon, 2008) 128.
[190] Kelman, *Greyhound* 133.

sympathises with the patients sitting in the waiting room. He rejects to participate in the doctor's inhumane approach to his suffering patients, and eventually he dares to reproach the doctor for his elitist sentiments. Bursting in a fit of anger not unlike that of Stan's, he speaks out against the doctor's disregard for his patients' feelings: "when people're waiting to see you man you dont even fucking bother acknowledging them hardly, their existence, you dont even bother, you're quite happy just sitting here fucking complaining to me."[191].

In fact, the hierarchical antagonism between the protagonist and doctor in "In with the doctor" reappears again in Kelman's later stories. Besides his depiction of Sammy's unsuccessful humiliating confrontations with various authorities to receive his financial compensation in *How late*, Kelman's latest book continues to follow a similar pattern as far as his criticism of bureaucracy and elitism is concerned. In particular, the central character in "I am as Putty," who is a disaffected job seeker, articulates his distaste for government institutions and their humiliating procedures. Although he has an appointment with an employment agency's official, the whole matter upsets him because he abhors everything related to bureaucratic administration:

> . . . Fucking officialdom man I hate it, I detest it with a vehemence, total vehemence. . . . A good thing was the woman that worked there. She had her own little place. An office I think, quite comfy as I recall, a desk and chairs, and just so warm, maybe too warm. You felt like telling her to turn down the heating system. But in a lot of these quasi-government places the heating gets controlled by a central body and you don't have any power to turn it down because they keep the fucking temperature the same all over.
>
> These bureaucrats man they would do it everywhere if they could get away with it. Imagine they ruled the world, you would get the same temperature in Greenland as the Mali desert.[192]

The bizarre idea of a heating system controlled by a centralized bureaucratic body mirrors Kelman's criticism of an expansionist state apparatus that can easily devour the powerless individual. Even though the protagonist appreciates the cosy environment of the female official, he is pathologically anxious about the bureaucratic tendency to impose a centralized system of control. His paranoid mind fears the moment bureaucracy takes over the world and deprives individuals of their freedom of choice.

Despite his initial liking for the female official, he leaves her office with a feeling of bitter disillusionment. He feels cheated and mistreated by her deceptive skills which he attributes to bureaucratic authorities in general:

> Such is life. I am just so fucking trusting an individual. I always was. There is that bottom line with bureaucrats and some of the tools of their trade are tricks of deception. They get us doing things

[191] Kelman, *Greyhound* 141.
[192] Kelman, *If it is your life* 257.

> of which we, as it were, are unconscious. We seem to be unconscious. Yet we walk about and act in the world of other humans. It is not so much depressing as something less so, less depressing. I would have said it was not depressing, not at all, when I left the Agency on this occasion.
>
> . . .
>
> She had diverted my attention. She had.
>
> . . .
>
> One's defences are there to be lowered. This problem is singular. It exists for all individuals. The bureaucrat woman and myself were of an age. I had reckoned on a kind of I dont know man honesty. From her. Something. Is 'solidarity' too absurd a concept? Even using the word makes me turn my head a little, as though disguising my own naivety.[193]

Kelman portrays the manipulative nature of bureaucracy, which deceives ordinary people such as the protagonist, who naively believe they can be treated fairly. Instead, they find out bureaucrats do not have any sympathy because they are part of the power structures that exploit the gullibility of mainstream society. Eventually, the protagonist comes to realize that compassion is an old-fashioned virtue without any appeal to state authorities. Therefore, Kelman's world is one of bleak centralized officialdom that crushes the naive attempts of desperate individuals, who ineffectually seek compassion and mutual aid.

19. Police State and Abuse of Power

Kelman's systematic criticism of the state and its bureaucratic institutions emphasizes the abuse of power by various agents of law enforcement. He focuses especially on the coercive role of the police and their exclusive right to use violence against the public in order to enforce obedience. Consequently, his characters are frequently mistreated by the police whose corrupted behaviour fills Kelman's fiction with dystopian atmosphere. Set in repressive environments, his stories question the legitimacy of power structures that disrespect personal freedoms.

Concerning the abuse of power by the police, Tammas in *A Chancer* is Kelman's first major character to introduce the issue which later becomes the bottom line of Kelman's fiction – a consistent critique of a modern police state. Tammas and his friends experience minor police harassment on their way from a pub. Enjoying the night on the street, they tease each other and engage in an innocent friendly fistfight. Unfortunately, they are spotted and questioned by a night police patrol that brings the party's easy-going mood to an end. The youngsters are desperately striving to account for their immature conduct but the police officers are unyielding. Instead of showing allowance for the boys' harmless behaviour, the police immediately search their bags full

[193] Kelman, *If it is your life* 273–4.

of beer and food and intimidate the group at the same time. Eventually, the officers order Tammas' group to leave the place without any reason. However, Tammas and his companions refuse to follow up their orders because they are waiting for their absent friend:

> But the mate'll be here in a minute, replied Tammas.
>
> On your way I said, move!
>
> He's just round the corner in the bloody chip shop! cried Rab.
>
> What… what was that? The first policeman frowned and he stepped closer to Rab. What was that? What d'you say there? I never really heard you right son what was it?
>
> Rab looked away.
>
> Naw I thought you might've swore there son but I'm no sure. Did you I mean? Did you swear?
>
> . . .
>
> I'll tell you something, said the policeman, it's time yous were all moving; and if yous are no out in five minutes flat I'll do the lot of yous. Ye listening now? D'yous understand?
>
> After a brief silence the other policeman gestured with his thumb: On your way.
>
> Move! Said the first one.[194]

Apparently, the policemen take delight in patronizing Tammas and his friends, who have not committed any crime at all. Abusing their power for the sake of their superiority, the officers mistreat the boys without the slightest provocation. Their motivation to exploit ordinary people originates in their privilege to exercise power with no restraints. Even though Rab tries to protest against such a hideous form of police misconduct, the officer threatens them with physical violence if they refuse to comply. Kelman shows how the police can legitimately attack personal freedoms without having to account for their transgressions.

Kelman's depiction of institutional repression becomes even more explicit in *How late*, where the protagonist repeatedly clashes with the state and its dictatorial structures. As far as the formalistic critical approach is concerned, *How late* can be easily interpreted as an endless struggle of an underprivileged individual against an oppressive system of exploitation. From the very beginning, the novel follows an unchanging pattern of Sammy's defiant attitude towards the state and police. The story basically opens with Sammy's violent conflict with several policemen who beat him up and arrest him in the end. As a result of police brutality, Sammy wakes up in prison to realize he has lost his vision. A rebel and an ex-convict, he is more than familiar with the prison system which is controlled by the state. In Sammy's eyes, the institution of the prison is a remarkable example how the state executes a total control over the individual. In fact, he sees the prison as a playground of the police whose abuse of power is sanctified by the legal system.

[194] Kelman, *AChancer* 26–7.

Sammy interprets the prison as a devilish place where people can disappear forever without any trace. Pondering his traumatic experience with the prison environment, he recalls how the police beat to death a black man in a cell:

> Then the wee black guy there's another yin christ the cell two down from Sammy the last time he was in. Supposed to have died with a heart attack; twenty-seven years of age; the cunts suffocated him, they sat on top of him then bounced up and down, big fucking screws, bouncing up and down on him, a heart attack, these bastards man know what I'm saying, him with his wee fucking headset, that's all he done, listened to his fucking music, ye heard it sometimes, it fucking hypnotised ye, tumatumatumti tumatumatumti.[195]

Sammy comments on the dreadful prison conditions that allow the police to brutalize the inmates for the sake of their sadistic amusement. He sympathizes with the black prisoner, who in Sammy's opinion did not deserve to be mistreated with such fatal consequences. Sammy points out that the police are untouchable by definition because their actions are legitimized by the state. Even though they murdered Sammy's neighbour in his cell, they got off with no investigation or punishment.

Sammy portrays the police as an all-powerful executor of the will of repressive organizations that can terminate a human life as they please. During his current imprisonment, his scepticism about the ruthless nature of the police is justified by a blatant manifestation of their abusive methods. An interrogator at the police station where Sammy is being detained reassures him that "we can hold ye here forever if we want. And if we hold ye here we know nothing'll happen, whereas if we let ye go… who knows? we dont. I mean basically it's best we do hold ye."[196]. Therefore, Kelman uses Sammy's experience to criticise the sinister implications of the legal and penal systems, which authorize the police to deprive individuals of their personal freedoms. Due to neat interconnection between the individual branches of government, its agents are protected by their status to intimidate Sammy.

Concerning the role of the police, Ward argues that they "fulfil certain *social* functions, but everyone will agree that their primary purpose is to fulfil *governmental* functions"[197]. Consequently, Sammy is aware of the ideological context of his encounters with the power structures. He is enraged by these "bastards," who "could pick out anything they wanted" because "he had nay right, nay right at all; they could charge him with that man illegal entry, if they wanted. Any fucking thing."[198]. Nonetheless, Sammy remains a rebel *with a cause* – he deconstructs the

[195] Kelman, *How late* 31.
[196] Kelman, *How late* 202.
[197] Ward 153.
[198] Kelman, *How late* 175.

apologetic façade of the state, government, and their institutions, which exercise absolute authority over society.

Sammy's unfortunate experience with state institutions reflects Kelman's criticism of their abusive nature. He believes that they oppress the public and monopolize the process of decision making. Concerning the unequal one-sided relationship between state institutions and the public, Kelman contends that

> Big business and those who represent it now manage this country as never before in recent years. Overtly this happens by means of the political and legal systems; by the forces of law and order, the police and the penal system, the military; by state immigration controls, the DSS, the education system and so on. These institutions and structures are designed to control the vast majority of people who constitute society, the public. It is the public who represent the central threat to those in authority and are perceived by them as the 'real enemy'.[199]

Admittedly, Sammy embodies Kelman's anti-authoritarian beliefs. He frequently muses about the violations of his personal liberties by state authorities, who treat him as their enemy. As far as the dehumanizing effects of state institutions on Sammy are concerned, he complains that "it was always them, these bastards, always at their convenience, every single last bit of time, it was always them that chose it; ye never had any fucking choices. Everything ye fucking did in life it was always them, fucking them, them them them"[200]. Based on Sammy's long history of confrontations with the law, his dystopian view of the state and its predominant totalitarian features corresponds to Kelman's arguments that an individual is constantly facing the patronizing environment created by power structures.[201]

Engaged in a subversive conversation with his cellmate, Sammy describes his philosophy of life and attitude towards the police:

> . . . ye've got to survive. Cause these cunts'll fucking do ye. They like fucking doing ye. That's what they're here for. Know what I mean? Ye get done right? Well that's now ye get done, they fucking do ye. And when they've fucking done ye they've done ye, that's what I'm talking about. Either ye let them or ye dont. Personally I fucking dont, right, I dont fucking let them. Know how? cause I fucking hate the bastards. I hate them; that's how I survive. Know what I'm saying?
>
> Aye.
>
> And the way I hate them; total fucking fuck all. Win lose or draw. There's nay such thing as a good fucking uniform.[202]

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[199] James Kelman, *Some Recent Attacks: Essays Cultural & Political* (Stirling: AK Press, 1992) 43.
[200] Kelman, *How late* 32–33.
[201] see Kelman, *Judges* 272.
[202] Kelman, *How late* 195.

Despite the amount of injustice inflicted on him by the police/authorities, Sammy refuses to be a silent victim. He represents hope for the disempowered that face similar hardships because he never gives up – his hatred against the establishment urges him to resist and fight back.

Speaking of the paradigm of dystopian fiction, the claustrophobic atmosphere of a totalitarian police state in *How late* resembles George Orwell's masterpiece *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). The prophetic novel offers a grim insight into a futuristic totalitarian society that is governed and brutalized by repressive organizations. One of their representatives, a secret service agent, outlines the prospects of state authority: "'If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face – for ever,'" and "'remember that it is for ever. The face will always be there to be stamped upon.'"[203].

Therefore, *How late* can be read as a dystopian story that attacks the totalitarian tendencies of modern states. Regarding its underlying message, Kövesi believes that "To ignore the huge questions the novel worries at – questions about the fairness and validity of the legal system, the state prison system, the police, the health and social security systems – is to ignore the novel's overall agenda, and to ignore Sammy's politics . . ."[204].

Kelman's dystopian efforts culminate in his following novel *Translated Accounts*, which again questions the authoritarian nature of the state and its agencies. In contrast to his previous stories that feature individuals suffering injustice, *Translated Accounts* introduces state terror on a full-scale. There are recurrent images of police/military brutality that includes numerous rapes, atrocities, humiliations, and mass intimidation. In "¿FODocument" a male individual is worried about being caught on the street after curfew. He witnesses two soldiers/policemen shooting a man in public and ridiculing his death.[205]. Appalled by their routine of sadistic behaviour, he hides in a nearby house but they eventually find him. Adding to his previous shock, they seem to murder a little baby that is within the house.[206] However, the story does not make it clear whether they ended up killing the baby or not. These 'securitys' are not explicitly identified as the police or army but they reappear throughout the whole novel as perpetrators of state violence, who take delight in intimidating and aggrieving the public. Kelman's decision to call them *securitys* is an ironic reference to the state's claim to provide ordinary citizens with security. In *Translated Accounts* security is a label for state terror and police misconduct.

Set in an explicitly totalitarian regime, *Translated Accounts* is narrated by of several anonymous characters who relate either their own experience with state brutality or atrocities they witnessed.

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[203] George Orwell, *Ninety Eighty-Four* (1949; London: Penguin Group, 1989) 280.
[204] Kövesi 147.
[205] see Kelman, *Translated Accounts* 26.
[206] see Kelman, *Translated Accounts* 42.

Frustrated at the alarming amount of state control and oppression, the narrator in "lecture, re sensitive periods" criticises the system of injustice which deprives the public of their personal freedoms:

> Peoples are confronted by all authoritys and agencies, policing bodies, others, military, security, domestic and foreign, whether in the role of defence or prosecution, of judge, jury, executioner, extrajudicial, summarily and always the government as integral state agency, democratically-elected, dutiful-appointed.
>
> It is we who confront authorities. And who are we. We who may seek. Many colleagues many people. Disinformation and propaganda exist. This has been intensified, now reinforced and again reinforced. Few among us will have noticed, become moved. Who might be aggrieved if discovering the reality of State control.[207]

The narrator gives a true picture of a society controlled by a system of repressive organizations that maintains the status quo by means of totalitarian measures. He emphasizes the irony of the fact that the tyrannical institutions are legitimate because they have been authorized by the process of 'democratic' consent. Actually, this extract is very similar to Sammy's account of his experience with the police; despite the oppressive atmosphere of state terror, Kelman stresses the responsibility of the individual to protest and resist the enslaving ideology of power structures.

Certainly, *Translated Accounts* is Kelman's most dismal novel as far his criticism of social and political control is concerned. There is little, if any at all, room for humour and amusement. For that reason, his subsequent book *You have to be Careful* about a Scottish immigrant in the US strikes the reader as a surprisingly exhilarating story that mocks American culture and politics. Nevertheless, it also includes allusions to Kelman's political views about the state and its institutions expressed already in *How late*. The main protagonist who works at an American airport comments on the ironies related to the place. Even though an airport is usually interpreted as a hub that allows people to travel and enjoy freedom, Jerry in *You have to be Careful* pictures the place rather as an institution of control. While rich and respected passengers are welcome, homeless vagrants who are found in the vicinity are removed. Jerry shares compassion with the destitute who "believed that their colleagues [at the airport] were not disappearing under their ayn steam but were made to disappear by a special division of airport Security, known in the industry as "pest control".[208]. In fact, Jerry's apprehensions resemble Sammy's accounts of the police who can legally abuse their power and mistreat the individual as they please. Therefore, Kelman's concern about the validity of the state and government remains a recurring topic of his fiction.

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[207] Kelman, *Translated Accounts* 78.
[208] Kelman, *You Have to be Careful* 247.

20. Surveillance and Social Control

Apart from Kelman's portrayal of state terrorism conducted by power structures against the public, he frequently tackles the issue of mass surveillance, which is another characteristic feature of dystopian fiction. His characters are often monitored by corporate or government organizations that seek to enhance uniformity and total control. Consequently, Kelman's stories employ varying degrees of paranoia created by a constant threat to the right to privacy.

Kelman's critical commentary on the humiliating effects of managerial surveillance appears already in *The Busconductor Hines*, where the protagonist is being watched and confronted by the company's supervisors. One day, Hines breaks the company's policy because he is not wearing his uniform hat. Consequently, he is caught and admonished by a meticulous bus inspector who records his transgression and refuses to accept Hines' explanation.[209] The inspector represents the company's device to keep an eye on their employees and constantly report on their conduct. The stifling atmosphere of constant surveillance stimulates Hines' paranoid feelings that corrupt his personal integrity.

Speaking of paranoia induced by managerial surveillance, the narrator in "Street-sweeper" suffers from a pathological fear that far exceeds Hines' trouble with the inspector. The story opens with a bizarre parody of a person, who is persecuted by a totalitarian system:

> The sky was at the blueyblack pre-heavygrey stage of the morning and the gaffer was somewhere around. This is one bastard that was always around; he was always hiding. But he was somewhere close right now and Peter could sense his presence and he paused. It wasnt a footstep but he turned to see over his shoulder anyway, walked a few more paces then quickly slided into a shop doorway, holding the brush vertical, making sure the top of his book wasnt showing out his pocket. This was no longer fun.[210]

Even though Peter works as a street sweeper, he fears the company's supervisors who monitor the employees. Afraid of being detected, Peter's mind is besieged by the oppressive surveillance agenda carried out by his superiors. He desperately tries to evade the gaffer/supervisor whose spying activities haunt Peter's disordered mind. Consequently, he cannot function as free individual because his actions are a subject to the management's control.

Nonetheless, he manages to maintain his critical reasoning. Despite the mental pressure generated by his employer's monitoring efforts, Peter is aware of the humiliating effects of surveillance. He considers them demeaning because he "was sick of getting watched. He was. He

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[209] see Kelman, *Hines* 64.
[210] Kelman, *The Burn* 79.

was fucking sick of it. The council have a store of detectives. They get sent out spying on the employees, the workers lad the workers, they get sent out spying on them. . . . Naw but he's fucking sick of it, he really is. High time he was an adult."[211]. Eventually, Peter's nightmare comes true when the gaffer suddenly shows up and charges him with neglecting his duties. However, his dislike of managerial surveillance is a telling comment on the state of modern British society, which is has been increasingly monitored and attacked by government institutions since the 1970s.[212]

Besides the impact of corporate control on the individual, Kelman repeatedly reinforces the Orwellian atmosphere of constant surveillance by confronting his characters be various means of social and technological control. Concerning the latter, Sammy in *How late* is very cautious about security camera systems that seem to monitor all his activities. Blind and disoriented, he feels extremely vulnerable in a hospital's lift because it is a place with no opportunity to hide:

> Up he went. This is fucking lovely! he said. And he made a coughing sound like he was clearing his throat. It was a cover-up for the fact he had spoke out loud. He knew there was naybody in the lift with him but it was probably fucking bugged man know what I'm talking about, or else a VCR, probably there was a VCR. And the security cunt was sitting watching him right at this very minute, having a wee laugh to himself cause Sammy was talking and there was naybody there.[213]

Sammy's paranoid worries echo Kelman's criticism of state surveillance measures. Even though he is blind, Sammy has not given up his right to privacy. He is afraid of a third party watching him while he is powerless. As far as Sammy's anxiety about CCTV cameras is concerned, Gardiner argues that Kelman aptly depicts a substantial rise in public surveillance which started in Scotland in the mid-1980s.[214]

Correspondingly, Patrick Doyle in *A Disaffection* also suffers from pathological technophobia especially in terms of watching a television. He stubbornly refuses to watch or possess one because he considers it is a technological device that enhances mind control. According to his conspiracy theory, "ye aye think it's you that's doing the bloody watching but it's no, it's you that's actually being watched – the government's got the fucking security forces all taking notes!"[215]. There is a reason to believe that Patrick refers to Orwell's invention of the *telescreen*,

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[211] Kelman, *The Burn* 80.
[212] see Kelman, *Judges* 346.
[213] Kelman, *How late* 91.
[214] see Michael Gardiner, "Kelman and World English," *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman*, ed. Scott Hames (Edinburgh: EUP, 2010) 105.

[215] Kelman, *A Disaffection* 239.

which is an electronic appliance not unlike a television that functions as a means of social control in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Moreover, Kelman emphasizes the dystopian tone of *A Disaffection* by endowing Patrick with a fixed idea of being under constant surveillance of state intelligence agencies.[216] Resembling Sammy's paranoia, Patrick also feels surrounded by policemen who threaten his right to privacy.[217] However, the actual presence of any means of state control in Patrick's life is not verified at all. Consequently, Kelman leaves the reader wondering whether Patrick's fears are a product of a delusional mind or a well-designed system of state surveillance.

Kelman's depiction of state control takes rather an absurd note in "Naval History," where the narrator enjoys himself in his favourite second-hand bookshop. Suddenly, a couple of his former friends turn up and start piling books on his hands. He cannot make any sense of it and the whole situation turns into a surreal spectacle. In the end, he threatens them to call the police but they turn out to be policemen who have been watching him for some time. Without any obvious reason, they arrest him and take him away.[218] The entire story is reminiscent of the absurdist tradition represented by Becket and Pinter. It does not provide any logical reasoning for the outrageous actions of the policemen. Conversely, the fact that the narrator is immediately deprived of his rights and free will stresses the absurdity of state surveillance, which renders an individual's life meaningless.

The influence of the Theatre of the Absurd on Kelman is even more evident in his play *In the Night* (1991), which features a young couple whose home is invaded by three ruthless interrogators. They appear in the couple's flat as if from nowhere and start intimidating them at once. The interrogators have been watching the couple's anti-government activities for some time and now they have decided to confront them. They treat the couple without any respect to their privacy because the man and woman are lying barely dressed in their bed. Moreover, the interrogators take delight in ridiculing the couple with malicious insults, calling the man "fart" in particular.[219] Justifying their alleged right to mistreat the couple, the first interrogator claims that "I've got the position of power dear, that's how come I can say these things."[220]. Consequently, the play combines absurdist features with dystopian issues of state surveillance and repression of the public that underlie Kelmanesque.

In addition, the play also addresses uniformity as an integral aspect of social control. According to the second interrogator, the couple's most serious crime is that they are *different*: "I

[216] see Kelman, *A Disaffection* 101–3.
[217] see Kelman, *A Disaffection* 209.
[218] see Kelman, *The Burn* 112.
[219] see Kelman, *Hardie and Baird & Other Plays* 58.
[220] Kelman, *Hardie and Baird & Other Plays* 58.

shall state very briefly what I dislike about them and why I feel they are to be punished rightly. And I'm aware you can find it peculiar. It is just that they are not us. (*Puzzled shake of the head: frowns at couple.*) There is something distinctly unwholesome about it, about is and the circumstances surrounding it."[221]. The interrogator explicitly accuses the couple of being unique, which he considers subversive. Judging from the interrogators' tendencies to attack the concept of otherness, *In the Night* underlines Kelman's critical remarks about the efforts of the State to brainwash the public into accepting a homogeneous patriotic identity.[222]

Speaking of the polarity between uniformity and selfhood, *The Busconductor Hines* shows that Kelman's radical politics has been explicitly involved in his fiction since his early beginnings. Towards the end of the novel, the bus company takes disciplinary action against Hines who is called to account for his late arrivals and policy violations. Eventually, the management decides to punish Hines by assigning him a special shift but he refuses to accept the penalty.[223] He objects to be patronized and manipulated by his superiors, who monitor and restrain their employees' conduct. The situation reaches a climax when Hines rejects to wear his uniform, which becomes a symbol of the management's control over their workforce. He complains about the uncomfortable feeling of the uniform because "the coarseness of the cloth somehow making you think of the fleecy coat of a wee sheep, the straggly bits left on the barbed wire fence you can picture as hell of an itchy if dangled against the skin."[224]. Hines' reference to the barbed wire is of particular importance because it reinforces the implications of his unbearable bondage. Consequently, he prefers not to wear it because the uniform reminds him of the management's surveillance. Moreover, the uniform also stands for a means of social control since it imposes a standardized identity and suppresses selfhood. Therefore, Hines concludes that "It was good being without the uniform."[225].

Kelman revisits the theme of ideological uniformity again in *How late*, where Sammy visits the doctor who acts rather as an advocate of totalitarianism. Although Sammy believes his condition is exceptional and deserves a proper treatment, the doctor does not provide any comfort or sympathy. Conversely, he informs Sammy that "No one is unique."[226]. Denying Sammy his recently acquired identity based on his loss of vision, the doctor refuses to acknowledge Sammy's individual uniqueness. Consequently, the doctor becomes an instrument of state surveillance that ensures homogeneous ideology and discipline.

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221 Kelman, *Hardie and Baird & Other Plays* 75.
222 see Kelman, *Judges* 347.
223 see Kelman, *Hines* 195.
224 Kelman, *Hines* 93.
225 Kelman, *Hines* 182.
226 Kelman, *How late* 222.

In contrast, *Translated Accounts*, Kelman's most schizophrenic novel, offers a positive prospect as far as the uniqueness of the individual is concerned. Even though the narrator of "her arms folded" lives in a totalitarian country that constantly monitors its citizens, he strongly believes in human individuality:

> The name of an individual is important, I know that it is, but also that what is to do, I know, from myself not from myself, what to do, what I can do, what that I am to do, if I can do it that I shall do it, that I am not obstructing movement, we move ahead, we are to progress, how that is to be doubted, not by myself.[227]

Despite the narrator's ambivalent insecurity, he refuses to give away his identity and succumb to the anonymous uniformity enforced by the state. In his opinion, progress can be achieved only through ideological plurality by persons who act as individuals with unique identities. Ironically, the fact that the narrator's name is never revealed underlies the claustrophobic effects of a totalitarian surveillance state.

21. Narrative Voice

Kelman's treatment of narrative voice has undergone a fascinating development that has tremendously contributed to Scottish literary tradition. Trying to find a balance between the first-person and third-person narrator, he has extensively experimented with various means of approaching narrative and dialogue, which are traditionally distinguished by graphical as well as verbal cohesive ties. Moreover, Kelman's narrative innovations have enabled him to use the formal features of his fiction as a vehicle for the critical context of his radical anti-authoritarian politics.

Concerning Kelman's early stage, his short stories show his relentless efforts to experiment and search for a suitable narrative perspective that would allow him to authentically depict the life of the dispossessed. In fact, he interpreted this initial phase of his career as a "way of flexing his literary muscles."[228]. Consequently, Kelman's early short stories employ a variety of narrative voices. In particular, *An Old Pub* opens with "The Cards" that is narrated in the traditional third-person point of view:

> 'Duncan your record is appalling,' Sanderson looked over his head somewhere and then sniffed. 'You should have been fired the last time you were up.'
>
> 'But Mr Sanderson there were reasons for those absences,' Duncan stopped and looked away.

[227] Kelman, *Translated Accounts* 314.
[228] Shanks 16.

> 'What excuses could there be for this,' he picked up the folder, 'since the last time you were up here. Look at this.' He smacked the page with his left hand. 'November sixth, eight, nine, the fourteenth, twentieth, twenty-first and twenty-second.' Sanderson let the page fall.[229]

The short story maintains a conventional narrative voice that presents the protagonist's actions in a comfortably coherent order. The narrator keeps an objective distance from the characters whose inner thoughts are practically inaccessible. Kelman guides the reader by the typical means of a third-person narrative voice – 'he picked up,' 'He smacked' – that describe and specify characters' conduct. Moreover, he also retains the formal distinction between dialogue and narrative, which are graphically separated by the apostrophes. As a result, the story follows the traditional mode of third-person narrative that entails an air of detachment.

Conversely, the same volume is concluded by "Nice to be Nice," a rather phonetic first-person account of the protagonist's attempt to help his neighbour, who is afraid of getting evicted:

> So wir sitting in she's bletherin away good style aboot her weans in the rest ay it whin aw if a sudden she tells me she's gittin threw oot her hoose – aye in her four kids wi her. Said she goat a letter tellin her.
>
> Canny dae it: A says.
>
> Aye kin they no jist: says Moira: the coarpiration kin day whit they like Stan.
>
> Well A did know that is a matter i fact bit A also knew thit they widny throw a singil wummin in four weans oot inty the street bit A didny tell her that in case she thoat A wis oan therr side. Big Moira's like that – a nice lassie, bit she's ey gittin thins inty her heid aboot people so A said nothing.[230]

In contrast to "The Cards," the protagonist and narrator are identical. Kelman allows the reader to enter Stan's mind as he first describes his conversation with Moira, and then concentrates on his own inner thoughts about her situation. Eventually, Stan reveals his assessment of Moira's personality and a decision not to disturb her with his opinion. In addition, Kelman also avoids the graphical distinction between dialogue and narrative via apostrophes, which conventionally separate individual entities involved in the story. This shift towards less distinct boundaries between heterogeneous features of Kelman's text foreshadows his future obsession with eliminating the hierarchy of traditional narratives based on orthography and punctuation.

As far as the treatment of narrative voice is concerned, Kelman's first two novels summarize his previous experiments and manifest a far more systematic approach than his earlier short stories. However, *The Busconductor Hines* and *A Chancer* can be interpreted either as complete

[229] Kelman, *An Old Pub* 1.
[230] Kelman, *An Old Pub* 110.

opposites or mutual complementation. The former mergers first-person and third-person narrative, whilst the latter almost entirely avoids the inner world of its protagonist.

Speaking of *The Busconductor Hines*, Kelman came up with a method to preserve the objective facticity of a third-person point of view while accessing the inner thoughts of the protagonist without any significant break in narrative:

> Then he stopped. He had become self-conscious. He glanced out the window, the bus had pulled into the kerb to collect a passenger. He changed his fare-stage. He was aware of the future of Hines and was experiencing a terrible guilt. Eh! Poor auld fucking Rab the unfortunate bastard with his wife and 38 weans who, unless content to remain as conductor for the rest of his working garage life, is definitely best to chuck the job right now and get it over with. Eh! Fuck off.[231]

While Kelman maintains a third-person narrator who describes Hines' actions ('he stopped,' 'he glanced out,' 'he changed'), narrative smoothly shifts into Hines' consciousness without any explicit split. Hines' first-person interior monologue starts with the interjection 'eh' and continues in a pseudo-third-person contemplation until 'fuck off.' As a result of Kelman's dissolution of the formal hierarchy between speech and narration, "the boundaries between public utterance and private thought become tenuous to the extent that it sometimes becomes difficult to determine whether the character is speaking aloud or giving voice to his thoughts inwardly."[232].

Moreover, the fuzziness caused by indistinct boundaries between narration, dialogue, and monologue is further reinforced by Kelman's deliberate omission of apostrophes that would organize the structure of the text. In Kelman's view, such formal attempts to separate narration from the character's thoughts expressed in a local non-standard dialect of English ('auld' and 'weans') are ideological instruments of control:

> What larks! Every time they opened their mouth out came a stream of gobbledygook. Beautiful! their language a cross between semaphore and morse code; apostrophes here and apostrophes there; a strange hotchpotch of bad phonetics and horrendous spelling – unlike the nice stalwart upperclass English hero (occasionally Scottish but with no linguistic variation) whose words on the page were always absolutely splendidly proper and pure and pristinely accurate, whether in dialogue or without.[233]

Therefore, Kelman has abandoned using apostrophes because they represent social and economic hierarchy which then mirror in the text. His aim has been to make his characters equal, neither separating their local dialect from any other English accent nor distinguishing between the flow of the dialogue/monologue and narration.

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[231] Kelman, *Hines* 116–7.
[232] Shanks 17.
[233] Kelman, *Some Recent Attacks* 82.

In comparison, *A Chancer* is Kelman's only novel that deliberately denies full access to the protagonist's consciousness. Tammas' actions are almost entirely related by a third-person narrator who hints at Tammas' inner thoughts from an external perspective. Compared to Hines, who contemplates his relationship with his wife and child in an interior monologue, Tammas' breaking up with his girlfriend is introduced in a detached third-person perspective:

> Margaret shook her head. You never told me you'd stopped seeing her.
>
> Are you talking about Betty?
>
> Well I didnt know you were seeing anybody else!
>
> Mm . . . Tammas looked away. His cigarette was lying smouldering in the ashtray; he puffed twice on it, before stubbing it out and swallowing what was left of his coffee. He returned his attention to the television.[234]

Facing his sister's reproach, Tammas does not provide any explanation for his actions. The narrator remains neutral and evades any evaluation of the situation. Kövesi argues that "the combination of the withdrawn narrator who provides almost no access to Tammas' thoughts, with a socially reticent and retreating Tammas, means that this novel demands interpretation of the most fundamental kind, even if it is only to work out what Tammas' motivations and intentions might be."[235]. Admittedly, Tammas refuses to give any answer to his sister and retreats to a safe distance of the indifferent third-person narrator. Consequently, *A Chancer* can be seen as Kelman's most 'objective' novel so far, which attempts to remove authorial control over the text and offer bare facticity of Tammas' actions. The responsibility for their interpretation lies altogether with the reader.

In *A Disaffection*, Kelman abandons the external narrative perspective that dominates *A Chancer* and returns back to the dissolution of narrative voices. He combines a non-omniscient third person narrator with the protagonist's interior monologue to provide a bridge the gap between objectivity and authenticity. Consequently, he makes use of the stream-of-consciousness method that, as Humphrey argues, "rests on its potentialities for representing character more accurately and more realistically"[236]. Yet, Kelman's revision of this modernist narrative method goes beyond its limits as he switches between first- and third-person modes:

> He gestured at the peeling paintwork as they ascended. He began whistling a tune, not pausing on any of the landings although he was aware she might be interested to see out into the backcourt – if only so she could gain time before having to enter his flat. In case he fucking grabbed her like one of these stupid Rome and Juliet affairs of the silent screen. My darling, how

[234] Kelman, *A Chancer* 109.
[235] Kövesi 67.
[236] Robert Humphrey, *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel* (1954; Berkeley: California UP, 1955) 7.

> I've longed for this moment! Smack smack smack. The sound of the kissing. And then too her somewhat sly wee insinuation of a comment to do with the state of the roof guttering which he was best to ignore – as if he was dutybound to start agitating over the probably build-up of rainwater or something.[237]

Introducing the facts in Patrick Doyle's world, Kelman starts with a third-person narrative voice ('He gestured,' 'He began') to describe Patrick's actions. Then the point of view transforms into a reflection of his state of mind ('he was aware'), and eventually the reader accesses Patrick's own thoughts related in a first-person interior monologue ('I've longed') that is reinforced by a stream-of-consciousness repetition of a particular fantasy ('Smack smack smack.'). Therefore, Kelman obliterates the formal distinctions between narrative voice and characters' consciousness that includes thoughts expressed in expletives and local patois ('fucking' and 'wee'), which would otherwise be separated by apostrophes.

Speaking of Kelman's innovative fusion of narrative and speaking voice, Craig points out the effects of this method:

> The text is designed visually to resist that moment of arrest in which the reader switches between the narrative voice of the text and the represented speech of a character, and what this does is to create a linguistic equality between speech and narration which allows the narrator to adopt the speech idioms of his characters or the characters to think or speak in 'standard English' with no sense of disruption.[238]

Although Kelman achieved a linguistic equality between speech and narration, he remained concerned about the egoistic implications of a first-person narrator. Consequently, he faced a dilemma concerning his desire to avoid a third-person omniscient narrator and diminish the influence of a self-centred first-person approach at the same time. Patrick Doyle in *A Disaffection* voices Kelman's obsession with getting rid of the egoist 'I' perspective:

> Naw but the I's were the worst. Everywhere you looked always this fucking I. I I I. I got really fucking sick of it I mean it was depressing, horrible. I mean that's exactly what you're trying to get rid of in the first damn bloody fucking place I mean Christ sake, you know what I'm talking about.[239]

Patrick reflects on the judgmental nature of a centralized narrative authority that has the power to control and manipulate the discourse. In fact, Kelman's efforts to eliminate the omniscient narrator on the one hand, and the first person on the other are reminiscent of the existentialist

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[237] Kelman, *A Disaffection* 137.
[238] Cairns Craig, "Resisting Arrest: James Kelman," *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams*, ed. Gavin Wallace and Randal Stevenson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1993) 103.
[239] Kelman, *A Disaffection* 145.

tradition that suggests the 'I' can be a deceptive instrument of authorial power.[240] As a result, Kelman's next novel *How late* offers a resolution of this narrative conflict. He employs the second-person singular pronoun 'ye' as an acceptable compromise between the egoistic 'I' and the omniscient third-person narrator. The opening paragraph immediately indicates the overall structure of the novel based on Sammy's 'ye':

> Ye wake in a corner and stay there hoping yer body will disappear, the thoughts smothering ye; these thoughts; but ye want to remember and face up to things, just something keeps ye from doing it, why can ye no do it; the words filling yer head: then the other words; there's something far far wrong; ye're no a good man, ye're just no a good man.[241]

Through the second-person voice, Kelman manages to escape the authoritarian omniscience as well as the individualistic supremacy of the first-person narrator. He establishes a more community-based discourse because Sammy's 'ye' includes both singular and plural referents of the pronoun.[242] As far as the treatment of narrative voice is concerned, *How late* seems to be Kelman's most anti-authoritarian novel because it strives to eschew the moment of narrative enchainment. Consequently, Sammy's narration mirrors his resistance against the state penal system.

In addition, Kelman's partial implementation of second-person narrative entails particular non-patronising effects on the reader. Namely, 'ye' often hinders the identification of speakers who become involved in Sammy's narration. For instance, during Sammy's interrogation at the police station, the anonymous policemen are never specified due to the lack of dialogue tags:

> After a time Sammy said, Her family's in Dumfries. I dont know whereabouts but somewhere down there.
>
> Nay idea?
>
> It was a different voice; the young yin by the sound of it. Sammy shifted in his chair as if surprised by where the voice was coming from. The address is in the house somewhere, he said, but I canny look cause I cannay see.
>
> Has she done this before?
>
> …
>
> Eh?
>
> Aye.
>
> Did ye tell them?
>
> Who?
>
> The guys that were asking ye the questions?

[240] see Kövesi 67.
[241] Kelman, *How late* 1.
[242] see Kövesi 52.

> I think so.
>
> Where d'ye meet her first?[243]

Despite Kelman's employment of the collective 'ye,' he also retains the non-omniscient third-person narrator who relates the facts of Sammy's world ('Sammy shifted'). Nonetheless, the narrator does not exercise any power over the narrative discourse, but merely contextualizes the fact that Sammy is blind. Since there are no clues to signify who asks Sammy the questions, Kelman forces the reader to experience Sammy's uncertain world of blindness. McGlynn points out that Kelman "regularly eliminates all speech tags in extended dialogues, making it extraordinarily challenging to keep track of who is speaking. Together, these practices leave the reader unmoored, far removed from a comfortable position of narrative knowingness."[244]. Therefore, Kelman does not impose any authorial sentence on the reader. Instead, *How late* is open to interpretation and demands readers' active participation.

Conversely, Kelman's recent novels appear to depart from his narrative experiments in *How late*. *Translated Accounts* breaks Kelman's typical central narrator into an unspecified number of individual narrators, whose accounts barely show any continuity. Yet they all share a common quality – the first-person voice that relates horrors and atrocities experienced by various individuals in a militarized territory. The account "who asks the question" represents a typical example of the narrative structure:

> This woman was familiar with their dialect, I have said, that language. They knew nothing of hers. Thus she had become the inferior. This is as it was, it remains so, for myself also, individuals inferiorised, myself herself.
>
> She had become the inferior as I also became at the prior time. These matters were occurring.
>
> All periods are significant. And effected through the one factor. It is asked of the one factor, can it exist.
>
> Who asks the question.
>
> They come in the night. They drag us from sleep, from sleep into sleep, as unto death. Myself herself.[245]

The narrator intentionally avoids concrete referents of the pronouns so that the reader never learns who 'they' actually are. The anonymity of the narrator and the persons he refers to strengthens the oppressive atmosphere that threatens to reveal some disturbing truth. Nevertheless, the narrators in *Translated Accounts* do not reveal any profound truth or explicit evidence about any crime. Even though serious crimes occur, their perpetrators are not identified

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[243] Kelman, *How late* 184.
[244] McGlynn 64.
[245] Kelman, *Translated Accounts* 317.

and the narrators remain helpless. The dispersed narrators relate the accounts from a detached perspective but their inner thoughts might be indicated by repetitions of some items such as 'myself herself' above. Paradoxically, the unifying pattern of the computerized accounts and their narrators is their discontinuity. In fact, the only proof that *Translated Accounts* is a novel can be found in the preface and the book's subtitle - *Translated Accounts: A Novel.*

In contrast, Kelman's subsequent novels *You have to be Careful* and *Kieron Smith* substitute the multiplicity of the dispersed narrators in *Translated Accounts* with a singularity of a central character that echoes Kelman's previous narratives. Both Jerry and Kieron mix the registers of speech and narration without any apparent split in the text. They fuse the first-person interior monologue with the non-omniscient third-person narrator who relates the facts of the characters' worlds. These two novels mark Kelman's return to his familiar treatment of narrative voice that resonates through *The Busconductor Hines*, *A Disaffection*, and *How late*. Therefore, *A Chancer* and *Translated Accounts* stand out as examples of Kelman's unconventional approach to narration that is not identical with the majority of his fiction.

VI
Kelman and Scottishness

Concerning Scottish-English relations, references to their antagonistic nature are abundant in Kelman's stories. Apart from the linguistic differences between Standard English and Scots vernacular, his narratives frequently picture Scottish individuals who comment on the exploitative efforts of the English State and Scotland's increasing inferiority. Consequently, the recurring topic of Scottish-English animosities is likely to imply Kelman's nationalistic affiliations that would associate him with the traditional struggle for modern Scottish independence.

In spite of these nationalistic implications, Kelman approaches the issue of national identity and ethnicity from a completely different perspective. Instead of taking a purely nationalistic stand, Kelman refuses the concept of national identity and allows his main characters to ridicule the sentimental attachment to geographical or ethic boundaries that instil strong beliefs of superiority and sameness. He concentrates on criticism of power structures that take advantage of the distinctions based on artificially forged national identity, which tend to discriminate individuals with different origins. Moreover, Kelman points out the humiliating effects of passportism, which endows the State with legal measures to classify the public according to their identification documents, and treat immigrants as aliens rather than human beings.

22. National Identity

Kelman's critical depiction of the clash between Scotland and England includes explicitly hostile attitudes of his characters towards the English State as well as rather sarcastic opinions that play down sentimental patriotism. Speaking of the former, Patrick's father in *A Disaffection* represents a fine example of open animosity towards England's oppressive regime, which is supposed to harm and subjugate Scotland. Discussing the issue of economic exploitation of Scotland, he criticizes the way England monopolized Scottish fishing industry. In his opinion, English bourgeois restaurants are supplied with first-class Scottish sea food at the expense of Scotland's consumers, who are left with mere leftovers.[246]

In his opinion, the contemporary generation of young Scots do not protest against such grave injustice. As a result of his bitter feelings against England, he reproaches Patrick for his generation's indifference: "Yous dont complain about things, that's what I mean."[247]. Therefore,

[246] see Kelman, *A Disaffection* 110.
[247] Kelman, *A Disaffection* 110.

Patrick's father ranks among Kelman's characters who express traditional nationalistic sentiments concerning Scotland's inferiority and England's oppressive agenda.

Despite Patrick's father's sentimental patronization of his son, who in his eyes does not show much commitment to complain about political and economic oppression of Scotland, Patrick actually agrees with his father's dislike of England's mistreatment of her subjects. As far as England's alleged exploitation of Scottish people and environment is concerned, Patrick articulates his negative attitude towards the English superior:

> Aye, but I'm biased as ye know; I hate Greatbritain. It was fine before all these selfish and greedy aristocratic capitalists mankindhating landowners started dividing things up between them and saying where ye could walk and where ye couldni walk – it was fine up till then, before these effing boundaries roped you in, when it was just a big chunk of stuff you could just set out and do what you liked on.[248]

Patrick relates his view on the history of English takeover of Scottish land, which resulted in Scotland's inferior status. From his idealized perspective, Scotland used to be almost a pastoral scene of freedom and harmony before the English seized and divided it in their own fashion. In this sense, Patrick and his father's nostalgic opinions on Scotland's history of a mistreated people justify Böhnke's particular reading of Kelman, which highlights the nationalistic overtones of Kelman's fiction. Concerning Kelman's portrayal of Scotland's inferiority, Böhnke believes that "by having a closer look at his work and attitudes and how Scottish national identity and nationalism express themselves there," it will inevitably "emerge that he can be seen as a 'chronicler of the nation' rather than a theoretical nationalist"[249].

Judging from the explicitly belligerent remarks about England's policies made by Patrick and his father, Böhnke's nationalistic interpretation of Kelman's work seems acceptable. Kelman's view of the sentimental attachment to national identity reappears in *A Disaffection* again in connection with the symbols of a common cultural and historical origin. Namely, Kelman examines the nationalistic overtones of Highland music and Scottish folklore, which represent the essential facets of Scottishness. A clash between the allegiance to Scottishness and its avowed refusal erupts when Patrick's brother's friends quarrel over their colliding tastes in music:

> Arthur winked at Pat; Davie's a Highland & Islands man, whereas your brother, he likes the Shetlanders. Me … he tapped himself on the chest: I prefer Rock & Roll! . . . It's all ye get in this house with these two cunts, he said, the fiddle and the fucking whatever – the bagpipes!

[248] Kelman, *A Disaffection* 301.
[249] qtd. in McGuire 113.

> Davie glared at him. Dont denigrate the national instrument![250]

Davie embodies the concept of national identity. He is a person whose spirit of national pride is rooted in the traditional symbols associated with Scotland. Consequently, he feels offended by Arthur's sarcastic comment on the nostalgic relics of Scottishness represented by the Highland music and the bagpipes.

Conversely, Arthur epitomizes the refusal of sentimental Scottishness because he does not subscribe to Davie's obsession with the symbols of national identity. Instead of the traditional Scottish tunes, he prefers modern Rock & Roll music which implies his identification with a globalized cultural pattern. As a result of his distaste for nostalgic reminders of Scottishness, he suggests changing the music:

> A wee change of mood eh? Arthur winked at Patrick: Just trying to get this pair away from fiddles and bagpipes.
>
> It's your national heritage, replied Davie. Dont tell me you're wanting to stick on rock music![251]

Davie is appalled by Arthur's utter disrespect for what Davie sees as fundamental features of their 'national heritage.' However, Davie's belief in national identity is rather one of Kelman's ironic remarks about the absurdity of Scottishness than an attempt to chronicle a nation's history. The fact that the popular image of Scottishness was artificially fabricated by folklore enthusiasts in England is a telling comment on Scottish cultural stereotypes that often function as the primary sources of national pride.

Speaking of the these superficial traits of Scottish 'national heritage,' Houston reveals that "the association of the material aspects of Highland life – heather and thistles, bagpipes and tartan – with the symbols of being Scottish was created in London during the 18th-century romantic revival".[252] Moreover, he argues that these aspects of Scottishness were "cemented in the 1810s and 1820s by a brilliant public relations exercise by the great Tory and monarchist, the novelist Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), and institutionalized by Queen Victoria (1837-1901)"[253]. Consequently, Davie's patriotic commitment to the material aspects of Scottishness turns out to be Kelman's ingenious attack on the misleading concept of national identity.

Kelman is well aware of the deceitful nature of national myths and labels that are commonly used to refer to a particular group of people. He refuses to misinterpret these labels as

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[250] Kelman, *A Disaffection* 252–3.
[251] Kelman, *A Disaffection* 262.
[252] Houston 93.
[253] Houston 93.

fundamental determinants of one's identity because in his opinion they merely have the role of semantic reference:

> Entities like 'Scotsman', 'German', 'Indian' or 'American'; 'Scottish culture', 'Jamaican culture', 'African culture' or 'Asian culture' are material absurdities. They aren't particular things in the world. There are no material bodies that correspond to them. We only used those terms in the way we use other terms such as 'tree', 'bird', 'vehicle' or 'red'. They define abstract concepts; 'things' that don't exist other than for loose classification. We use these terms for the general purpose of making sense of the world, and for communicating sensibly with other individuals. Especially those individuals within our own groups and cultures. When we meet with people from different groups and cultures we try to tighten up on these loose, unparticularised definitions and descriptions.[254]

Therefore, there is reason to believe that in *A Disaffection* Kelman takes advantage of the 'material absurdities,' such as the ideas of national heritage based on artificially fabricated cultural items, to derogate the lure of nationalism and its agents.

In fact, Kelman continues to question nationalism through his characters who do not feel any sentimental attachment to Scotland. Instead, they either express their desire to leave Scotland or they have already left it. They are not concerned about their national identity at all because it cannot provide them with economic security. In their eyes, Scotland is a country not unlike any other. Moreover, they often see Scotland as one of the principal reasons of their unfortunate lives.

In "events in yer life," Derek, a Scottish expatriate who moved to England, comes back to visit his relatives. He meets with his former friend Fin, who has remained a passionate advocate of Scottish nationalism, and realizes how different their attitudes are. While discussing Derek's emigration, Fin rebukes him for using the term 'Britain' when he refers to Scotland. From Fin's perspective, "there's nay separation up here. It's always Scotland. No just one minute and Britain the next."[255]. Consequently, Derek is confused because his living in England blurred such distinctions that stem from exclusively nationalistic criteria. Eventually, Derek anxiously asks Fin about his nationalistic views: "Ye talking about Nationalism? Ye a Nationalist?"[256]. With no sign of hesitation, Fin briskly replies that it is "hardly even a question nowadays I mean it's to what extent"[257].

Concerning Kelman's portrayal of national anxieties, Derek and Fin obviously stand for the two opposite approaches to national identity. Fin resembles the nationalistic fervour of Davie

[254] Kelman, *Some Recent Attacks* 72.
[255] Kelman, *The Burn* 224.
[256] Kelman, *The Burn* 224.
[257] Kelman, *The Burn* 224.

from *A Disaffection*, whereas Derek represents Kelman's own sceptical rejection of the absurd sense of nationhood. Derek is a cosmopolitan individual whose political perspective has escaped the limiting possibilities of nationalism.

The theme of leaving Scotland behind and rejecting any claim to take pride in national identity re-emerges again in Kelman's subsequent novels. In particular, his most famous novel *How late* intentionally refuses to glorify Scottishness. The rebellious protagonist finds the oppression of the Scottish police state more than suffocating. Indeed, identifying himself with the very authorities that brutalize him simply on the basis of a shared national identity is the last thing Sammy would do. He does not enjoy any sentimental or patriotic sentiments: "Sammy didnay really like Scotland. It was his country, okay, but that didnay mean ye had to like it. . . . Sammy had never been lucky here. Never."[258]. In the end, Sammy luckily manages to get a taxi and execute his plan to leave the place that has caused him so much trouble and harm.

Kelman's non-nationalistic loyalties are evident also in *Translated Accounts* which largely draws on the characters' dispersal and displacement. The anonymous authors of the individual accounts show little concern about their ethnic or national identities, especially in the face of the state terror that seems to consume the whole country. Regarding patriotic allegiances, the narrator of "old examples" denies his attachment to his country: "This was my country yet not my country. Why was I here. It was to question from the past, having no meaning for the now."[259]. Through auto-cancellation, he deconstructs the false continuity of national identity which is meaningless in his current situation.

Moreover, Kelman's deliberate use of a computerized language without any trace of local dialects rejects ethnic specificity. Gardiner contends that this fact resulted in poor reception of the book by traditional advocates of Scottish ethnicity.[260] As far as nationalistic interpretation of Kelman's fiction is concerned, Gardiner's observation gives evidence that Kelman does not advocate national identity or ethnicity which would please the followers of Scottish nationalism. Furthermore, *Translated Accounts* refutes Böhnke's view of Kelman as a "chronicler of a nation" because there is simply no nation Kelman could chronicle – only the displaced narrators who give discontinuous and incoherent accounts of their miserable conditions.

Last but not least, Kelman's most comic novel to date – *You have to be Careful* – represents the most explicit refusal of national identity in his fiction. The protagonist ridicules his nationality by referring to himself as a "member of the alieniganae,"[261] who is denied acknowledgement by the

[258] Kelman, *How late* 256.
[259] Kelman, *Translated Accounts* 89.
[260] see Michael Gardiner, "Kelman and World English" 107.
[261] Kelman, *You Have to be Careful* 86.

US security system. Even though he is going back to Scotland, he refuses to associate his decision to leave with any sentimental feelings of national pride or nostalgia: "I needit to get back to something. It had nothing to do with homesickness or notions of a motherland. Fuck the motherland, blood and guts and soil and shite, it didnay matter a fuck to me."[262].

Therefore, Kelman resolutely rejects nationalism of any kind. His major characters do not accept the notion of national identity, which would urge them to remain in Scotland and be proud of their ethnic origin. Instead of nostalgic glorification of Scottishness, Kelman more likely fits the recent pattern of Scottish literature that seeks to defy pathetic nationalism and rethink the traditional stereotypes:

> The aim of contemporary Scottish literature is to emphasise individuality and intracommunal difference rather than to construct dubious all-in-one myths of a nationalist quality. While retaining its own characteristic timbre and twist it has become truly cosmopolitan. After looking first at its navel, then at its underbelly, it has now set to explore the whole of its anatomy, fetching skeletal national stereotypes from the closet to bring them under close scrutiny.[263]

23. 'fucking imperialist bastards': Postcolonial Discourse

Kelman's rejection of nationalism encourages a rather postcolonial interpretation of his fiction that often deals with anxieties between England and Scotland. Exploring Kelman's writings from the postcolonial perspective will further show his defiance of Scottishness and reinforce the anti-authoritarian aspect of his fiction.

Concerning the relationship between England and Scotland, Patrick Doyle in *A Disaffection* emphasizes the imperialist ambitions of the former without any particular reference to Scotland's nationalistic claims:

> Probably the whole of Scotland is huffy. This is why their history is so shitey. The English are not huffy, just fucking imperialist bastards. Which ones? Quite right. And that applies to the Northamericans as well. Imperialists cannot be huffy: it would be a contradiction.[264]

Instead of taking pride in Scottish history and glorifying her resistance against the English, Patrick's pessimistic view of Scotland implies his distance from any kind of national identity that would oblige him to sympathize with the alleged suffering of Scottish people. Far from expressing any sentimental compassion, Patrick openly criticises the passive and disorganized

[262] Kelman, *You Have to be Careful* 26–7.
[263] qtd. in McGuire 128.
[264] Kelman, *A Disaffection* 117.

attitude of Scotland which allowed the prudent English to take over. For that reason, Patrick does not resort to nationalism because his detached commentary points out the effects of imperialist endeavour, but no ethnic issues.

Moreover, Patrick's view cannot be identified with nationalistic bias against England because he also mentions the imperialist aspirations of the United States. In his opinion, English and American policies concerning world dominance are alike. Therefore, Kelman's supposed association with nationalism must give way to examining his fiction with respect to postcolonial theory and power structures in general.

Kelman's latest collection of short stories *If it is your life* proves that he questions authoritarian efforts of the English government and its oppressive policies. In "as if from nowhere" an elderly protagonist wonders about Scottish defeatism, which has paralysed most attempts to resist and fight back:

> Why did people not fight? It was the same in Scotland. People didnt fight, not like in the old days. Scots wha hae. Nowadays it was just like whatever it was, acceptance, submission, grovellation, to a bunch of corrupt administrators, lawyers and bureaucrats whose debased self-interest enabled the undead not to colonize the world, but to enslave it.[265]

Even though the protagonist is prone to nostalgic laments for Scotland's history, he avoids any explicitly nationalistic arguments. Instead of accusing England in terms of ethnic injustice, he criticises the role of power structures that are responsible for facilitating colonization and subjugation of the weakest links in global community. In fact, he does not allude to any specific government authorities – the 'bunch of corrupt administrators' could be English as well as Scottish. Consequently, Kelman focuses on the general pattern of power structures that endorse imperialist and authoritarian policies. Ethnicity does not play any major role in Kelman's postcolonial discourse.

As far as colonialism is concerned, Scotland was repeatedly exposed to English territorial, political and cultural expansionism in the past. Scotland had to withstand enforced redistribution of land known as the infamous Highland clearances in the eighteen and nineteenth centuries, which radically altered the geopolitical character of Scotland.[266] Furthermore, Scotland lost its sovereignty to England by signing the Act of Union in 1709, and suffered from enforced Anglicisation that was countered by enthusiasts like Robert Burns, who promoted Scoticisms.[267] Eventually, ordinary Scottish people were victimized by American and British multinational oil corporations that exploited crude oil reserves discovered in the 1960s in the North Sea, and the

[265] Kelman, *If it is your life* 49–50.
[266] see Houston 86–89.
[267] see Houston 127–8.

Scottish National Party that took advantage of the dispute over the extraction to gain political credit.[268]

With respect to Scotland's colonial experience, Kelman's fiction can be easily identified with postcolonial theory, especially in terms of his advocacy of marginalized cultures and languages. Reflecting on the accusation that he hates the English, Kelman explained his critical attitude in a postcolonial way: "When a colony attempts to break free, you know, the question that the imperial power always asks is, 'Why do you not like us?' To me, whether we like them or not is irrelevant. It's the master-slave thing, you know, the slave says, 'I wish to be free,' and the master goes, 'Why? I treat you well.' The concept of freedom somehow doesn't apply to a subjected people."[269]. Therefore, Kelman writes from a detached objective perspective which is not based on nationalistic hatred against the English but critical assessment of England's colonizing policies that affected Scotland's history.

In the light of Kelman's postcolonial arguments, *Translated Accounts* represents an eloquent testimony to the dehumanizing effects of colonization. The narrator of "who asks the question" relates his inability to identify himself with his country and language because the process of colonization has split his identity:

> This ground may be called land. Some call it so. I cannot, cannot say of this ground how it may be land. For how many lands! One may know all lands. Ours is the inferior, always and for all. I know all languages, I said it, thus am I inferior. And to all peoples, if it matters, then mattered, it did not, does not.[270]

As a consequence of his schizophrenia incurred by the colonizing power, the narrator suffers from serious displacement. Even though he suggests his geographical and linguistic knowledge is substantial, he is made feel inferior in his own country. He compares the past when the individual's identity was taken for granted with the present situation of territorial expansion and cultural imperialism. The narrator's experience reflects the fact that colonialism included various forms of subordination ranging from territorial and political gains to adopting the language and culture of the colonizing power.[271] Consequently, *Translated Accounts* is Kelman's postcolonial masterpiece, which illustrates his anti-authoritarian and anti-imperialist political beliefs.

However, Scotland's postcolonial status within the British Empire is a matter of controversy. In comparison to India and other former British colonies, whose human and natural resources were enthusiastically exploited by England, Scotland had a considerable share in British

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[268] see Christopher Harvie, *Scotland & Nationalism: Scottish Society and Politics 1707–1994* (1977; London: Routledge, 1994) 183–187.
[269] Toremans 581.
[270] Kelman, *Translated Accounts* 319.
[271] see McGuire 128.

imperialist ventures all around the world and her representatives were rewarded with royal titles for their merit in the building of the Empire.[272] Besides Scotsmen's active service in the East India Company, they voluntarily participated in conquering and settling the Empire's colonies from Canada to New Zealand.[273] Therefore, Scotland' inclusion in postcolonial discourse is highly debatable, especially during the period of the British Empire.

Kelman's recent fiction mirrors this fact and acknowledges Scots' undeniable participation in British colonial and military efforts. In particular, the protagonist of *You Have to be Careful* ponders British colonial history in the nineteenth century and his anti-nationalistic beliefs. In a conversation with his Indian friend, Jerry provides a self-critical judgement about Scottish pro-active role in British oppression:

> But we all eat shit, I says, my faimly's worse than yours, my entire country man it is much worse, we are all cretinous fucking goddam servants, arselicking bastards.
>
> That's your business. You think that's something to do with me?
>
> Sure, I says, of course it is; one of my ancestors might have been out there in the subcontinent employed by the imperialist Brit fuckers, executing women, weans and men to keep the wolf from the door, a soldier, an ordinary feller.[274]

Instead of promoting his national identity by glorifying Scottish efforts, Jerry ridicules his countrymen whom he sees as obedient agents of the British Empire. More importantly, he admits Scots' part in implementing ruthless methods in the colonisation of India.

In this manner, Kelman agrees with the sceptical argument about the right of white European countries to be included in postcolonial discourse. In *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), a book focusing on the effects of decolonization on literature, the authors question the postcolonial legitimacy of countries such as Scotland:

> While it is possible to argue that these societies [Ireland, Scotland and Wales] were the first victims of English expansion, their subsequent complicity in the British imperial enterprise makes it difficult for colonized peoples outside Britain to accept their identity as post-colonial.[275]

As far as Scotland's participation in British military actions is concerned, Kelman's latest novel *Kieron Smith, boy* gives further evidence of his acknowledgement of Scotland's problematic postcolonial identity. Ruminating on the inclusion of Scottish armed forces in British army, the adolescent protagonist emphasizes their cooperation:

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[272] see J. M. Reid, *Scotland: Past and Present* (London: Oxford UP, 1959) 134 and 135.
[273] see Reid 134.
[274] Kelman, *You Have to be Careful* 45.
[275] qtd. in McGuire 118.

> England had the best Navy the world had ever seen. My da said it too, they could beat anybody and we were just there too if it was the kilties marching as to war because we had the pipes and just were the best fighters and helped them because if they helped us too.[276]

Through the naïve reasoning of an immature mind, Kelman reinforces his previous concern about Scotland's participation in British military ventures expressed by Jerry in *You Have to be Careful*. Even though Kelman draws on postcolonial theory, he is able to reflect on Scotland's controversial identity of an oppressed territory. Nonetheless, his criticism of power structures embodied in the protagonists of *How late*, *Translated Accounts*, and *You Have to be Careful* deliberately avoids the pitfalls of simplistic nationalist narratives.

24. 'you is alien': Citizenship and Discrimination

In his critical approach to identity, Kelman addresses the issue of citizenship as a fundamental aspect of state control. He questions the absurdity of the fact that citizenship determines one's existence, which is either guaranteed or denied by the possession of valid identification documents. Moreover, Kelman demonstrates how citizenship motivates acts of official discrimination against immigrants and persons without any official proof of their nationality.

Kelman's explicit criticism of official discrimination on the basis of citizenship is evident in his most chilling drama *In the Night*, which challenges the right of the state to monitor and persecute the public. During the interrogation led by three officials who burst into a couple's flat, the issue of citizenship is brought up as one of the criteria that define the couple's transgressions:

> THIRD. (to First) You know something, I dont even think she's British let alone anything else.
>
> FIRST. They're probably immigrants.
>
> THIRD. Yeh, indeed, of Asian or East European extraction. Maybe from Africa, or the West Indies, the Central Americas.[277]

The couple's unspecified citizenship is considered a serious crime by the three interrogators who wonder about their true origin. The fact that the couple are probably immigrants is seen as a grave breech of the standard, which is apparently associated with British citizenship. Their xenophobic and anti-immigration attitude reinforces the dystopian atmosphere of the play and demonstrates Kelman's rejection of national identity that serves as an authoritarian measure to ensure absolute control.

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[276] Kelman, *Kieron* 291.
[277] Kelman, *Hardie and Baird & Other Plays* 91.

The bureaucratic obsession of the State with documents that establish one's identity reappears in *Translated Accounts*, where the narrator of "a pumpkin story" describes discriminatory practices of the immigration officers who intimidate his associate immediately after he gets off the bus:

> As the first fellow pushed out from the bus, our colleague. What is your human rights for human life if you are not human, are you human, what life do you have if you have none you are not human, let me kill you, it is slaughter I am butcher. Where are your identification papers is this your country if it is so show us where are they. . . . It was the first fellow that one military shouted at, first man pushed out from the bus. It was this first man knocked down rising up knocked down rising up and shouting at him, shouting, these military and insignia, insignia men military men shouting at him, parading for us the colleague, yes, I now saw they knew it.[278]

The narrator relates a sense of powerlessness that emerges in the face the state terror perpetrated by its agents of law enforcement, who are endowed with absolute power. He points out the sinister significance of identification documents which determine whether one is human or not. Obviously, the person in question has trouble with proving his identity and the officers brutalize him in front of the other passengers. Using such a disturbing scene of police brutality, Kelman shows the dehumanizing effects of bureaucratically designed national identity which can result in intimidation and human degradation.

In comparison, the underlying theme of *You Have to be Careful* is the protagonist's immigrant status which deprives him of citizenship privileges in the United States. In fact, the America in *You Have to be Careful* has dystopian features of a totalitarian regime that distinguishes its population according to their ID status. Jerry as an immigrant has the lowest status of the 'Red Card,' which ostracizes him in the eyes of the natives for his suspicious strangeness.[279] His strong accent and radical political opinions represent Jerry's social stigma that gives away his non-native identity. He illustrates his experience with the xenophobic attitude of the local residents who look down upon foreign individuals:

> One usually associates it with small towns but it happens in major cities as well: stray into a new district and ye discover it is a homogeneous hotbed of poisonous fuckers all staring at ye because ye are the wrang "thing": religion, race, class, nationality, politics; they know ye as soon as they look at ye, boy, you is alien.
>
> Even in places where it isnay obvious and ye think it is okay, suddenly the atmosphere shifts. It can even be your fault, you say something out of turn and the fucking roof caves in, ye wake up in Accident & Emergency with a guy in a grey suit staring at ye and naw, he isnay a doctor, he is a

[278] Kelman, *Translated Accounts* 121–2.
[279] see Kelman, *You Have to be Careful* 11–2.

> snooping bastard from the indigenous aliens' section of the Federal Bureau of Immigration and Assimilation.[280]

Jerry shows how his inferior immigrant status denies him the right to be treated as a human being. Instead, he is labelled a 'thing' and 'alien' that does not deserve any respect. Furthermore, the animosities of the locals can easily turn into physical intimidation of immigrants, who are threatened by increasing victimization carried out by official agencies of immigration control. Consequently, Jerry repeatedly faces the process of official discrimination that reminds him of his inferiority in a foreign country.

Concerning Jerry's perpetual humiliation caused by his alien status, Kövesi argues that "Kelman pushes the context of this noel a little into the future, and exaggerates American politics incrementally further to the right, satirising by implication political developments in the wake of terrorist attacks on the USA in September 2001, such as the US 'Patriot' Act of 2001, the ensuing 'War on Terror' in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere."[281]. Therefore, Jerry represents Kelman's most explicit attack on the State and its bureaucratic machinery, which exploit the concept of national identity to brainwash and control the public.

[280] Kelman, *You Have to be Careful* 26.
[281] Kövesi 180.

Conclusion

James Kelman has rightfully secured his undeniable place within contemporary Scottish literature. His long and dramatic career has proven him a tremendously prolific essayist, playwright, and fiction writer who has repeatedly dared to address numerous cultural and political issues that are widely held to be taboos. Kelman's first-hand experience with social and economic deprivation has led him to produce a unique brand of working-class literature that challenges the political and literary status quo.

The aim of this study has been to revise a former BA thesis which only explored a limited amount of Kelman's fiction from a singular perspective, and provide a thorough analysis of the whole body of his literature with a number of new observations. In order to accomplish this goal, Kelman's recent output and his published dramas have been included to determine the development of his writings from the early stages to the present. Despite the overall homogeneity of Kelman's work, this thesis has also set out to show major variations in his fiction that are often overlooked for the sake of simplicity.

To be able to account for any particular changes though, it is imperative to assess the recurring topics in Kelman's writings. Namely, it is the case of class conflict that reappears in the majority of Kelman's stories. He explores the cauldron of class animosities created and nourished by capitalism, which negatively affects his dispossessed characters and their attitudes towards society. Kelman's protagonists are haunted by unemployment and economic insecurity that highlight the underlying aspect of economic determinism in his narratives. Their underprivileged lives represent a telling comment of the growing gap between haves and have-nots, which inevitably encourages class antagonism.

Besides the exploitative nature of capitalism, Kelman's stories systematically deal with masculine stereotypes and the traditional division of gender roles. His protagonists are typically males whose masculinity is at stake. They face a redistribution of conventionally accepted roles of women, who are no longer condemned to a domestic sphere of existence but participate in the public arena alongside their male counterparts. Even though Kelman's women are never introduced as main characters, they exercise substantial influence over his male protagonists who are frequently captivated by their rational reasoning and self-control. Consequently, Kelman's men happen to carry out parental and domestic responsibilities formerly associated with women, whereas his women have their share in the traditional masculine role of the breadwinner.

A heavy emphasis has also been laid on the existentialist features of Kelman's narratives that largely draw on the philosophy of Franz Kafka, whose legacy has tremendously influenced

Kelman's work. Characteristically, Kelman's minimalistic short stories and novels lack the traditional plot structure. In fact, Kelman defies the concept of plot because he depicts everyday horrors of common individuals, whose routine nature does not possess any beginning or end. Therefore, he takes advantage of the existentialist method of 'throwness' which confronts the reader with a contextualization deficit in Kelman's plotless narratives.

In addition, a particular interpretation of Kelman's writings with respect to the existentialist philosophy of Félix Guattari and Gilles Delueze has challenged the assumption that Kelman's characters are chronically paralyzed and his stories are short of dynamism. Conversely, it has been shown that from the existentialist perspective Kelman's protagonists share a quality of perpetual motion and commitment to avoid permanent paralysis.

Moreover, this aspect of existentialist dynamism can be also seen in the changing setting of Kelman's narratives that resist arrest. They shift from Glasgow in his earlier fiction to an unknown territory in *Translated Accounts*, and include a futuristic vision of America in *You have to be Careful in the Land of the Free*. Eventually, Kelman arrives back in Scotland with his latest books *Kieron Smith, boy* and *If it is your life*.

As far as language is concerned, Kelman's advocacy of demotic dialects and use of expletives in particular have been the most distinctive features of his fiction. Contrary to popular beliefs that associate profanities and slang with poor vocabulary or lack of articulacy, Kelman introduces swear words as a means of linguistic innovation and wordplay that demonstrate the intellectual potential of his seemingly inarticulate protagonists.

For that reason, *Translated Accounts* appears to be a major break in Kelman's development. In comparison to his otherwise vernacular-oriented work, *Translated Accounts* shows no traits of ethnic specificity and its broken computerized language signifies communication breakdown imposed by anonymous power structures. However, Kelman's subsequent output returns back to a mixture of Scots and Standard English, which was the prevailing pattern before the publication of *Translated Accounts*.

Apart from the hierarchical differences between standardized language forms and local patois, Kelman portrays the authoritarian nature of the State and its institutions. His protagonists are constantly threatened by the oppressive measures of agents of law enforcement. As a result, they suffer from state and social control that connect Kelman's narratives with the dystopian tradition of George Orwell or Aldous Huxley.

Concerning Kelman's commitment to anti-authoritarian ideology, his treatment of narrative voice displays his efforts to avoid the hierarchical distinctions between the speech of his characters and the voice of the narrator.

In contrast, his relentless endeavour to do away with the omniscient third-person narrator was surprisingly abandoned in *A Chancer*, his second full-length novel that is told from a non-omniscient third-person point of view to achieve facticity and objectivity. Nonetheless, his subsequent writings are anchored in an ingenious mixture of first- and third-person narrative voices that blur the boundaries between the characters' thoughts and narrators' presence.

Compared to Kelman's stories narrated by singular agents, *Translated Accounts* stands for an exception because it consists of multiple narrators who provide fragmented information through the first-person point of view.

Despite his repetitive references to the anxieties between Scotland and England, Kelman rejects the concept of national identity and his narratives criticize nationalism of any kind. Instead, he deals with the effects of imperialism and colonialism in general and his stories imply a growing concern about the discrimination based on nationalities and ethnicity. Kelman's recent novels, especially *You have to be Careful in the Land of the Free*, defy citizenship which only serves to attack immigrants and make them inferior. Therefore, Kelman's anti-patriotic beliefs prove his refusal of nationalism and ethnic narrow-mindedness.

To sum up, Kelman's homogeneous body of literature contains significant divergences, especially in case of his later fiction that takes advantage of more fluid narratives based on associations rather than episodic structure of his former writings. Kelman's development of narrative voice demonstrates his systematic efforts to find a suitable vehicle for his political anti-authoritarian opinions, while the existentialist dynamism of his stories gives evidence about his tenacious endeavour to avoid paralysis and fossilization.

Shrnutí

James Kelman patří bezpochyby mezi nejvýznamnější spisovatele současné skotské literatury. Svým osobitým stylem a neotřelým přístupem ke kontroverzním tématům, jako například užití vulgarismů v literatuře nebo kritice mocenských struktur, již několik let provokuje oficiální britské literární kruhy, u nichž jeho tvorba nezřídka vzbuzuje pohoršení. Kelman se proslavil především svým nechvalně známým románem *How Late it was, how late*, který mu nakonec paradoxně v roce 1994 přinesl jedno z nejprestižnějších britských literárních ocenění – The Man Booker Prize. Fakt, že Kelman vyhrál tuto cenu s knihou, která obsahuje téměř čtyři tisíce variací silně vulgárních výrazů a která napadá legitimitu Státu, vlády a jejich institucí, vzedmul mocnou vlnu nesouhlasu u množství renomovaných literárních kritiků. Tomutu široce medializovanému tlaku však Kelman nepodlehl a zachoval si svoji tvůrčí integritu, která se odráží v jeho odhodlání nadále psát svým svérázným způsobem o tabuizovaných a politicky radikálních tématech.

Nicméně, právě díky kontrovernímu úspěchu Kelmanovy oceněné knihy *How Late it was, how late* a především jejímu následovnému odsouzení ze strany rozhořčených kritiků, kterým se Kelman nesmazatelně zapsal do podvědomí čtenářské obce, může dojít k zjednodušujícím a přímočarým hodnocením Kelmanovy tvorby. Jeho literární repertoár se zdaleka neomezuje pouze na jednu knihu a jednu literární formu, ale naopak zahrnuje kromě několika románů i nepřeberné množství povídek, esejů a několik divadelních her. K tomu je třeba připočíst i pestrou škálu literárních experimentů, kterými se snaží obohatit svoji práci, aby co nejautentičněji zachycovala každodenní realitu běžných lidí.

Cílem této práce bylo tudíž poskytnout komplexní pohled na tvorbu Jamese Kelmana a vyhnout se unáhleným závěrům o jejím podřadném místě v současné skotské a britské literatuře. Přestože tato studie vychází z původní bakalářské práce, která zkoumala především Kelmanův nekonvenční přístup k proletářskému literárnímu žánru, podává ucelený rozbor jeho kompletního literárního díla a nezaměřuje se pouze na jeden z jeho dílčích aspektů. Tohoto souhrného náhledu bylo dosaženo souvislou analýzou všech hlavních charakteristických znaků Kelmanovy tvorby, včetně jeho nejnovějších publikací, které zmíněná původní bakalářská práce neobsahovala. Za tímto účelem se autor rozhodl využít metod materialismu, strukturalismu a formalismu, aby systematicky došel k tíženým výsledkům svého výzkumu.

První oblastí, kterou se tato práce zabývala je Kelmanův kritický pohled na kapitalismus a způsob, jakým se tento ekonomický systém odráží v životě běžných neprivilegovaných vyděděnců, kteří se více, či méně neúspěšně, snaží čelit materiálním imperativům, jež ovládají jejich žalostnou existenci.

Drtivá většina Kelmanovy tvorby se věnuje sociálně a ekonomicky vyloučeným jedincům, kteří v lepším případě vykonávají nekvalifikované dělnické profese, v horším trpí chonickou nezaměstnaností. Kelmanovi anti-hrdinové, jež svým ekonomicky neproduktivním statutem zvýrazňují propastný rozdíl mezi bohatou a chudou částí společnosti, dokumentují historické změny, jimiž prošla Velká Británie od druhé světové války.

Kelman podtrhuje zásadní obrat, ke kterému došlo po poválečném období rekonstrukce v britské ekonomice. Zatímco se poválečná Británie těšila z relativního hospodářského oživení, tak s nástupem nekompromisního konzervatismu, spojeného s úřadem premiérky Margaret Tchatcherové, došlo k éře masivní privatizace národního průmyslu, kterým tradiční oblast skotského industriálního pásu utrpěla zásadní ránu. Z toho důvodu Kelmanovy postavy reprezentují masy dělnické třídy, která s uzavřením skotských průmyslových komplexů v osmdesátých letech dvacátého století ztratila své přirozené zázemí a zdroj síly. Jelikož bylo toto tíživé období sociální a ekonomické nejistoty zároveň časem, kdy se formovalo Kelmanovo spisovatelské zaměření, není náhodou, že jeho příběhy vykreslují dělnickou třídu jako rozštěpený celek, jehož dávno zašlou jednotu a odhodlání nahradila bezmoc a dezorganizovanost.

Díky Kelmanovu důrazu na třídní konflikt mezi majetnou menšinou a ekonomicky marginalizovaným pozůstatkem dělnické třídy, jsou jeho příběhy nabité nevraživostí mezi těmito dvěma skupinami. Kelmanovy postavy vyjadřují svůj hněv a odpor k ekonomické elitě, která je svým bezohledným jednáním vystavuje rizikům, spojeným s nedodržováním bezpečnosti práce a průmyslovými nehodami, za něž odmítají nést zodpovědnost.

Přes značně depresivní a klaustrofobickou atmosféru, pramenící z logické bezradnosti ekonomického determinismu, je Kelmanova tvorba charateristická svým ironickým humorem a neortodoxním přístupem k literatuře, která vychází z dělnického prostředí. Kelman si pohrává s budovatelskými stereotypy, které nakládaly s dělníkem jako s pologramotným, ale čestným a uvědomělým nositelem stranické ideologie. Místo těchto romantických představ však Kelman vykresluje existenci dělnické podtřídy, jejíž členové nadapadají legitimitu námezdní práce a soukromého vlastnictví prostřednictvím drobných krádeží a expropriací. Navíc to již nejsou lehce zmanipulovatelní jedinci, kteří své životy rozdělují mezi práci v továrně a hospodskou kulturu, ale sečtělí čtenáři klasické literatury, k níž ve svých úvahách přímo i nepřímo odkazují.

Typologie Kelmanových postav a jejich fungování v rámci svých dělnických komunit je další otázkou, kterou tato práce zkoumala. Typickou postavou Kelmanových příběhů je maskulinní anti-hrdina, který je konfrontován s měnícím se paradigmatem tradičně chápaného mužství.

Místo konvenčního dělnického alfa jedince, který zabezpečuje svoji rodinu a ekonomicky zajišťuje její reprodukci, zatímco jeho ženský protějšek trpělivě pečuje o domácí prostředí a

vykonává rodičovské povinnosti, Kelman staví ženy do opačného postavení, čímž zpochybňuje tento zažitý stereotyp. Jeho ženské postavy, které však nikdy nejsou hlavními aktérkami děje, nýbrž spíše doprovází centrální mužské anti-hrdiny, jsou silné osobnosti, jež věří ve své právo podílet se na vedení rodiny a aktivně se zapojit do života mimo domácnost. Jejich odhodlání pracovat a být ekonomicky produktivní se střetává s představami Kelmanových můžských postav, které se musejí vyrovnávat s měnícím se historickým kontextem, který otevřel cestu zaměstnání žen v administrativních a nedělnických profesích. Přestože mají Kelmanovi muži problémy pochopit tento trend, tak se mu nebrání a přijímají ženu jako svoji rovnocenou partnerku v pracovní i rodinné sféře. Čtenář je tak například svědkem radikální výměny tradičně chápané mužské a ženské role v oblasti péče o dítě a domácnost; zatímco žena pracuje, muž se stará o dítě a úklid domácnosti jako v případě Kelmanova prvního románu *The Busconductor Hines*.

Kelman tuto problematiku posunuje ještě dál tím, že představuje muže jako oslabeného jedince, který nedokáže kontrolovat sebe ani své okolí. Naproti tomu Kelman zobrazuje ženské postavy jako archetypy racionálního a střízlivého jednání, jež drží mužskou nedbalost a sentimentalitu při zemi. Přesto, že Kelman obrátil polaritu mezi patriarchátem a matriarchátem o sto osmdesát stupňů, jeho maskulinní postavy se proti této změně nijak zásadně nebrání. Naopak, Kelmanovi anti-hrdinové se dokonce obdivují stoické sebekontrole jejich ženských protějšků, které jsou paradoxně symbolem moci a intelektu.

Kromě toho trpí Kelmanovi muži značnou mírou odcizení v rámci svých rodin i mimo ně. Není to důsledek sílícího postavení ženského elementu, ale spíše vlivu vzdělání na členy dělnické komunity, která se tak ještě víc štěpí a rozpadá. Některé Kelmanovy postavy, které jejich rodiny zpočátku povzbuzují, aby získali vzdělání a tím i naději na „lepší" život, končí jako zatracenci, jelikož se svým sociálním a ekonomickým vzestupem příliš vzdálili svému původnímu dělnickému zázemí.

K tomuto vnitřnímu pocitu vykořenění se navíc přidává i faktor vnějšího odcizení v souvislosti s rozpadem organizované dělnické třídy. Tento problém se týká především Kelmanových anti-hrdinů, kteří se z různých důvodů odmítají zapojit do kolektivního odporu proti svým zaměstnavatelům a oživit pověstného ducha dělnické jednoty. Místo posílení své třídní identity organizovaným bojem za svá práva, tito jedinci rezignují na pocit sounáležitosti a dokonce se i odmítají ztotožnit se svým neprivilegovaným dělnickým postavením. Tímto způsobem Kelman zobrazuje kolaps moderní dělnické solidarity, která utrpěla procesem privatizace průmyslových odvětví a rostoucí atomizací post-industriální společnosti, jež už pro masy nezaměstnaných dělníků nemá uplatnění.

Vedle Kelmanova důrazu na třídní konflikt a podobu vnitřních vztahů proletariátu, se tato studie zčásti věnovala také filosofické povaze jeho tvorby, která je do značné míry ovlivněna evropským existencialismem. Strukturou svých příběhů se Kelman otevřeně hlásí k odkazu Franze Kafky a Fjodora Dostojevského, především svým úsilím vyhnout se abstraktním konceptům a naopak zdůraznit konkrétní formy utrpení běžného člověka, na něhož dopadá tíha každodenní reality. Zvláštní pozornost si zaslouží jeho teorie o absenci jakéhokoli začátku, či konci samotného příběhu. Na tomto principu Kelman staví své vyprávění, které čtenáře vrhne do určité situace, často bez potřebné kontextualizace, která je tak autentickým portrétem reality.

V souvislosti s tímto existencialistickým aspektem „vrhnutí" čteráře do života Kelmannových postav, je důležité zmínit jeho odpor k populární literatuře, která podle něj vytváří vykonstruované a „abnormální" příběhy o tajných agentech a bankovních loupežích, které nemají mnoho společného s životem běžného člověka. Namísto velkolepých a vzrušujících zápletek Kelman vyzdvihuje nutnost vyjádřit konkrétní fakt, či situaci, v životě jednotlivce, bez jakéhokoli autorova hodnocení, protože jen potom vynikne jeho tíživá podstata. Kelmanův důraz na holou skutečnost určitého faktu slouží jako nástroj pro ultra-realistické zachycení hororových okamžiků, které vycházejí z rutinní pohavy všedního života a nikoli z pera ekonomicky zabezpečeného umělce.

Mimo to je také zajímavé sledovat odraz existencialistické filozofie Félixe Guattariho a Gillese Deluezeho na Kelmanových postavách, které odmítají přijmout *nedostatek* jako svůj životní úděl předurčený kapitalismem. Tento *nedostatek* může být vyjádřen jejich tíživou finanční situací, podřadným sociálním postavením, či deficitem v oblasti partnerských vztahů. Nicméně, Kelmanovi anti-hrdinové se s tímto nedostatkem materiálních a emocionálních hodnot dokáží vypořádat procesem neustálého *stávání se*, což vyjadřuje jejich odhodlání kompenzovat chudobu expropriací a podřané postavení opakovanou konfrontací s mocenskými strukturami. Přestože Kelmanův princip „děje bez děje," který aplikuje na své příběhy „všedních hororů," má za následek absenci jakékoli tradiční zápletky, jeho postavy se této zdálivé paralýze vyhýbají právě tím, že se neustále posunují kupředu – stávají se – a to i v případě, že je tento posun opakováním jejich předchozích činů.

Zásadní veličinou se zde stává pohyb, který mnozí Kelmanovi kritikové přecházejí bez povšimnutí, či ho záměrně ignorují. Tento pohyb je znatelný například v oblasti zasazení děje jeho příběhů. Zatímco je jeho ranější tvorba zasazená převážně do Skotska a má epizodický charakter, jeho pozdější díla, zejména romány *Translated Accounts* a *You have to be Careful in the Land of the Free* vykazují posun mimo území Velké Británie. Co se týče románu *You have to be Careful*,

Kelman dokonce upustil od svoji tradiční epizodické struktury vyprávění a využil splývavější organizace příběhu na základě asociací, spíše než chronologicého řazení událostí.

Snad nejcharakterističtějším rysem Kelmanovy tvorby je jeho radikální přístup k otázce jazyka a jeho lokálních dialektů. Naprostá většina jeho příběhů je psána hovorovou angličtinou, respektive její skotskou variantou. Kelman využívá místních nestandradních výrazů, především z oblasti svého rodného Glasgow, čímž se snaží přidat na autenticitě svých postav, které se díky svým jazykovým predispozicím dostávají do konfliktu s autoritami, jež uznávají pouze standardní formu spisovné angličtiny. Tyto konflikty často pramení z Kelmanova přesvědčení o oprávněnosti užití vulgarismů v běžném styku, jelikož tyto komunikativní prostředky jsou součástí identity jednotlivce a vycházejí z jeho kulturního pozadí. Zakázat a tabuizovat vulgarismy, by podle Kelmana znamenalo zakázat a cenzurovat právo marginálních nářečí a kultur na existenci. Své názory prezentuje ve své tvorbě ve formě snah oficiálních institucí cíleně omezovat Kelmanovy anti-hrdiny, kteří v komunikaci využívají hovorové výrazy a vulgarismy, čímž se odmítají podrobit nadvládě centrálně určeného jazykového formátu.

Kelmenovo využití místního skotského nářečí a vulgarních výrazů však zdaleka není prvoplánové a bezúčelné. Tyto odchylky od standradního jazyka může čtenář chápat ne jako nedostatek komunikativních schopností, či ubohou úroveň slovní zásoby, nýbrž jako prostředek jazykové hry a inovace. Kelmanovy postavy nezřídka znovuobjevují a přetvářejí jazyk a jeho složky tím, že například vulgarismy dosazují do různých funkcí větných členů, kombinují je se standradními výrazy a vytvářejí nové lexikální jednotky. Jinými slovy si svým způsobem hrají s jazykem, který se neustále vyvíjí a modifikuje.

Vzhledem ke Kelmanově systematickému využití skotského dialektu, dalo by se říci, že jeho tvorba je jednotvárná a předvídatelná. Tento stereotyp však narušuje románem *Translated Account*, v kterém není možné vystopovat jakýkoli náznak lokálního zabarvení jazyka, protože záměrně simuluje strojový překlad původního jazyka postav do nesouvislé anlgličtiny. Proto je tento Kelmanův nejexperimentálnější román zásadním zlomem v jeho jinak jazykově homogenní tvorbě. Po tomto neočekávaném počinu se však Kelman opět vrací ke své typické látce, včetně jazykové stránky lokálních dialektů a hovorových výrazů.

Kelmanův kritický postoj ke kapitalismu jde ruku v ruce s jeho odporem ke Státu a jeho institucím, které ve svých příbězích zobrazuje jako nástroje útlaku a vykořisťování. Jeho anti-hrdinové jsou zpravdidla frustrovaní jedinci, kteří čelí represivnímu vlivu byrokracie a státních donucovacích složek. Jejich podřadné postavení ve společnosti je proto dovršeno neschopností podřídit se mocenským strukturám, se kterými vedou sisyfovský boj.

Kelmanova tvorba svojím nádechem všudypřítomné státní kontroly a totalitních praktik státních institucí v mnohém připomíná klasický dystopický žánr, na který poukazuje temnou atmosférou a paranoidním přesvědčením jeho postav o tom, že jsou sledovány státními orgány.

V Kelmanově světě totalitní kontroly je možné vystopovat vliv absurdního dramatu Samuela Becketta, či Harolda Pintera, jejichž odkaz je zřetelný především v Kelmanově románu *How late it was, how late*, dále *Translated Accounts* a také jeho absurdní hře *In the Night*. Všechna tato díla otevřeně kritizují legitimitu Státu, který si monopolizuje právo vytvářet zákony a instituce, jež slouží k útlaku veřejnosti. Z tohoto důvodu je možné říci, že celá Kelmanova tvorba má formu souboje jednotlivce proti byrokratickému a totalitnímu systému, který nerespektuje právo na soukromí a důmyslně porušuje svobody jednotlivce.

Posledním aspektem, kterým se tato práce zabývala je Kelmanův vztah ke konceptu národnosti a etnicity. Z toho, že Kelmanovým obvyklým námětem je antagonismus mezi angličtinou a její skotskou variantou, či přímo mezi Skoty a Angličany, by se dal snadno vyvodit závěr, který by Kelmana označil za nacionalistického spisovatele, který přiživuje etnickou nesnášenlivost.

Po bližším prozkoumání jeho tvorby na pozadí jeho politických názorů, které publikoval ve svých esejích, je však nutné konstatovat, že James Kelman se k myšlence nacionalismu v žádném případě nehlásí, nýbrž ji přímo napadá, jako nesmyslný konstrukt, vytvořený za účelem rozdělení a ovládání veřejnosti. Jeho postavy se často vyjadřují o své vlasti ironicky, ba přímo opovržlivě, což znamená, že nemají žádný zájem na tom, jakkoli oslavovat jejich domnělé etnické kořeny.

Úhlavního nepřítele Kelman nespatřuje v jiné národnosti, ale vládnoucí třídě, která bez rozdílu utlačuje obyvatelstvo, od kterého údajně pochází její legitimita. Zejména ve svém nejhumornějším díle *You have to be Careful* se Kelman zabývá despektem Státu a vlády k imigrantům, kteří jsou automaticky považováni za vetřelce a o jejich životě rozhoduje jejich pas a evidence v bezpečnsotím systému země, ve které se rozhodli usadit.

Místo nacionalismu se Kelman hlásí k anarchistickým myšlenkám, které ovlivnily jeho anti-autoritářskou identitu spisovatele a politického aktivisty, jež ostře vystupuje proti vládnoucímu establishmentu a třídnímu rozdělení kapitalistické společnosti. Tento rys Kelmanovy tvorby je vedle její jazykové specifičnosti rozhodujícím faktorem, který je možné sledovat od jeho ranných začátků až po nejnovější díla.

Zásadní předělem z hlediska formálních znaků bylo vydání jeho dvou po sobě jdoucích románů *Translated Accounts* a *You have to be Careful in the Land of the Free*, které značily jistý odklod od Kelmanovy typické struktury vyprávění a zasazení děje. Po těchto netradičních publikacích se opět vrátil do známého prostředí dělnického Glasgow v románu *Kieron Smith, boy*, který líčí

dospívání pubertálního chlapce, jež se snaží zachovat si svoji identitu prostřednictvím jazyka komunity, ze které pochází a zároveň vzdorovat svým ambiciózním rodičům. Kelmanova nejnovější sbírka povídek *If it is your life* se nese v duchu jeho tvorby, která předcházela vydání románu *Translated Accounts* a proto ji není možné považovat ze nějaký převratný bod.

Vzhledem k tomu, že Kelman už jednou potvrdil svoji literární nepředvídatelnost, není možné s jistotou předpovědět, jaký bude další vývoj jeho tvorby. Je možné, že opět přijde s neočekávaným experimentem, ale stejně tak je pravděpodobné, že bude pokračovat v tom, co prokázal, že umí nejlépe – politicky a sociálně laděné próze, která využívá lokálních dialektů k zvýraznění třídního konfliktu.

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Anotace

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Název práce: James Kelman: Třída, gender a identita v současné skotské literatuře

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

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James Kelman patří bezpochy mezi nejvýznamnější představitele současné skotské literatury, která v nedávné době zaznamenala značný rozmach. Svým nekompromisním politickým radikalismem a vynalézavostí v oblasti tvořivého psaní, se Kelman stal spisovatelem, jež v každém ohledu představuje výzvu pro politický establishment i čtenáře. Životní zkušenost neprivilegovaného člověka, vyrůstajícího v glasgowských městských slumech, mu poskytla možnost přijít s originálním pojetím proletářské literatury, která se neotřelým způsobem zabývá otázkou maskulinity, jazyka, identity a třídního rozdělení společnosti. Cílem této diplomové práce je poskytnout ucelený přehled kompletního vývoje Kelmanova díla od jeho počátku až do současnosti a poukázat na zásadní odchylky v jeho zdánlivě homogenní tvorbě. Kromě Kelmanova kritického pohledu na drtivý dopad kapitalismu na pracující v současné společnosti, klade tato práce zvláštní důraz na odraz evropského existencialismu v jeho spisech. Navíc se také věnuje způsobu, jakým se Kelmanovo kritické zobrazení totalitních aspektů moderního Státu hlasí k dystopickému odkazu George Orwella. Z toho důvodu je věnována zvláštní pozornost Kelmanově práci s jazykem a naratologickými prostředky, jimiž vyjadřuje své anti-autoritářské politické názory. V neposlední řadě přispívá tato studie k vyvrácení veškerých interpretací, které Kelmana, díky jeho jazyku a kontroverním názorům, řadí do skupiny nacionalisticky orientovaných spisovatelů. Naopak poskytuje pádné argumenty, jež dokazují Kelmanův odpor k představě národní identity, která je z jeho pohledu pouze prostředkem státní kontroly a diskriminace. Proto Kelman a jeho dílo zásadním způsobem zpochybňují legitimitu právního systému, policie, neustálého státního dozoru a obecně diskriminační podstatu občanství.

Klíčová slova

James Kelman, Skotsko, maskulinita, jazyk, třída, identita

Resumé

Author: Jan Horáček

Title of Thesis: James Kelman: Class, Gender, and Identity in Contemporary Scottish Literature

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Abstract:

James Kelman ranks among the most influential figures of contemporary Scottish literature which has recently experienced a tremendous boom. Combining uncompromising political radicalism with literary ingenuity, Kelman has become a controversial urban writer who challenges authority and readership in every possible respect. A Glasgow-based author who grew up in the city's slums, he is credited with introducing genuine working-class fiction powered by unorthodox approaches that deal with class, masculinity, language, and identity. The aim of this study is to show the entire trajectory of Kelman's development from his early beginnings to the present and prove that there have been significant variations in his seemingly homogeneous work. Besides exploring Kelman's critical view of capitalism and its devastating impact on the modern working-class community, a heavy emphasis has been laid on the existentialist aspect of his narratives that largely draw on the European existentialist thought. Moreover, Kelman's portrayal of the totalitarian features of the State links his writings with the dystopian tradition of George Orwell. Consequently, a particular attention has been paid to the implications of the changes in treatment of language and narrative voice that Kelman uses as a vehicle for his anti-authoritarian political agenda. Last but not least, this study refutes any nationalistic interpretation of Kelman's writings. In fact, it gives evidence about his avowed refusal of the concept of national identity which only serves the needs of power structures to control and discriminate the public. Therefore, Kelman questions the validity of the legal system, the police, state surveillance and the discriminatory nature of citizenship in general.

Key Words:

James Kelman, Scotland, Masculinity, Language, Class, Identity