A Glasgow Voice:
James Kelman’s Literary Language

Christine Amanda Müller, B.A. (Hons)

Department of English, Creative Writing, and Australian Studies

Faculty of Education, Humanities, and Law

Flinders University

Thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2010
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................ vi
ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................. x
DECLARATION ......................................................................................................... xi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ......................................................................................... xii

Chapter One: Introduction .................................................................................. 1
   James Kelman’s writing and aims................................................................. 1
   Weber’s notion of social class ..................................................................... 10
   Kelman’s treatment of narrative ................................................................. 11
   Traditional bourgeois basis of book publication ...................................... 14
   Scottish literary renaissance ..................................................................... 16
   The Glaswegian dialect and the notion of a ‘Bad Scots’ ......................... 19
   Discourse of purity ...................................................................................... 21
   Stylistic research already conducted on Kelman’s work ....................... 26
   The datasets used to support this thesis ...................................................... 38

   KELMAN’S FICTION, SCOTS FICTION, SCOTS WRITTEN, and SCOTS SPOKEN .......... 41

Outline of the chapters in this thesis................................................................. 48

Chapter Two: Punctuation as a Creative Evocation of Prosodic Features ... 52
   Kelman’s treatment of narrative and dialogue ........................................... 52
   An overview of prescriptive and creative writing punctuation ............... 57
       The prescriptivist approach to punctuation ........................................ 57
       The prosodic approach to punctuation ............................................... 60
   Kelman’s use of punctuation ..................................................................... 63
       The prescriptivist and orthographic sentence .................................... 63
   Authority, stratification, and status .............................................................. 67
   Quotation marks: authority and demarcation ......................................... 67
   Apostrophes: stratification ......................................................................... 73
   Capitalisation: status ............................................................................... 79
   Word spaces, hyphens, and compounds: the orthographic word .......... 85
   Indicating flow and stress ......................................................................... 90
   Commas, semicolons, colons, full stops: pauses in flow ....................... 90
Chapter Three: Spelling as Accenting the Text

Introduction

Spelling styles

English spelling

Traditional literary style

The Scots Style sheet and related innovations

The phonetic style

Kelman’s relationship to each spelling style

Kelman’s spelling strategy

A comparison of the use of spelling between the datasets

Degrees of variance in Kelman’s writing

A change is made to a single letter

The transformation of two letters

Changing the visual word length: one letter additions and removals

Complex changes to English spelling

A notable case: the spelling of negated auxiliary verbs

Small but significant changes to spelling

Conclusion

Chapter Four: Vocabulary as Social Identity

Lexis unique to the Glasgow area

The Scots-English Continuum

Type of Scottish Lexis that belong in Column 1

Kelman’s lexical range as compared to other Glasgow writing

Uniformity and the ideology of standardisation

Lexical variation in Kelman’s work

The appearance of Scotticisms in the Scottish literary voice

Social-class-based differences in choice of lexis

Kelman’s use of slang
Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 195

Chapter Five: Grammar as Social Demarcation .................................................. 197
Some examples of Glasgow writing ........................................................................ 199
Grammatical variation in Kelman’s work .............................................................. 203
Scotticisms .............................................................................................................. 205
 Covert Scotticism: a preference for the contracted operator in negation... 207
 Covert Scotticism: restricted range of should, might, and must, and rare use
 of shall, may, and ought......................................................................................... 209
 Covert Scotticism: the frequent use of have (got) to ......................................... 212
 Covert Scotticism: can replaces may for permission ......................................... 213
 Overt Scotticism: dinna is a conscious symbol of Scottishness .......................... 214
 Summary of Scotticisms ..................................................................................... 215
Kelman’s use of –n’t contractions to align the text with spoken discourse .... 216
Kelman’s use of –na aligns the text with spoken discourse ............................... 219
 Summary of –n’t and –na ................................................................................... 222
Scottish ye versus English you as a feature of spoken discourse ..................... 223
 A special case: yous ............................................................................................. 226
 Summary of ye usage among the datasets .......................................................... 228
Glaswegian dialect discourse features ................................................................. 228
 Urban Scots: out the ............................................................................................ 229
 Urban Scots: the morrow, the day, the night ..................................................... 230
 Glaswegian tags: but, and (all) that, and eh ...................................................... 232
 Summary of Glaswegian and urban Scots features ......................................... 234
Conclusion .............................................................................................................. 235

Chapter Six: What the Fuck? .............................................................................. 238
The Booker Prize controversy ............................................................................... 239
Problems with terminology, definition, and scope ............................................ 245
Fuck and cunt in the history of literature .............................................................. 250
Swearing serves a variety of nonliteral functions: scope and rates of use ....... 252
Nonliteral swearing in Kelman’s writing ............................................................. 261
Literary politics ..................................................................................................... 277
Linguistic Hygiene and Swearing ...................................................................... 280
Conclusion ................................................................................................................................. 283

Chapter Seven: Body Language as Communication and Class Consciousness ............................................................................................................................. 285

Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 285

Five main types of body language.......................................................................................... 287

Three types of encoding body language into a written form.............................................. 289

Closer analysis of two short stories...................................................................................... 290

Greyhound for Breakfast ..................................................................................................... 291

A Decision............................................................................................................................... 302

A comparison of body language in Kelman’s work and Scottish fiction......................... 309

Extensive depictions of body language as part of a working-class literary style ............... 321

History of ‘civilised’ body language...................................................................................... 321

Public looseness.................................................................................................................... 324

Empirical studies of body language and social class.......................................................... 325

Conclusion............................................................................................................................... 328

Chapter Eight: Conclusion.................................................................................................. 330

Summary of the Chapters .................................................................................................... 330

Key Facets of Kelman’s Voice.............................................................................................. 333

Key Facet One: The Use of Glaswegian and Scots Language ........................................ 333

Key Facet Two: Working-Class Discourse Features ......................................................... 334

Key Facet Three: A Strong Link to Spoken Language....................................................... 336

Some final words.................................................................................................................. 337

APPENDIX: RAW DATA ..................................................................................................... 339

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................................................................... 356
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: Thesis datasets and their constituent elements from Kelman’s writing and the Scottish Corpus of Texts and Speech ........................................................ 43
Table 2.1: Punctuation, semantic implications, and prosodic associations .......... 62
Table 2.2: Quotation mark ratios and rates ........................................................... 72
Table 2.3: Question mark, exclamation mark, full stop, and comma rates .......... 98
Table 2.4: Comparison of pause indicators used in Kelman’s fiction and the SCOTS datasets ....................................................................................................... 99
Table 2.5: Terminal marks rates ........................................................................ 101
Table 2.6: Ellipses rates ................................................................................... 109
Table 3.1: The distribution of alternate Scottish and English spellings in a 30 word sample .......................................................... 140
Table 3.2: The distribution of alternate Scots spellings of the same word ......... 142
Table 3.3: Spelling distributions of the Scottish cliticized negator –na .......... 151
Table 4.1: A selection of Glasgow words identified by the SND and found in the research on the area ................................................................. 165
Table 4.2: Kelman’s use of Glasgow Dialect Words ......................................... 165
Table 4.3: Aitken’s ‘A model of modern Scottish speech’ .................................. 167
Table 4.4: A classification of lexis for Glasgow literature ............................... 168
Table 4.5: Aitken’s ‘Obligatory Covert Scotticisms’ in Kelman’s fiction ......... 181
Table 4.6: Aitken’s proposed social-class-based patterns of language use, as mapped against each column type .......................................................... 183
Table 4.7: Some words from The Patter frequently used by Kelman .............. 190
Table 5.1: A classification of grammar for Glasgow literature .......................... 198
Table 5.2: Auxiliary verbs ................................................................................ 207
Table 5.3: Covert Scotticism – a preference for the contracted operator when negating WILL .......................................................... 208
Table 5.4: Covert Scotticism – a preference for the contracted operator when negating BE .............................................................. 209
Table 5.5: Covert Scotticism – restricted range for should, might, and must .... 210
Table 5.6: Should, might, and must rates ............................................................ 210
Table 5.7: Covert Scotticism – rare use of shall, may, and ought............... 211
Table 5.8: Shall, may, and ought rates ........................................................... 211
Table 5.9: Covert Scotticisms by rank – have (got) to is more frequent than should, might, and must ........................................................ 212
Table 5.10: Have (got) to rates compared to should, might, and must ....... 212
Table 5.11: A comparison of can and may .................................................... 213
Table 5.12: Scotticism – overt use of dinna in preference to don’t .......... 214
Table 5.13: Contracted negative –n’t rates (with or without apostrophes)... 217
Table 5.14: Positive auxiliaries and their –na variants ................................. 220
Table 5.15: Scottish cliticized negator rates –na ......................................... 221
Table 5.16: Combined Scottish cliticized negator –na and English contracted negative –n’t rates ................................................................. 222
Table 5.17: Total negation among the datasets ........................................... 223
Table 5.18: you and ye ratios ..................................................................... 224
Table 5.19: you and ye rates ..................................................................... 224
Table 5.20: yer and your ratios ................................................................. 226
Table 5.21: yer and your rates ................................................................... 226
Table 5.22: All yous rate per 1,000 words ............................................... 227
Table 5.23: Urban Scots out the versus English out of the ......................... 229
Table 5.24: out the and out of the ratios .................................................... 229
Table 5.25: Urban Scots the morrow, the day, and the night rates per 1,000 words ......................................................................................... 231
Table 5.26: Urban Scots the morrow, the day, and the night ratios ........... 231
Table 5.27: Glaswegian tags but, and (all) that, and eh rates ..................... 232
Table 6.1: Functional uses of fuck ................................................................. 252
Table 6.2: Literal fuck in the datasets and the BNC ...................................... 254
Table 6.3: Non-literal fuck in the datasets and the BNC ............................... 255
Table 6.4: Literal fuck in the datasets and the BNC (instances per 1,000 words) ................................................................................................. 259
Table 6.5: Nonliteral fuck in the datasets and the BNC ............................... 259
Table 6.6: Individual *fuck* and *cunt* percentages among four of Kelman’s novels
.................................................................................................................................................. 281
Table 7.1: Five examples of each of the three types of body language ........... 311
Table 7.2: Emblems ................................................................................................................... 312
Table 7.3: Illustrators and regulators ................................................................. 314
Table 7.4: Emotional displays and externalisers ............................................. 317
Table 1.1: Datasets used in this thesis............................................................ 339
Table 2.2: Quotation mark raw counts ............................................................... 339
Tables 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6: Question marks, exclamation marks, full stops, commas, and ellipses raw counts .......................................................... 339
Table 3.2: English and Scottish spellings – raw counts............................... 339
Table 3.2: Breakdown of choice between two Scots spellings of the same word, raw counts .................................................................................. 341
Table 3.3: Different spellings of the Scottish cliticized negator –na raw counts 341
Table 3.3a: KELMAN’S FICTION spellings of the Scottish cliticized negator –na raw counts ......................................................................................................... 341
Table 3.3b: SCOTS FICTION spellings of the Scottish cliticized negator –na raw counts ......................................................................................................... 342
Table 3.3c: SCOTS WRITTEN spellings of the Scottish cliticized negator –na raw counts ......................................................................................................... 342
Table 4.1: Glasgow Words and their sources .................................................. 343
Table 4.5: Aitken’s ‘Obligatory Covert Scotticisms’ in KELMAN’S FICTION texts raw counts ........................................................................................................... 344
Table 4.7: Some words listed by *The Patter* and found in KELMAN’S FICTION’s writing raw counts .................................................................................. 344
Tables 5.3, 5.4, 5.11 and 5.12: Scotticisms......................................................... 344
Tables 5.3, 5.4, 5.11 and 5.12a: Scotticisms - negation search terms ............... 345
Tables 5.3, 5.4, 5.11 and 5.12b: Scotticisms - KELMAN’S FICTION raw counts .. 345
Tables 5.3, 5.4, 5.11 and 5.12c: Scotticisms - SCOTS FICTION raw counts ....... 346
Tables 5.3, 5.4, 5.11 and 5.12d: Scotticisms - SCOTS WRITTEN raw counts ...... 346
Tables 5.3, 5.4, 5.11 and 5.12e: Scotticisms - SCOTS SPOKEN raw counts ....... 346
Table 5.5 and 5.7: Should, might, and must & shall, may, and ought rankings within each dataset and their raw counts ............................................................ 347
Table 5.9: Have (got) to as compared to should, might, and must raw counts ... 348
Table 5.13: The contracted negative with and without apostrophes raw counts 349
Table 5.15: Scottish cliticized negator raw counts........................................ 349
Table 5.16: Combined cliticized negator –na and contracted negative –n’t raw counts .................................................................................................................. 350
Tables 5.18 and 5.19: you and ye raw counts............................................. 350
Table 5.20 and 5.21: yer and your raw counts ........................................ 350
Table 5.22: yous raw counts........................................................................... 351
Table 5.23: Out the and out of the raw counts .......................................... 351
Table 5.25: The morrow, the day, and the night raw counts.................... 351
Table 5.27: But, And (all) that, and eh tags, including those occurring before commas rates .......................................................... 352
Table 5.27a: but, and (all) that, and eh tags, including those occurring before commas, raw counts ............................................................. 352
Tables 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, and 6.5: Proportions of different forms of fuck in each dataset, including those reconstructed from McEnery’s work on the BNC, raw counts . 353
Table 6.6: Fuck and cunt in KELMAN’S FICTION four novels, raw counts ... 354
Table 7.1: Selected body language terms by category – total raw counts .... 354
Table 7.2: Emblems: rates, ratios, and raw counts................................... 355
Table 7.3: Illustrators and regulators: gaze rates, ratios, and raw counts .... 355
Table 7.4: Emotional displays and externalisers: rates, ratios, and raw counts.. 355
ABSTRACT

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

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

Christine Amanda Müller
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible if my supervisor Professor Graham Tulloch had not taken a chance on me. It is a pleasure to thank him for his guidance and support throughout the years, enabling me to develop an understanding of the subject and generally to become an academic.

I owe my deepest gratitude to two other people: Dr Brooke Thomas and Dr George Couvalis. I am indebted to both of them for their advice, knowledge, company, and help. Not only did they both spend much of their time helping me shape my thoughts, they both voluntarily edited the final draft of this thesis.

I would like to thank James Kelman who agreed to a tape-recorded interview on 2 February 2008 in Glasgow and granted his permission to use segments of that interview in this thesis. His words inspired me and bolstered my resolve to write this thesis.

Assistance was provided to me by many people, including Prof Riaz Hassan who helped me develop an understanding of urban sociology, Prof Bob Holton who would converse with me on issues of social class, Prof Joost Daalder who encouraged my literary scholarship, Prof Ian Hunt who developed my philosophical understanding of the political world, and Dr Jason Pudsey who taught me about enlightenment thought and social construction.

I would like to thank Ms Fran Banytis for helping me understand and prepare for the thesis journey, Dr Anton Kozlovc for his intellectual support during the early stages of my thesis, Dr Dymphna Lonergan for her contribution to the chapters on swearing and body language, Assoc Prof Robert Phiddian for our debates on literary theory and swearing, and Prof Willy Maley for generously supplying me with references that were hard to obtain.

I am grateful for the support of my friends during this thesis. Among those who encouraged me were Ms Cheryl Simpson, Dr Michael Savvas, Dr Ben Kooyman, and Dr Nigel Palmer. A special thank you needs to go to Dr Tim Moss for providing much needed and sensible assistance during the thesis process.

This thesis would not have been possible without my patient, loving, and intelligent husband Robert Müller and my supportive son Tanami Müller. Also, an important part of my academic life was spent with Lily, my Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, whose devotion and insistent companionship kept me grounded and on track. Finally, my love goes to my my Scottish family, especially to my great-aunt Jessie McRobert who enabled my visits to Glasgow.