

A Glasgow Voice:
James Kelman's Literary Language

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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

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