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CLASS, NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE AND LANGUAGE IN JAMES KELMAN'S
THE BUSCONDUCTOR HINES, A DISAFFECTION AND
HOW LATE IT WAS, HOW LATE

by

MALCOLM TODD, B.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of English Language and Literature

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

05/09/96

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HOW LATE IT WAS, HOW LATE

submitted by Malcolm Todd, B.A.

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

Thesis Supervisor

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ABSTRACT

James Kelman is one of a number of Scottish writers who have gained prominence since the 1970s. This thesis explores his treatment of working-class culture, his narrative technique and his use of Glasgow speech in The Busconductor Hines, A Disaffection and How Late it Was, How Late. The final chapter argues that Kelman's use of nonstandard English is part of a counter-hegemonic movement in language. In this study, a combination of post-colonial and Marxist theoretical frameworks is employed. It is argued that, in his fiction, Kelman creates a site of resistance to imperial authority and the dominant class in Britain. He challenges stereotypical perceptions of the working-class, traditional narrative structure and the hegemony of standard English speakers. By investing value in both working-class and Scottish culture, Kelman pushes for the creation of a more democratic cultural and linguistic historic bloc.

To my parents and grandparents, citizens of Kelman's city

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ABBREVIATIONS

<u>BB</u>	=	<u>The Break-Up of Britain</u>
<u>BH</u>	=	<u>The Busconductor Hines</u>
<u>CCC</u>	=	<u>Class, Codes and Control</u>
<u>D</u>	=	<u>A Disaffection</u>
<u>HSL</u>	=	<u>The History of Scottish Literature</u>
<u>HL</u>	=	<u>How Late it Was, How Late</u>
<u>LSC</u>	=	<u>Language and Social Context</u>
<u>PCSR</u>	=	<u>The Post-Colonial Studies Reader</u>
<u>SNE</u>	=	<u>The Study of Nonstandard English</u>
<u>SRA</u>	=	<u>Some Recent Attacks</u>

INTRODUCTION

The past twenty-five years have been a particularly productive period in Scottish literature, prompting critics, such as Gavin Wallace in the introduction to The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies, to speak of a "new--perhaps even more 'real'--Scottish Renaissance" (Wallace and Stevenson 1). The phrase 'Scottish Renaissance' was originally used to describe the burgeoning of Scottish literature in the 1920s and 1930s which included writers such as Hugh MacDiarmid, Edwin Muir, Lewis Grassie Gibbon, Eric Linklater, Neil Gunn and Naomi Mitchison (Hart 207). The writing of the new renaissance is characterized by an "insistence on avoiding clichés in language or situations...[and an] openness to innovation" (Murray 9). James Kelman is one of a number of Scottish writers who have gained recognition since the 1970s. Others include William McIlvanney, Liz Lochhead, Iain Banks, Alasdair Gray, Alan Spence, Janice Galloway, Duncan McLean, Irvine Welsh and A.L. Kennedy. The Victorian critic J.H. Robertson argued that after the time of Sir Walter Scott "...we [Scotland] lost the culture-force of a local literary atmosphere" (Nairn, BB 124). However, the success of Scottish writers

this century is evidence that Scottish literary culture is very much alive.

James Kelman was born in Glasgow in 1946 and has been writing since the early 1970s. However, it was only recently that he could afford to write full time. To earn a living in the past he worked on building sites, buses, as a shoemaker and in an asbestos factory (Mega 3). Kelman's first book of short stories, An Old Pub Near the Angel, was published in 1973. Through the seventies, his work was included in the anthology Three Glasgow Writers (1976), his radio play, Hardie and Baird: The Last Days (1978) was produced by BBC Radio Scotland, and he published Short Tales from the Nightshift (1978), another book of short stories. Since then he has published three more books of short stories--Not Not While the Giro (1983), Greyhound for Breakfast (1987) and The Burn (1991)--as well as a collection of political and cultural essays titled Some Recent Attacks (1992). At first, Kelman was considered to be primarily a writer of short stories but he has now published four novels: The Busconductor Hines (1984), A Chancer (1985), A Disaffection (1989) and How Late it Was, How Late (1994). The novels represent Kelman's most developed and artistically complex work. In 1994, his talent was recognized internationally when he was awarded

the Booker Prize for How Late it Was, How Late.²

To date, not much criticism of Kelman's work has been published, and the criticism that does exist is limited to journal-length articles. Ian Bell's article "James Kelman" and Douglas Gifford's article "Discovering Lost voices" are among the few available on Kelman. "Resisting Arrest", in The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies, by Cairns Craig is insightful and has been a particularly valuable resource. The recent BBC Scotland documentary "No Such Thing as Bad Language" is also excellent and combines monologues by Kelman with dramatizations of his fiction and commentary on his work by contemporary Scottish writers and critics. Kelman's work has also been reviewed in many newspapers and these articles, if chosen selectively, can be another useful source of information. For instance, the controversy surrounding his Booker Prize victory in 1994 received widespread coverage. Kelman's novels are now regularly taught in university courses, especially in Scotland, and interest in his work is increasing. In addition to my own work, I am aware of graduate study being undertaken on Kelman at the University of Glasgow and in New Zealand.

It is difficult to study James Kelman's work without considering the cultural context in which he writes. Modern Scottish society faces a number of problems such as high

²The factual information in this paragraph is from Kathleen J. Edgar. Contemporary Authors. Vol. 148 (New York: Gale Research, 1996).

unemployment and political disappointment which have had a significant influence on his writing. In order to understand these conditions fully, it is necessary to become familiar with Scottish history.

The Scottish and English crowns were united in 1603 when King James VI of Scotland also became king of England. In 1707, the Act of Union united the Scottish and English parliaments. In exchange for political sovereignty, Scotland was allowed to retain the central features of its civil society which included an independent church, legal system and educational system. Through the union Scotland gained access to English markets and quickly became a willing partner in the expansion of the British empire (Maclean 152). In many ways, however, Scotland, and in particular the Highlands (Nairn, BB 111), suffered from the same type of deprivation as the countries it helped colonize. Scots and Gaelic have been undermined as autonomous languages, the Highlands were emptied through the clearances and cultural symbols like the tartan were, at one time, banned (Maclean 193, 182). In addition, Scottish representation in Westminster has, historically, been extremely limited, and today only amounts to 72 of 651 seats compared to England's 524. Though most colonies are characterized by underdevelopment, the industrial belt in the Lowlands prospered after the union. This itself is indicative of the divided nature of Scottish society--split

between Highlands and Lowlands, and Scottish and British identities within the United Kingdom--and complicates the notion that Scotland is a colony.

Certainly, a nationalist spirit has endured in Scotland in one form or another since the union and there have been many demands for more political autonomy in Scotland. "It is indubitably clear that Scotland survived the Union of 1707 as a separate 'civil society' and as a nation," explains David McCrone, "and that, if anything, its sense of difference and identity has grown rather than diminished" (3). Jacobite rebellions in 1715 and 1745 attempted to restore the Stuart monarchy and, indicative of the split nation, these were supported by a narrow majority of Highland clans, and opposed wholeheartedly by the Protestant Lowlands. In the nineteenth century pressure exerted by industrial barons resulted in the appointment of a Scottish Secretary, from within cabinet, to deal with Scottish issues --an extremely limited form of home rule tightly controlled by Westminster. This century, with the decline of the British empire and the discovery of North Sea oil, nationalist demands have increased dramatically and resulted in a referendum on devolution in 1979 which failed to secure independence for Scotland. Many Scots who support separation believe that Scotland's position is similar to that of a colony. However not everyone accepts this view and there is an ongoing debate among academics which

attempts to define Scotland's situation more exactly. Because Kelman identifies himself with 'post-colonial' writers, an overview of this debate would be useful.

Michael Hechter suggests in Internal Colonialism that the countries which make up the Celtic periphery in Britain--Wales, Ireland and Scotland--are internal colonies. He claims that they are underdeveloped and attempts to show that a cultural division of labour exists among the nations of the British isles. Scots, however, have been critical of Hechter's theory because it does not take into account the fact that, in economic terms, the Scottish Lowlands have been highly developed. In "Internal Colonialism Revisited", Hechter attempts to address their concerns by admitting that "The Scots had long been innovators in the British context--in education, finance, technology, and in the physical and social sciences" (20). He explains that "these are hardly the accomplishments of colonies" (20). However, the central problem with Hechter's thesis remains: he has been unable to prove that a cultural division of labour does, in fact, exist.

In The Eclipse of Scottish Culture, Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull draw on the work of Franz Fanon to argue that Scotland suffers from a sense of inferiority because of its cultural subordination to England. They show how history, even history written by Scots, presents pre-Union Scotland as a black hole characterised by barbarism and

fanaticism (Beveridge and Turnbull 39). In their view, Scotland suffers from a form of cultural imperialism imposed by England which has been successful in convincing Scots of their own inferiority. In order to change this, Beveridge and Turnbull argue that Scots must develop alternate codes for understanding themselves and their past (61).

"Neo-nationalism has become the grave-digger of the old state in Britain" argues Thom Nairn in The Break-Up of Britain. He suggests that the decline of the British empire and the inclusion of the working-class in mainstream politics have made neo-nationalism more of a threat to the British state than socialism (BB 37). According to Nairn, Scottish nationalism "belongs to the last fifty years, and is the chronological companion of anti-imperialist revolt and Third World nationalism, rather than of those European movements which it superficially resembles" (BB 95). Nairn, however, considers Scottish nationalism to be a unique phenomenon which should not be "assimilated to classical European or Third World 'nationalism' at all" (BB 128). This is because, unlike Italian and German nationalism, Scottish nationalism arrived late on the political scene, the fact that the Scottish Lowlands are highly developed and that Scotland was a partner in colonizing much of the British empire (Nairn, BB 135). A prominent British Marxist, Nairn reconciles neo-nationalism and socialism by citing Lenin's belief that nationalism can be useful in

undermining old political regimes (BB 90). Nairn's belief that neo-nationalism is a counter-hegemonic force in Britain is persuasive and suggests that the British state, in its present form, cannot exist for much longer.

In Understanding Scotland, David McCrone argues that too often, Scots focus on the differences between their culture and others. He believes that attempts to rediscover or establish an essential Scottish identity are misguided. He claims that Scotland actually "has had a very similar profile to Britain as a whole, while containing considerable specialisation reflecting its position as a distinct country within the United Kingdom" (McCrone 74). McCrone points out that the very nature of sovereignty is changing in the late twentieth century as a result of globalization and the power exerted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and various large corporations (McCrone 216). Making reference to Nairn's argument he claims that "the political, economic and social forces which are threatening to 'break up' Britain are not unique to it" (McCrone 214). He also suggests that as societies become increasingly multi-cultural "claims that 'a people' have a single culture become harder to maintain" (McCrone 217). He questions the significance of Scottish nationalism in the 1990s and argues that it must not be narrow in focus because it, and associations like the European Union, will be the vehicles which lead Scotland into a "post-nationalist age" (McCrone

196).

The question of Scotland's colonial status is a problematic one. Highland culture was clearly undermined and destroyed in much the same way as were the indigenous cultures of many colonies. However, the prosperity of the Lowlands in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the participation of the country in the expansion of the empire complicates a simple view of Scotland as a colony. Scots have rightly been viewed as both 'colonizer' and 'colonized'. Enforced emigration, poverty and lack of opportunity are among the forces that drove many Scots to emigrate and carve out a place for themselves overseas. And, although Scots rose to positions of prominence in their new homes, they were often treated as second-class citizens in their own country. The dominance of English culture has undermined the languages and culture of Scotland and threatens to absorb it.

Kelman's writing, although distinct from it, proceeds from within this debate about Scotland's political and cultural status. His own views on the problems facing modern Scottish society most closely parallel those of Beveridge and Turnbull. He claims that by the criteria of the ruling elite in Britain, Scottish culture and the Scottish people are considered inferior (Kelman, SRA 71). As a result, he sees his own work "as part of a...movement...toward decolonisation and self-determination"

(Kelman, "Elitist slurs..." 16). It is necessary to point out that Scotland's participation in the expansion of the British empire is not incompatible with post-colonialism: "the material practices of post-colonial societies may involve a wide range of activities including conceptions and actions which are, or appear to be, complicit with the imperial enterprise" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, PCSR 3). Kelman's work can be viewed as post-colonial; however, as with any analysis of Scotland, the contradictions inherent in the country's political position should be kept in mind. Kelman himself is wary of being called a nationalist because as he points out "there's been such a poor history of nationalism over the past 180 years" and "Nationalists are the ones talking about pure Scots [my emphasis]" (Pederson A13). However, Kelman's belief in "self-determination" (Kelman, "Elitist slurs..." 16) for Scotland, and other oppressed cultures, clearly contains aspects of nationalism. Kelman aligns himself with other post-colonial writers, in an attempt to avoid espousing a narrow form of nationalism, asserting that in order for a truly global culture to develop all indigenous cultures must be recognized.

Kelman's writing challenges the ideology of the centre in Britain. Through a variety of strategies he validates his own Scottish and working-class culture. His novels explode many of the conventions of British literature and

open up the process of writing to different voices, making it more democratic. His opposition to society's elites and lack of faith in society's structures of power manifest themselves through the content and narrative style of his novels. This study will make use of post-colonial as well as Marxist theory in order to explore Kelman's writing. Existentialism, another significant aspect of his work, lies outside the scope of this thesis.

In The Busconductor Hines, A Disaffection, and How Late it Was, How Late, Kelman portrays life in Glasgow in the 1980s and 1990s, a world in which traditional working-class culture has disintegrated. His characters are exploited by the institutions of the state and have no faith in change through the political system. However, in his novels Kelman creates a site of resistance to imperial authority and to the ideology of the dominant class in Britain. He challenges traditional narrative structure and the perception that his language and culture are inferior, creating a solidarity of language between the narrators and characters in his novels (Craig, "Resisting Arrest" 103). In this way, he invests value in urban, working-class Scottish culture and pushes for the creation of a more democratic cultural and linguistic historic bloc. Like many post-colonial writers, Kelman rejects the idea of a "homogenous human nature" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, PCSR 55) and focuses on the distinctive characteristics of

urban, Scottish, working-class culture. His work is part of a drive for greater cultural and political autonomy for Scotland and reinforces Thom Nairn's argument that neo-nationalism has supplanted socialism as the main source of counter-hegemonic change in Britain.

Chapter one of this thesis explores Kelman's depiction of the Scottish working-class and its exploitation by the state. It illustrates how the lack of political solidarity at the level of plot in his novels is replaced by linguistic solidarity in the narrative. Kelman's own politics are also examined, in particular, his belief that change in society must come from outwith the system--through art and ad hoc political protests. Chapter two illustrates Kelman's rejection of the paternalism of omniscient narration, other traditional narrative structures and narration in standard English. Chapter three argues that the Glasgow speech of Kelman's novels is a language of resistance and constitutes a rejection of the world-view of the English home counties and standard English. Finally, chapter four argues that by challenging the hegemony of standard English, authors like Kelman push for the formation of a more democratic historical bloc in terms of language and culture.

CHAPTER 1

THE WORKING CLASS, ALIENATION AND THE STATE

The state is the biggest agency for terrorism going and it terrorizes its own people.

James Kelman, "No Such Thing as Bad Language"

British society has always been highly stratified along class lines. However, until the appearance of novels like Elizabeth Gaskell's Mary Barton (1848) and Charles Dickens's Hard Times (1854) in the nineteenth-century, urban, working-class life had not been a significant topic for British writers. Since then, the tradition of the working-class novel has emerged. In this century it has been characterized by works like Robert Tressell's The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists (1914), Alan Sillitoe's Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (1958) and The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner (1959) and, in Scotland, by Archie Hind's The Dear Green Place (1966) and William McIlvanney's Docherty (1975). James Kelman's work is part of this tradition.

The Busconductor Hines, A Disaffection and How Late it Was, How Late focus on issues facing the working-class in Glasgow in the 1980s and 1990s. Since the Second World War,

British working-class solidarity and working-class culture have disintegrated. Social inequality, however, remains a reality in Britain and the subordinate class continues to be exploited by the dominant class in society. The working-class culture which Kelman explores is one of hopelessness. Traditional avenues of working-class protest, such as the trade union movement, the Communist party and the Labour party, have either proved ineffectual or have become part of the mainstream. Kelman's novels introduce working-class characters to a middle-class audience, "challenging the middle-class reader to come out of his value system, to explore or empathise with another" (Gifford 3). Isolated from traditional working-class values, his heroes are exploited by the repressive and ideological state apparatuses (RSAs and ISAs) and are frustrated by the impossibility of socialist change from within the political system. However, as Cairns Craig argues, the lack of political solidarity in Kelman's work is replaced by a "Unity of voice [language]" which reinforces "a communality that transcends the absolute isolation of the individual human being" ("Resisting Arrest" 103). James Kelman describes himself as an anarchist and positions himself far to the left of the labour party on the political spectrum (McNeill 1). He has no faith in the party-political system and believes change must come from outwith its boundaries. Through his writing and his participation in various *ad hoc*

political protests Kelman challenges the dominant ideology in Britain at both an imaginative and a political level.

"Seriously; you're just asking me seriously, if I'm a Marxist, in a school like this, in a society like this, at a moment in history like the present" (D 191), says Patrick Doyle to another teacher in A Disaffection. Patrick's comments highlight the problems facing the left in Britain, and elsewhere, in the 1980s and 1990s. They illustrate the isolation of Kelman's characters from traditional working-class culture. Patrick finds his fellow teacher's question ridiculous because being a mainstream Marxist in Britain in the late 1980s does not have much significance. As Stuart Hall explains, after the Second World War the Right settled for a welfare state while labour agreed to work within the framework of a modified capitalism (36). This consensus, which underlies modern British politics, prevented the growth of a subversive socialist movement on a large scale. The absence of a viable working-class movement isolates Rab Hines, Patrick Doyle and Sammy Samuels--the central characters of Kelman's three novels under discussion--from the working-class values their families held only a generation ago.

Typically, the heroes of the working-class novel have been members of the labour aristocracy or they have been talented at activities, like sports, which reinforce a sense of solidarity (Craig, "Resisting Arrest" 100). Often these

novels are optimistic about the prospect of political change in the future which will improve working-class life. Kelman's novels, however, are not of this type. His characters have no hope of political redemption and can find no escape from the monotonous routine of life in the present. The Scottish poet Liz Lochhead explains that in Kelman's fiction "you cannot ignore people that you might cross the street to avoid if they tried to start talking to you at a bus stop" ("No Such Thing..."). In the end, it is unclear whether his "protagonists are victims of a Scottish, deprived, post-war and grey environment and upbringing, or whether the faults lie essentially in themselves" (Gifford 5). It is likely that both factors contribute to the desperate outlook of Kelman's heroes on the world.

There are a number of ways in which the characters in Kelman's novels are isolated from traditional working class values. Rab Hines, for instance, does not believe in the work ethic which was an integral part of working-class life. He sleeps in and is late for work and is sceptical of conventional routes of social mobility. He derides his driver Reilly who is getting his 'highers' at night school (BH 136) and hopes to become Shop Steward (BH 84). And, although he wants to get a public service vehicle (PSV) license, he cannot keep a good enough record at work to get asked to attend drivers' school.

Education has always been an important means of social

mobility to the working-class in Scotland. The myth of the 'lad o' pairts' dominated the novels of the kailyard at the turn of the century and is still prevalent in Scottish society today. The Scottish education system is, historically, believed to be more accessible than England's because of the democratic nature of Presbyterianism. Hines explains "education was, after all, the Scottish Way. Surely this erstwhile nation had once been the forerunner of the concept of Equal Opportunity at a Spiritual Level" (BH 95). Rab refuses to accept this belief. He could go back to school, like Reilly, to get his 'highers' but he does not have the will to do so. Rab's mother regrets the fact that he did not complete them when he was younger: "You could've. You could've if you'd tried. You know you could've Rab, you could've got your Highers" (BH 136). In this way, education as a means of redemption for the working-class is shown to be a false dream.

In contrast to Hines, Patrick Doyle went to university and completed a "MA HONS" degree (D 64). He is "a member of the Greatbritish elite" (D 140). However, Patrick also finds education isolating because it pushes him further away from the working-class life of his parents and his brother Gavin which he continues to identify with. One way in which he is distanced from them is that he does not rely on public transportation: "thank christ he was a rich bourgeoisie because it meant you could travel privately and secretively,

avoiding all the terrors of being witnessed by the random populace" (D 329). Patrick became a teacher in an effort to help other working-class children. In the end, however, he concludes that it is impossible to enact structural change in society as a teacher. He explains his frustration with teaching to his class:

I'm a fucking no-user, because that is what teachers are, no-users. If I wasn't a fucking no user I wouldn't be a fucking teacher in this stench of a society. It's [change is] up to you yourself. (D 199)

Because Patrick is part of the educational ISA, he cannot be part of a true revolutionary movement. He passes this information along to his students, hoping that they will be able to avoid making the same mistake as him.

Kelman's characters are isolated from working class culture and society in general. Sammy, for instance, is a kind of Ishmael--apart from his son, and his next door neighbour Boab, every man's hand is against him, at least in his paranoid view of things--this is the measure of his class alienation--even the pubs he used to drink in are not safe! The alienation of Kelman's characters from traditional working-class values and a sense of community is also emphasized by the fact that they think of themselves as numbers. Rab Hines is busconductor "4729" (BH 64), and Patrick Doyle calls himself "auld 2¹: 2²" (D 164). Sammy would have had a number applied to him in prison as well. The isolation of Kelman's characters from the community is

made even more emphatic by their reduction to numerical signifiers.

Thatcherism² is the hegemonic ideology in the British society of Kelman's novels and this too further isolates his protagonists from traditional working-class culture. The politics of the ruling Conservative party in Britain have not only frustrated socialism but effectively destroyed it. In "The Toad in the Garden", Stuart Hall explains how Thatcherism actually appeals to and gains support from the working-class (40), and how its success becomes both a symptom and a cause of the decline of working-class solidarity. Patrick Doyle's socialist ideals are unorthodox for a member of the educated and the dominant class because as he puts it, Chiang Kai-Shek, not Mao, is "the Greatbritish Hero" (D 148).

Thatcherism, however, has not enjoyed the same success in Scotland that it has in England. The majority of working-class Scots support the Labour party. For instance, in the 1987 General Election the Conservatives won only 10 of 72 seats in Scotland while the Labour party won 50 (Dickson 57). As a result, it is widely believed that the government in Westminster does not have a mandate to govern in Scotland. (McCrone 213) The interests of Kelman's characters are not represented in the dominant ideology and

²Thatcherism refers to the right-wing ideology of the British government since the Conservative party came to power in 1979. It continues today under John Major's government.

although Scotland consistently elects a majority of Labour MPs, party politics has proved to be an ineffective means of change. As a result, the protagonists of Kelman's novels, like many Scots, are 'disaffected' from both Thatcherism, the dominant ideology, and from the party-political system in Britain as a whole.

A Disaffection is a critique of mainstream socialists like Patrick Doyle who believe they can make a difference from within the system. In an interview with Kirsty McNeill Kelman explains:

[the hero of the novel] had to be someone committed in a way that would presuppose a working class or lower middle class background; someone who thought there was a possibility of change from within the system--a mainstream socialist. I've never believed that. I've voted maybe twice or three times since I turned 21. (McNeill 1)

Kelman's comments highlight the futility of idealism in Scotland, and, in the character of Patrick, he illustrates the 'disaffection' that follows trying to confront the system. Doyle attended university and hopes to push for some form of socialist change through working in the education system. But, as Kelman explains "Doyle has...[recently] become aware of the futility of things" (McNeill 1). He is disillusioned with his life as a teacher, believing he is "the fellow with the likeable personality who is to influence the weans of the lower orders so that they willni do anything that might upset the people with wealth, power and privilege" (D 210).

Labour unions have also ceased to be an effective means of opposition for the working class. The aborted strike in The Busconductor Hines is symptomatic of this breakdown. Hines explains that attendances at union meetings "rarely numbered more than twenty" (BH 196). The large attendance and solidarity shown at the meeting in the novel are reminiscent of a time in the past when the labour movement was much stronger. After the meeting, one of the conductors explains his elation to Reilly, Hines's driver, "best Meeting I've ever been at. See when the vote came! totally unanimous. Everybody in the room man it was really good" (BH 205). Hines, however, destroys the solidarity of the union when he blurts out a verbal resignation in a meeting with McGilvaray. The fact that Rab acts as an individual is indicative of the decline of working-class community in Britain in the 1980s and 1990s.

Despite the fact that the Labour and Conservative parties have agreed to work within the framework of a post-war "settlement" (Hall 36), a dominant and subordinate class remain features of British society. The state, however, rules on behalf of the dominant class and protects its hegemony through the RSA and various ISAs. The sites in which a working-class counter-hegemonic movement could be developed have been weakened; this has exacerbated the exploitation of the subordinate class by the dominant class.

In Glasgow: Going for a Song, Sean Damer explains the

extent to which the police are the enemy of the working-class (90). This is an aspect of working-class life in Glasgow which Kelman emphasizes repeatedly. At the end of A Disaffection, Patrick Doyle imagines he is being chased by policemen who yell "we fucking hate ye" (D 337) and How Late it Was, How Late begins when Sammy is grabbed and roughed up by a group of undercover officers. Similarly, in The Busconductor Hines, Rab must be on the look out for inspectors who can board his bus at any time and book him for infractions. The police are part of the repressive apparatus of the state and are legally sanctioned to use violence against its citizens. They do not care about people like Sammy: "These sodjers man if ye're no a fucking millionaire or else talk with the right voice, they dont give a fuck" (HL 4). Althusser explains that the RSA functions first by repression, including physical repression, and secondly by ideology (Althusser 74). In How Late it Was, How Late, Sammy points to the real purpose of the police when he calls them "sodjers" (HL 3). He explains that the police follow "one fucking order: batter fuck out the cunts so they know who's boss; that's the fucking order, the first command" (HL 63). The beating Sammy receives at the hands of the police is indicative of the way the subordinate class is treated by the authorities. When Sammy was in prison he witnessed the murder of a fellow prisoner by prison guards:

that 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... (HL 31)

The exploitation of the subordinate class is exacerbated by the fact that the units of the RSA are not held accountable for many of their actions. In the official report, the prisoner Sammy sees murdered is said to have died of a heart attack. It is this lack of accountability which makes Kelman's characters fear the RSA. However, Andrew O'Hagan, another West of Scotland writer, is critical of Kelman because he thinks Sammy is too often hammered by the official forces of the state. He argues that "the true crime of Thatcherism is that it induced the working-class to hammer itself" (Ascherson 22). O'Hagan's criticism parallels Stuart Hall's belief that Thatcherism remains hegemonic because it has the consent of the working class. O'Hagan has a valid point. However, it seems to me that Kelman does explore this aspect of British politics at least somewhat in his fiction; for instance, the way in which Rab sabotages a potential strike.

Often, Kelman's protagonists feel like they are under surveillance by the authorities, in particular the police and the secret service. This is illustrated on the cover of How Late it Was, How Late by the British road sign which indicates that radar guns are in effect along motorways. In

A Disaffection, Patrick Doyle exhibits a paranoia that elements of the RSA are constantly monitoring his activities. In contrast to Sammy's brutal encounter with the police, however, Patrick's takes place on an imaginative level. He is aware that the repressive nature of the police and military extends into the realm of ideology which includes his work as a teacher. He nicknames the second headmaster "MI6" (D 22) and suggests that Alison's husband might be working for "the Economic League or Special Branch, or MI5 and the CIA" (D 72). The second half of the novel takes place against the backdrop of a "Centralamerican assassination" which raises questions about the CIA's involvement in world politics (D 237). The world of Patrick's mind is an Orwellian one in which Big Brother is constantly watching. He believes, half-jokingly, that the RSA watches him through the television screen: "I've no got a telly these days, I used to have one but I've not got it now. You think you're watching it but you're no, they're actually watching you" (D 239). It is easy to dismiss Patrick's paranoia as a peculiarity of his imagination, however, the conditions which he describes have their basis in reality. When a policeman knocks on Patrick's door to tell him he has left his car lights on, the forces of the RSA seem benevolent (D 59). Ultimately, however, Patrick's mistrust of the police seems well grounded because the officer reminds him that his taxes are due in a few days!

The various ISAs in society are another source of exploitation for the subordinate class in British society.

In The Busconductor Hines, education determines the type of work characters are engaged in: blue collar or white collar. Althusser argues that the educational ideological apparatus is the dominant one in mature, capitalist societies and that the point at which a person leaves the education system determines his or her position in society (80-82). Kelman reflects this aspect of class society in his writing. Hines resents the presence of the university graduate in the back office as he signs his duty-sheet (BH 155) and when he brings his son to work he explains to him, "That's a girl who works in the Office...She earns more than I do for fewer hours" (BH 190). It is apparent that the inequalities of the wage scale are based on education. Hines is annoyed that his wages and the value attached to his work are determined by the fact that he did not get his 'highers' or go to university. The result is an 'us' and 'them' situation in which people are divided into groups based on their level of education. Hines even feels as if he is being watched when he goes to the library:

He examined the book. Big illustrated pictures of an anthropological nature. It was a mistake to have taken it out, he would probably end up with a hardon, and she [the librarian] would see him, and report him to the authorities. (BH 140)

Hines plays out the class politics of the library in his mind and it is clear that he feels inferior to people in

positions of authority. The librarian would be disgusted by the biological reality of his 'haddon' because polite society likes to pretend these things do not exist, at least in public. The educational ISA, and related institutions like the library, perpetuate the hegemony of the dominant class in society.

Patrick Doyle's problems in A Disaffection are slightly different. He himself is a member of the ideological police and he has difficulty dealing with this fact because he comes from a working-class background. He realizes that the school is a mill that churns out students imbued with the dominant ideology. This is hinted at by the fact that the headmaster of the school is called Old Milne which means mill in Scots. Patrick attempts to teach the children in his classes about the way power operates in society. He tells them, "The present government, in suppressing the poor, is suppressing our parents" (D 24). He sees himself as a Judas figure who has "sold his rights for a wheen of pennies" (D 303). Patrick regrets the fact that he has turned his back on his working-class roots which he feels attached to but can never recover. He leads a life of "revolutionary compromise" (D 178), attempting to reconcile his counter-hegemonic beliefs with his position as a member of the dominant class. In an attempt to undo some of the effects of the educational ISA, he explains the insidious power of education to his students:

I'm one of the ones that does it [represses the subordinate class] worst of all because you all think I'm on your side and I'm no--even MI6's more on your side than I am! I'm no kidding ye weans I'm really fucking, not to be trusted. (D 186)

Patrick believes that teachers are virtually members of the government (D 159). He tells his students, "Repeat after me: We are being fenced in by the teachers" (D 25). He wants to quit his job because he feels he no longer wants to be a part of a system that exploits people. In How Late it Was, How Late the institutions of the ideological state apparatus make Sammy's life a nightmare. His experiences are similar to those of Joseph K in Kafka's The Trial (1925) and The Castle (1926). Battered and blind after his sessions with the police, Sammy encounters a maze of bureaucracy in which public health officials and his own doctor appear unwilling to help him. He wants to get a "dysfunctional benefit" (HL 67) from the Department of Social Security (DSS) but his doctor will not diagnose him as being blind. Various authorities appear to be in collusion against Sammy. In fact, it is possible that the police have told his doctor not to cooperate. The most the doctor will say is "in respect of the visual stimuli presented it would appear you were unable to respond" (HL 219). He cites a report by Doctor Crozier in order to suggest that Sammy's blindness is the result of a panic attack. A damaging 'fact' in Sammy's dossier is that when he witnessed that violent death in prison years before, he

had a panic attack (HL 221).

Sammy's visit to the DSS is just as frustrating as his doctor's appointment. The regulations governing a dysfunction claim are complex and a health officer warns him he will have to see the "Medical Benefits Office of the Police Department [which] has its own procedures" (HL 108). From Sammy's point of view the health authorities are on the side of the police. He is in a difficult position because he cannot have his job registration changed at the DSS without seeing the Police Department Medical Benefits Office and he is unwilling to go that route because the police have warned him to "watch out for the dark" (HL 254).

Uncooperative members of Glasgow's working-class have historically had difficulty getting 'lines' from the authorities. Sean Damer explains that until the First World War employers kept control of their employees by issuing character notes. Also, landlords would refuse to rent tenements to anyone who did not have a factor's line (Damer 110). "Notes and lines," he argues, "were an excellent way of controlling socialists, trade unionists and other disruptive elements" (110).

James Kelman himself has encountered similar problems with the DSS today through his work with *Clydeside Action on Asbestos*, a lobby group which attempts to secure compensation for the victims of asbestosis. The refusal of doctors to diagnose this disease is due to the fact, Kelman

claims, that it will "cost the government and it'll cost the asbestos industry money" ("No Such Thing..."). Bert Conner, a member of the group, claims that 95% of the cases get refused. He cites a case in which the government granted a man 10% compensation, the lowest amount possible, and complains because, although two specialists diagnosed him with asbestosis, his own doctor refused to put it in his panel line ("No Such Thing..."). The problems Sammy encounters with the DSS and the health authorities in How Late it Was, How Late mirror the problems Kelman has witnessed working with *Clydeside Action on Asbestos*. Kelman explains, "The people of my culture and community are in constant struggle with these agencies. Part of their life is the confrontation with the DSS, the police [and] the medical authorities" ("No Such Thing..."). Through his fiction Kelman forces middle-class readers to consider the ways in which the working class is controlled and exploited by governmental bureaucracies.

There are several interesting parallels between Kelman's politics and those of his protagonists. He too has no faith in the possibility of change from within the system but pushes for change from beyond its boundaries. Patrick Doyle in A Disaffection wants to challenge the hegemony of the dominant ideology as well. When he realizes his efforts at change from within the education system are futile, he turns to art, in the form of two pipes, as an alternative

way to influence people. Joan Murphy, one of Patrick's students asks him, "If ye think the world's as bad as all that then how come you're just gonni go away and play the pipes instead of doing something more useful" (D 200). However, what Patrick proposes is more complex than just playing the pipes. His decision is like one Kelman made a long time ago. Patrick wants to challenge artistically the dominant ideology in the same way Kelman does in his fiction: teaching "by performance instead of pointing the finger" (D 10).

Kelman is a political activist as well as a writer. In addition to his lobbying the government for compensation for the victims of asbestosis ("No Such Thing..."), he joined the group 'Workers' City', in 1990, to protest the marketing of Glasgow as 'Merchant City' during the European City of Culture celebrations (Kelman, SRA 1). 'Workers' City' reminded the public that merchants, like Buchanan, Miller, Elder and Burrell, whose success the city was celebrating, had built their fortunes on slavery and exploitation (Kelman, SRA 2). It also questioned the appropriateness of the slogan, coined in 1983 to promote the city, "Glasgow's Miles Better" by asking the question "Glasgow's Miles Better for Whom?" Kelman's work as an activist keeps his writing vital and gives him insight into the challenges facing the subordinate class in society. The fact that Kelman is involved as an activist and challenges

the dominant ideology through his writing indicates that he believes counter-hegemonic change is possible, even if the impetus for it must come from outwith the boundaries of party politics. It has been suggested that the recognition of Kelman as a major writer is an attempt to assimilate his work into the dominant ideology. For instance, the award of the Booker prize to Kelman for How Late it Was, How Late in 1994 prompted Neal Ascherson to write, "Enemy headquarters in London has a plan to assimilate him by flattery" (Ascherson 22). However, the counter-hegemonic nature of Kelman's fiction makes it impossible to incorporate his work into the literary canon without, at some level, affirming his politics--the politics of cultural autonomy--which the dominant class in Britain is reluctant to do.

It is apparent that Kelman's work belongs to the tradition of the working-class novel. The lack of optimism in the plots of his fiction is indicative of the problems facing Glasgow's working-class in the 1980s and 1990s. He writes about a world in which working-class solidarity and traditional working-class values no longer make sense. Isolated from traditional working-class culture, his protagonists are exploited by the apparatuses of the state and are denied a viable political outlet for their concerns. Although Kelman's characters have no hope of political redemption, a linguistic solidarity underlies his fiction and emphasizes the importance of community and the counter-

hegemonic nature of both narrative and language. Kelman explains, "I'm a member of this community and I want to be a writer within it" ("No Such Thing..."). Although The Busconductor Hines, A Disaffection and How Late it Was, How Late focus on the disintegration of traditional working-class culture, Kelman offers a "unity of voice" (Craig, "Resisting Arrest" 103) in place of working-class political solidarity. Aspects of this will be explored in the next three chapters.

CHAPTER 2
NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE

the narrative belonged to them and them alone

James Kelman, Some Recent Attacks

"One of the problems with the Scottish novel has been, right from the beginning, the division between the voice of the author or narrator and the voices of the characters" ("No Such Thing..."), claims Cairns Craig. Generally, the narrator speaks in standard English and the characters speak in Scots. The problem with this is that it creates a hierarchy of value in which working-class and Scottish forms of speech are shown to be inferior to the language of the narrator. Characters who speak in Scots do not seem to have interior lives and appear to be incapable of telling the story. For example, although David Balfour, the narrator of Robert Louis Stevenson's Kidnapped (1886), is a Scot he tells his story in standard English. The minister, and the barber, on the other hand, speak in Scots. This is the way narrative typically functions in the Scottish novel, reinforcing the belief that people like David Balfour are the only people with stories worth telling and that the

proper voice to tell them with is standard English.

James Kelman opposes these values and opens up the narrative process by allowing working-class Scottish voices to tell the story. The narrative strategies which he employs in his novels are a rejection of the paternalism of omniscient narration, of standard English and of traditional narrative structure. He is indebted to the tradition of the French *nouveau roman* (McNeill 4) which resists standard elements like plot, characterization, descriptions of states of mind and normal settings in time and space. The narrators of The Busconductor Hines, A Disaffection and How Late it Was, How Late speak the same language as the protagonists. Kelman uses free indirect discourse to allow their thoughts to blend with the characters' voices. In another significant technique, the absence of quotation marks in his stories makes it difficult to distinguish between the narrator's voice, direct quotation and interior monologue. This form of stream of consciousness mirrors the dislocation of the interior lives of his heroes and reproduces their isolation and alienation from society. To the same end, Kelman subverts traditional narrative structure with its focus on a climactic event, in favour of a flat, undramatic imitation of everyday life. With the exception of The Busconductor Hines, his works contain no chapter breaks, but are punctuated with ellipses which indicate silences and the passage of time.

In Kelman's novels, the narrative voice speaks the same working-class Glaswegian language as the protagonists. Kelman uses free indirect discourse to avoid problems, such as paternalism, traditionally associated with omniscient narration. This allows the voices of the narrators in his novels to blend with those of the characters and establish solidarity at a linguistic level (Craig, "Resisting Arrest" 103). In this way, Kelman avoids the value judgements and condescension inherent in a narrative voice which speaks standard English.

The narrators of Kelman's novels, like his heroes, are working class; they speak in the same style. Free indirect discourse allows these two voices to blend which reduces the differentiation between narrative and direct quotation. The narrative of The Busconductor Hines is indicative of this:

He [Hines] watched the boy staring at the television from his usual kneeling position, the thumb in the mouth, that incredible concentration. How can weans do wrong. (BH 89)

It is difficult to distinguish, here, between the narrative voice and Hines's. Hines appears to be describing the scene himself because the narrative mingles with his consciousness. He asks the question "How can weans do wrong", however, it is mediated through the voice of the narrator. We attribute it to Hines even though it is not in quotation marks. In "Resisting Arrest", Cairns Craig explains, "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" (103). In scenes with dialogue Kelman indicates a new speaker by starting a new line rather than using quotation marks and the requisite 'he said', 'she said'. This allows the dialogue to be understood and flow uninterrupted by the narrative voice.

Kelman works to bring the narrative voice and the voices of the characters into close alignment. As Craig puts it, "The liberation of the narrative voice from the constraints of written English is an act of linguistic solidarity, since it thrusts that narrative into the same world which the characters inhabit" ("Resisting Arrest" 103). In The Busconductor Hines, the narrator reports Hines's thoughts using Scots words such as "weans" which eliminates the tension that would exist if the narrative was written in standard English. This is a self-conscious technique: Kelman himself has stated "you have to find a way in which that standard voice becomes the ordinary Glasgow speaking voice" ("No Such Thing...").

In The Busconductor Hines there is virtually no indication of who the narrator is. When the narrative voice intervenes in the novel, Rab tells it to "fuck off": "This isn't Hines who's talking. It's a voice. This is a voice doing talking which he listens to. He doesn't think like it at all. What does he think like. Fuck off" (BH 167). The narrative voice has a different perspective from Rab but

when it questions how he thinks Rab seizes control of the story and tells it to "fuck off". In A Disaffection and How Late it Was, How Late, however, the reader sometimes catches a glimpse of the people telling the story. The narrative in these two novels is self-reflexive and exhibits an awareness of an audience. In A Disaffection, the narrator directly addresses the reader, and the judgements he--since Kelman's narrators have a recognizably masculine voice--makes indicate that he probably comes from a working-class background similar to Patrick Doyle's:

Part of Patrick's problem and let us face it he does have a problem, is, that he actually looks like a teacher and he dresses like a teacher and he even speaks like a fucking teacher as well... (D 331)

The narrator is critical of Patrick because he saw education as a way out of working-class life and believed he could make a difference in society by becoming a teacher. The narrator scorns Patrick when he describes the ways in which Patrick can be identified as a teacher. This confirms the narrator's working-class background. He believes Patrick has a problem because, although Patrick has become middle-class, he still identifies with his working-class roots. The narrator believes Patrick is no longer working-class and colludes with the reader in identifying this as a problem.

How Late it Was, How Late is narrated by someone with a similar background to Sammy, perhaps in a pub:

Okay, cutting a long story short here cause Sammy's head was getting into a state and what was

coming out wasnay always very good. The guy was fuckt I mean put it that way, he was fuckt, so there's nay sense prolonging it. If ye're wanting to play fair: alright? let it go, fucking let it go, just let it go, a wee bit of privacy, know what I'm talking about, ye give a guy a break, fuck sake, sometimes it's best just accepting that. (HL 51)

As this passage begins, the narrator cuts Sammy's rambling stream of consciousness short, to make sense of what is happening for the reader and, also, to give Sammy a break. The narrator is concerned about telling the story properly and giving Sammy some privacy at a vulnerable moment. He brings to a halt the voyeuristic view we enjoy of Sammy's thoughts. Like Sammy, the narrator speaks nonstandard English. He uses words and phrases like "cause", "ye", "fuckt", "wasnay", "fuck sake", "wee" and "I mean" which are typical of the spoken language of Glasgow's working-class. Most of the time it is difficult to separate the narrative voice from Sammy's because Sammy talks to himself in the third person. The narrator is almost another Sammy, a kind of minor consciousness, who uses the same language.

In this novel, the narrator also indicates an awareness that he is addressing an audience which may be unfamiliar with Scottish language. "He [Sammy] had a drouth, a drouth. Know what that means," the narrator asks, "it means he's fucking thirsty" (HL 319)." Here, the narrator expresses frustration with readers who may be unfamiliar with Scots words like "drouth". He asks "know what that means", taunting the reader who is not given a chance to respond

before the narrator jeers "it means he's fucking thirsty." The narrator of How Late it Was, How Late is sensitive to linguistic differences and wants the story to be understood.

Kelman's use of free indirect discourse is in direct opposition to omniscient narration. In an interview with Kirsty McNeill, Kelman explains that he tries to obliterate the standard third party narrative voice, "the one that most people don't think of as a 'voice' at all" (McNeill 4). He attempts to create total objectivity in the narrative, striving for a value-free text (McNeill 4). What this means is that Kelman tries to rid the narrative voice of any distinguishing features or judgements which might reveal its values. He does not want the narrator to have a specific point of view because he does not want anyone "to be oppressed or colonised by it" (McNeill 4). As I have argued, Kelman briefly reveals the point of view of the narrators in A Disaffection and How Late it Was, How Late. However, these instances are the exception. On the whole, he reveals virtually nothing about the values of his narrators and avoids condescension in the narrative towards his characters. As he has said himself, the standard third party narrator is "totally biased and elitist, economically secure, eats good food and plenty of it, is upper middle class paternalist" (McNeill 4). In an attempt to create this value-free text, Kelman purges his narratives of evaluative adjectives like "beautiful" and "fat" (McNeill

4). Also, in the style of the *nouveau roman*, he gives no descriptions of the characters in his novels or the city which they inhabit. With this minimalist style, he attempts to distance himself from his work and allow his story to unfold without interference. The fact that his narrators speak the same language as his characters and his frequent use of free indirect discourse allows him to avoid heavy handed, omniscient narration. He does not want to colonise his characters or his readers (McNeill 2).

Kelman's characters are alienated from society and their thoughts often reflect this. A Disaffection's Patrick Doyle identifies with the German poet Holderlin (1770-1843) who was also in love with a married woman and who eventually went mad. "Poor Holderlin," Patrick thinks, "In his early thirties he finally succumbed to that insanity which seems to have been threatening him for years" (D 117). Patrick's thoughts reflect his disillusion with life and with his job as a teacher: "I'm sick of being alone and being a teacher in a society that I say I detest all the time" (D 248). He is a cynic and the only escape he has recourse to is an imaginative one because he is incapable of committing suicide. Patrick finds two electrician's pipes at the back of the arts centre. These pipes fulfil the same role as the guitar in Wallace Steven's "The Man with the Blue Guitar" (1937) or the music in William Carlos Williams "The Desert Music" (1954): they are instruments of the imagination.

Patrick knows he is lucky because he has recourse to the pipes--the imagination--which fill a void in his life and "most folk dont even have that" (D 226). However, even this escape becomes another symbol of his alienation, as he never has the discipline to play them.

Rab Hines's disjointed thoughts in The Busconductor Hines also indicate a dissatisfaction with life. His marriage is falling apart and he no longer likes his work. Rab contemplates ways in which to save his marriage: "Now: let us take it slowly, slowly and calmly. One might start off by too late it is too late, too fucking late, it is too fucking late for this shite" (BH 98). Here, Kelman's use of interior monologue shows the repetitious, circular nature of Rab's thoughts. They do not form logically, rather, they spill on to the page in a stream of consciousness which realistically reflects the pattern of his thoughts.

In How Late it Was, How Late Kelman's use of interior monologue is limited by Sammy's blindness. After his fight with the police Sammy loses his sight and, in the process, the reader loses his or her sight as well. From virtually the beginning of the novel, Sammy's perceptions are mediated through sound, touch, taste and smell. When he wakes up in jail his pillow is wet and he can only speculate why: "He shifted his head and felt the pillow damp on his face. He hadnay been greeting, just water must have been running out. Or else pus. Maybe it was fucking pus" (HL 24). The

experience of reading is defamiliarized because the reader has lost access to the visual mimetic world.

There are no climaxes in Kelman's novels. Nairn sums up Kelman's technique well when he describes A Disaffection as "a dry nightmare" (Nairn, "A Disaffection" 36). The Busconductor Hines and How Late it Was, How Late contain few conventionally dramatic moments as well. Kelman's plots focus on the everyday, average events in his characters' lives eschewing the grandiose events of conventional novels. He prompts the reader to take an active role in reading his work. His plots do not unfold neatly according to some predetermined formula. Rather, they fold back on themselves making use of repetition instead of linear progression.

According to Kelman conventional plot structure has a class bias. He claims that the "idea of the big dramatic event...assumes that economic security exists" (McNeill 9). Traditionally the novel has focussed on middle and upper-class characters who have a large income and enough leisure time to be swept up in dramatic events. These incidents tend to be of an extraordinary nature and rarely involve everyday events in the lives of the characters. Kelman scorns this lack of "economic detail" (McNeill 9) in the Anglo-American literary tradition.

In The Busconductor Hines, Rab is constantly concerned about money. "He's always skint," he thinks, "How come he's always skint" (BH 182). His "wages for last week's workings

amount to well nigh fuck all" (BH 117). Rab needs overtime on the buses to make ends meet and he fantasizes about how much his wage packet would be if he got some (BH 118).

Nothing dramatic ever happens to Rab. He wants to quit his job and tells Reilly, "I want to jack the bastarn thing, right now...I need to jack it; I want to have jacked it" (BH 65). But, Rab is unable to quit his job; he is unable to take action. He takes a stand when he refuses to report to head office without getting paid for it (BH 184), however, he does not follow his protest through. Sammy, the Shop Steward, calls a union meeting to determine whether or not the membership is willing to strike on the issue. However, when he and Rab meet with McGilvaray Rab gets angry and blurts out a verbal resignation. He sabotages any collective action the union can take and, in the end, stays on working as a conductor. If Rab had quit his job or had taken part in a strike there would have been a climax in this novel, but Kelman does not allow these events to come to fruition. Instead, he focuses on the everyday aspects of Rab's life. Rab describes a recipe for mince and tries to figure out what the week's menu should be for his family (BH 70). The novel steers clear of dramatic episodes focussing, instead, on everyday rituals like rolling cigarettes, preparing dinner, making love and making coffee. There is no apparent narrative direction in the novel merely episodic and circular routines. As Cairns Craig explains, "[Kelman's

narratives] are concerned fundamentally...not with the progress implied by a narrative sequence but with repetition..." ("Resisting Arrest" 105). Rab's work is illustrative of the structure of the novel as a whole. He travels out on his bus routes each day in Glasgow only to return to the terminus where he started. He constantly expresses a desire to quit his job but, inevitably, he stays on because he does not have a choice.

Nothing dramatic happens to Patrick Doyle in A Disaffection either. He does not sleep with his married colleague Alison and although he dreams of sailing to France with an old friend, this does not happen either. Finally, he contemplates suicide but is unable to carry it out. His life has become a meaningless routine. He makes coffee, buys fish suppers and goes to the arts-centre bar with his co-workers. "Structural tension is sustained by tuning us into the ostensibly trivial events which punctuate [the characters' existence]" (Nairn, "A Disaffection" 35). Patrick frequently goes for runs in his car about Glasgow and, significantly, one time takes the road south to England. But, like Hines's bus routes, Patrick's journeys always end back where they started.

In A Disaffection, Kelman avoids conventionally dramatic events. In one scene, he describes Patrick throwing up on the classroom floor because he drinks too much at lunch and, typically, the episode is reported flatly

and from a distance: "Patrick Doyle's stomach erupted and what came out was a mixture of heavy beer and blended whisky" (D 201). The incidents which come closest to forming a climax in the novel are Patrick's meetings with Alison and Old Milne. Nothing comes of his meeting with Alison who tells him, "I'm not going to have a relationship with you" (D 235). However, when Patrick meets with Old Milne, the school's headmaster, he is informed that he is being transferred to Barnskirk High after the Easter break. He does not even remember applying for the transfer. Still, the dramatic tension of this moment fizzles away because Patrick does not really care what happens. It only reinforces his belief that there is a conspiracy against him.

How Late it Was, How Late also works against conventional plot formulas. There is no build up to the dramatic event of the novel. Sammy's fight with "the sodgers" (the police) happens quickly and inexplicably right at the beginning of the novel. The bulk of the story is concerned with Sammy's frustrating dealings with the authorities and how he learns to cope with his blindness and with the disappearance of his girlfriend. He encounters a maze of bureaucracy at the doctor's office and the Department of Social Security. These dealings with bureaucracy are undramatic as are the day to day events in Sammy's life. He travels to the mini-mart and the pub, he

listens to country music and takes a bath. However, towards the end of the novel, Sammy decides to leave Scotland for England. This is a decisive moment, but, ultimately, the reader is unsure whether he will actually leave Glasgow when he enters a cab at the end of the novel.

With the exception of The Busconductor Hines, Kelman's novels do not contain chapter breaks. This is one way in which the author attempts to reflect more accurately the lives of his characters in narrative. The division of novels into chapters is arbitrary and unrealistic. Although absolute realism is impossible in fiction, it is safe to say that our lives are not packaged into neat little bundles. As an alternative to chapter breaks, Kelman uses ellipses to indicate silences and the passage of time in his novels. For instance, in The Busconductor Hines, an ellipse is used to indicate the passage of time between Rab's day at work and a scene at home (BH 78). The ellipse draws a curtain on the action of the novel but, at the same time, lets the reader know that the characters' lives continue, even if not in narrative. Kelman also uses the ellipse to indicate silences. In A Disaffection, Pat asks Old Milne if the transfer is really his:

Are ye sure it's mine?

...

I dont eh-to be honest I mean christ it's no the sort of thing I do. I usually stick things out.
(D 179)

Old Milne's silence indicates that there may be more to the

transfer than we are aware of. It forces the reader to wonder if there really is a conspiracy against Pat. Use of the ellipse makes Kelman's readers question the silences in the novels. They must read between the lines in order to make sense of what is really going on.

In The Busconductor Hines, A Disaffection and How Late it Was, How Late James Kelman resists the values of standard English narrative. He allows the narrative voice to speak in the same style and register as his characters and uses free indirect discourse as an alternative to omniscient narration. As Cairns Craig argues, the absence of quotation marks in Kelman's work resists the moment of arrest when the reader switches from narrative to direct discourse. Kelman also lets his characters tell their own stories through interior monologue. Finally, he subverts standard narrative structure which builds towards a climax by focussing on routine events in the lives of his characters. The narrative strategies Kelman uses in his novels are a rejection of the paternalistic and elitist values inherent in omniscient narration, standard English and traditional narrative structure. His project is a political one: a rejection of the middle-class values which are traditionally built into the novel and the creation of a working-class, Scottish narrative voice.

Another significant aspect of Kelman's work is the Glasgow speech which he employs. In Chapter three I will

argue that Kelman's use of nonstandard English is a deliberate attempt to counteract the linguistic and cultural domination of Scotland by England. The Glasgow speech he employs is a language of resistance which reinvests value in the culture and language of Kelman's own community.

CHAPTER 3

GLASGOW SPEECH: LANGUAGE OF RESISTANCE

*There is no such thing as "the Queen's English."
The property has gone into the hands of a joint
stock company and we own the bulk of the shares!*

Mark Twain, Following the Equator

In The Post-colonial Studies Reader, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin claim, "Language is a fundamental site of struggle for post-colonial discourse because the colonial process itself begins in language" (283). The attempts of Tom Leonard, James Kelman and other Glasgow authors to give a "truthful account of the spoken tongue" (Morgan 321) are part of this process of decolonization. Their work, through the promotion of indigenous forms of speech, counteracts the linguistic and cultural domination of Scotland by England. In The Empire Writes Back, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin explain, "Post-colonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place" (38).

"The language people use indicates the values they live by," argues James Kelman in the BBC Scotland documentary "No

Such Thing as Bad Language." In order to write convincingly about his working-class Scottish culture, Kelman has chosen to write in the nonstandard speech of his own community. Although related to the tradition of Scots writing which includes the work of Allan Ramsay, Robert Burns and Hugh MacDiarmid, Kelman's work could be said to have more in common with post-colonial African writers such as Linton Kwesi Johnson, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and Ngugi wa Thiong'o whose writing is "premised on a rejection of the cultural values of imperial or colonial authority" (Kelman, "Elitist slurs..." 2). The use of language plays a key role in this process of decolonization. The Glasgow speech of Kelman's novels, for instance, is a language of resistance. It resists the world-view of the English home counties and standard English, its universalizing language, by investing value in local, working-class and Scottish forms of speech. Kelman adapts English³ to his own anti-imperial purpose; he is part of a 'Glasgow school' of writers who resist the homogeneity of standard English; he uses swearing in defiance of cultural taboos surrounding language; and he mirrors the qualities of oral speech in his writing.

³This spelling reflects the fact that as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin argue in The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures (London: Routledge, 1989) there is a "need to distinguish between what is proposed as a standard code, English (the language of the erstwhile imperial centre), and the linguistic code english, which has been transformed and subverted into several distinctive varieties throughout the world" (8). This spelling will be used, where appropriate, in this chapter.

The issue of language has always been important to Scottish writers. As Cairns Craig points out, "for all Scottish writers...the issue of language has an overwhelming significance that sets their writing quite different problems from those posed to the English writer" (HSL 3). These problems stem from the fact that, in Scotland, writers can choose from three national languages: Gaelic, Scots and English. English, however, has become the dominant language of the country. Gaelic was undermined as a national language when King Malcolm III adopted Anglo-Saxon as the language of the court in the eleventh century, and the position of Scots as an independent language was weakened by the Union of the Crowns in 1603, the introduction of the King James Bible in English, and the Union of the Parliaments in 1707. In Scotland, language is a means by which writers express their cultural autonomy from England. As Alan Bold explains, it is "a weapon in a national, and nationalistic, war" (4). Scotland's position, however, is a peculiar one because it "was an active partner in the extension of the Empire that made of English a world language, while at the same time, in its own linguistic experience, it shared the experience of the colonised" (Craig, HSL 5).

James Kelman writes in english; however, it is not the same English employed by writers such as Allan Massie and Muriel Spark which contains few traces of Scottishness. The

language of Kelman's novels is a transcription of urban, working-class Glaswegian speech. He does not write in 'literary' Scots because as Stephen Mulrine states in "Poetry in Glasgow Dialect," "Lallans seems wholly inappropriate to the Glasgow experience [because] its word-hoard is rural" (227). Scholars of Scots, in search of a pure language, have, in fact, been critical of Glaswegian speech. For instance, in the introduction to the 1931 edition of The Scottish National Dictionary, William Grant explains the exclusion of Glasgow's language: "Owing to the influx of Irish and foreign immigrants in the industrial area near Glasgow the dialect has become hopelessly corrupt" (Morgan 312). The language of Kelman's novels is, as a result, twice marginalised: first, by the dominance of Standard English and second, by the linguistic establishment in Scotland which refuses to validate it. "Reluctance to confer status on urban Scots," Edwin Morgan explains, "has...excused itself mainly on the ground that slang rather than dialect is involved" (313). Kelman rejects the linguistic purism of literary Scots and employs the living language of Glasgow's working class. He looks to the freedom enjoyed by American writers as an example, believing that if Scots lose their language they lose their culture (McLean 112). His writing is part of a larger movement in Scottish literature which has gained momentum over the past thirty years.

Since the late 1960s a 'Glasgow school' has emerged which includes writers such as Stephen Mulrine, Tom McGrath, Alan Spence, David Neilson, Tom Leonard and Alex Hamilton. These writers reinvest value in working-class Glaswegian speech in order to challenge the hegemony of standard English. They are, as I will illustrate in the next chapter, the organic intellectuals of a counter-hegemonic movement in language. Due to a lack of Scottish models in the 1960s, Tom Leonard looked to the work of William Carlos Williams as an example. He explains:

What I like about Williams is his voice. What I like about Williams is his presentation of voice as a fact in itself and as a factor in his relationship with the world as he heard it, listened to it, spoke it.
(Leonard 95)

Tom Leonard is concerned with the relationship between language and power in society. He, and the rest of the 'Glasgow school', attempt to resist the hegemony of standard British English in the same way that William Carlos Williams resisted 'literary' American language. In "Honest", Leonard makes his case for the use of nonstandard forms of English in writing:

ifyi write down 'doon' wan minute, nwrite doon 'down' thi nixt, people say yir beein inconsistent. But ifyi sayti sumdy, 'Whaira yi afti?' nthey say, 'Whut?' nyousay, 'Where are you off to?' they don't say, 'That's no whutyi said this furst time.' They probably say sumhm like, 'Doon thi road!' anif you say, 'What?' they usually say, 'Down the road!' the second time--though no always. Course, they never really say, 'Doon this road!' or 'Down the road!' at all. Least, they never say it the way it's spelt. Coz it izny spelt, when they say it, is it? (Leonard 73)

The 'Glasgow school' has attempted to render, as faithfully as possible, the spoken language of Glasgow's working-class in writing. Tom Leonard argues that a distinction must be made between language as it is spoken and as it is written. His use of Glaswegian syntax in this passage illustrates the limited capacity of standard English to reflect diverse forms of spoken english.

The language Kelman uses is a working-class dialect, however, it is also a regional form of speech. His writing gives the reader a sense of place and character, and functions as a site around which Scottish identity can coalesce. In The Empire Writes Back, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin illustrate how 'peripheral' writers use the language of the centre as a means of resistance: "the process of capturing and remoulding the language [of the centre] to new usages, marks a separation from the site of colonial privilege" (38). Kelman's english is nuanced with the tones and inflections of Glasgow speech. In this way, he appropriates English for his own anti-imperial purpose. In a society dominated by standard English, Kelman shows that there are alternative realities, alternative ways of speaking, which are equally valid. In "No Such Thing as Bad Language," John La Rose, a Caribbean poet and publisher, explains, "Kelman is linking up with a tradition which Joyce and others had which is a literature in English which is not necessarily English literature".

Kelman's work illustrates that the Scottish writer can use english as a language of resistance in the same way the writers of the Caribbean Arts movement did in London in the 1960s ("No Such Thing...").

Nonstandard Scottish english is undermined by standard English as it is taught in the British school system. Kelman explains that, in his own experience, "if you used words like aye in the classroom then the teacher would perhaps belt you" ("No Such Thing..."). As they grow up, Scottish children are taught that their speech is an inferior form of English. The centre devalues languages on the periphery by calling them vernaculars, patois, slangs, dialects and gutter-languages (Kelman, "Elitist slurs..." 2). "English as it has been bestowed upon us by the education system," argues Kelman, "is basically there to control us and teach us that we are inferior and our language is inferior and our culture is inferior" (Conrad B2). Through his writing, he attempts to counteract this perception. The voice which he creates is a distinctly working class and Scottish voice. Liz Lochhead expresses surprise at its potential: "I didn't know it was a possible voice in fiction, especially not a possible voice in fiction that would go all over the world as Kelman's voice does" ("No Such Thing..."). Kelman's use of language has opened up a range of possibilities for Scottish writers and other writers working within a tradition of resistance. The

reaction of the Scottish novelist Duncan McLean to The Busconductor Hines is indicative of this, "It was the voice. For the first time I was reading a book about the world I lived in. I didn't know literature could do that" (Downer 44).

Kelman's characters are sensitive to received pronunciation (RP), the accent of the British upper classes. They resent its hegemonic position in society and its inherent elitism because it does not allow them to have a voice. In The Busconductor Hines, Rab's brother-in-law speaks with this voice: "he came from the English Home Counties...and he spoke with this fucking amazing English accent" (BH 129). Hines, who is telling the story, admits that the way this other character speaks might not be his fault, but Hines still resents the values implicit in his language. In How Late it Was, How Late, Sammy's reaction to RP is similar: "all these fucking stupid voices that make ye think of double helpings of fucking raspberry trifle man with lumps of fresh dairy cream" (HL 113). RP is smooth, like cream; it is the flawless speech of the upper classes. In comparison, Sammy's speech is rough. Sammy connects RP with privilege: the trifle with cream RP reminds him of resonates with the strawberries and cream served at Wimbledon. Kelman's characters are frustrated by standard English, especially when spoken with an RP accent, because of the values these forms of speech represent. However,

Sammy also resents the middle-class Glasgow accent: "She [a receptionist] had one of these mental ding dong middle-class accents ye get in Glasgow" (HL 123). Through his treatment of language, Kelman shows how standard English inferiorizes his characters. He argues that, "For the writer in particular the fight [against racism and elitism] is through language...subverting the value-system is intrinsic" (SRA 22). The working-class language he employs in his novels is an attempt to undermine the hegemony of both English and middle-class modes of speech.

Kelman's language is a realistic depiction of a particular style of working-class speech, however, it is not the language of all Scots. Yet, the way in which he uses language allows Scots to identify with the political imperatives of his work regardless of the way they speak. In "No Such Thing as Bad Language," John La Rose explains,

There's a mythology which they [writers like Kelman] are trying to create in the literature which has to do with the reconstruction or recreation of these societies and the way people see themselves in their societies...("No Such Thing...")

Scottish national culture cuts across class boundaries and, although Kelman uses the language of the working-class, Scots from all classes can identify with his work because it resists linguistic and cultural domination by England.

One of the most striking features of James Kelman's writing is his use of swearing, or at least what is generally considered to be swearing. Debate surrounding

Kelman's use of so-called bad language reached a high point in the fall of 1994 when he won the Booker Prize for How Late it Was, How Late. Rabbi Julia Neuberger, one of the judges, called the decision "a disgrace" and declared Kelman's novel "inaccessible" (Lockerbie and Harris 15). It is believed that she had reservations about the language of the novel, despite the fact that she has been quoted as saying she "could not give a damn about the language" (Lockerbie and Harris 15). At the time, a journalist who reviewed Kelman's novel counted the number of times 'fuck' appears in it and discovered that the word, and its derivatives, occurs about 4,000 times (Pederson A13).

Michael Kelly, Glasgow's former Lord Provost, who launched the "Glasgow's Miles Better" campaign in 1983 (Bowditch 2), declared, "I haven't read Kelman's novel, but I gather the language is not something I would care to read. It's the kind of thing you can hear daily from taxi drivers and plumbers" (Marchand D1). Michael Kelly's antipathy towards Kelman likely stems from the fact that, in 1990, when Glasgow was declared the European City of Culture it was he who marketed it as 'Merchant City.' And, it was Kelman who opposed the celebration and joined the 'Worker's City' in order to protest the one-sided view of Glasgow which was being presented to the world. Kelman argues that "there's no such thing as bad language" ("No Such Thing...") and uses swearing in defiance of taboos surrounding speech. This

enables him to portray realistically the language his characters use.

The protagonists of Kelman's novels swear when they speak aloud and when interior monologue allows us to know what they are thinking. For instance, in How Late it Was, How Late, Sammy's thoughts are punctuated with 'fucks' when he is released from the police station: "Fucking hell man that felt like a woman's tit he had put his hand on. The name of christ he would get fucking arrested!" (HL 47). In A Busconductor Hines Rab Hines tells his driver, "Stop again man I'm jacking it. Pull into the side. High fucking time I mean it's getting to the ridiculous stage. Come on for christ sake Willie stop the bus" (BH 65). In addition to using fuck as an interjection, as he does in these examples, Kelman uses swear words as adjectives, nouns, verbs and in place of punctuation marks. In this way, he reflects the realities of spoken language. He claims that a working-class man "might be the best story-teller in the whole factory...he could maybe use the word fuck in about 12, 15 or 23 different ways" ("No Such Thing..."). Kelman not only allows swear words into his writing, but he suggests they are coloured with multiple meanings. Clearly, what his characters are doing is more complex than just swearing.

Readers of Kelman's work eventually become desensitized to his use of swearing because of the frequency with which it occurs. The words 'fuck' and 'cunt' appear often,

reflecting the manner in which his characters speak and think. Douglas Dunn, Professor of English at St. Andrew's University, claims "if you use them [the swear words] less frequently and in a sort of deliberate manner you're being almost prurient or you're being more obscene than if you try to reflect the frequency in a natural way" ("No Such Thing..."). The manner in which Kelman uses swear words thus adds to the realism of his novels, with repetition ridding these words of much of their verbal violence. Initially the language may shock the reader, but it must be gradually accepted as an actuality of the characters' speech.

"How can I censor the characters that I want to write about?" Kelman asks ("No Such Thing..."). He refuses to censor his characters and will not put constraints on their language. "[If] you don't allow people into literature because they use language in a certain way," he claims, "It means that you have succeeded in suppressing their existence" ("No Such Thing..."). In actual fact, literature has been successful in excluding characters whose vocabulary might include the word 'fuck'. If they do appear in a story, it is likely they will be censored. This continues to happen despite the fact that 'fuck' has been a part of the English language since at least the sixteenth century. As a result, in English literature "some 80 to 85 percent of the population simply...[do] not exist" (Kelman, SRA 82).

Kelman's work reflects, more accurately than literature has done in the past, the frequency with which people use words considered taboo.

In our society, swearing has no place in the world of officialdom. During an interrogation, the police tell Sammy, "Dont use the word 'cunts' again, it doesnay fit in the computer" (HL 160). Even Ally, who wants to represent Sammy's complaint in court tells him "Right...look or pardon me; just one thing, ye're gony have to watch yer language; sorry; but every second word's fuck...it's a good habit to get into for official purposes" (HL 238). Many of the newspapers which covered Kelman's Booker Prize victory followed this convention as well: reviews of How Late it Was, How Late substituted 'expletive', 'f-word' and 'F***' for the word 'fuck' (Pederson A13; Lockerbie and Harris 15; Marchand D1). The events and language of the polite world occupy a privileged position in English literature.

The language of Kelman's novels has been criticized as an inaccurate reflection of working-class speech in Glasgow. Douglas Dunn explains, "Some people might argue that there's a danger of Glasgow being misrepresented as a city of only a certain kind of working class" ("No Such Thing..."). Indeed, working-class Glaswegians do not all swear as often as Kelman's characters do. Like Patrick Doyle, they speak in a variety of registers and switch codes depending upon the situation they are in. The language used in The

Busconductor Hines, A Disaffection and How Late it Was, How Late is, for the most part, particular to Rab Hines, Patrick Doyle and Sammy Samuels. Kelman should not be faulted with misrepresenting Glasgow's working class because he faithfully constructs the speech and inner-thoughts of his characters. Granted, swearing is a significant aspect of working-class culture in Glasgow and if one goes to a pub on Sauchiehall Street or to the 'Old Firm' game at Ibrox, the language of Kelman's characters will likely appear realistic and perhaps even modest. However, Kelman does make an attempt to show his readers that working-class characters can express themselves in other ways. Rab Hines's driver and Patrick Doyle's brother, for example, do not swear very often, highlighting the fact that Kelman's characters represent only a segment of the city's working class.

The language Kelman uses in his novels is deliberately close to spoken language. One way he stresses the oral nature of language is by using repetition, illustrating the redundancy built into spoken language. For instance, in A Disaffection Patrick Doyle discusses his university essays with Alison:

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. (D 145)

Patrick Doyle uses "fucking" as an interjective three times

in this passage and repeats "I mean", a frequent characteristic of speech, three times as well. His speech is a barrage of swear words: "in the first damn bloody fucking place" shows a degree of redundancy which is seldom seen in writing. It is ironic that, in this passage, Patrick discusses the repetition of 'I' in his university papers claiming it is exactly "what you're trying to get rid of" in academic discourse. Although unacceptable in a university paper, Kelman builds repetition into his fiction in order to illustrate the circular nature of spoken language.

Kelman's writing also reflects the different styles and registers used in speech. He often spells words differently to suit different occasions. For example in one sentence, a word ending in 'ing' might be cut short to 'in' while, in another, it might be left 'ing'. As Liz Lochhead explains, this is "about an absolute emotional precision" ("No Such Thing..."). Kelman highlights the fact that people often vary the way they speak. What may, at first, appear to be inconsistencies in spelling are actually a deliberate effort to reflect the sheer variety of spoken language itself. This is apparent when Patrick Doyle speaks with his parents about discipline in the school system:

I'm no prejudiced at all, you just stick up for them. I dont. I just tell the bloody truth, as I see it. I'm no saying ye dont, but let's face it as well Pat, ye do like to be different. Naw I dont. Your maw's right, said Mr. Doyle. The same with bringing back the belt, you've got to be

different there too.
(D 112-13)

Kelman alternates between 'you' and 'ye' in this exchange. In the first line, Patrick's mother addresses him as 'you', but by the third line she adopts the more intimate 'ye' in an attempt to diffuse the rising tension of the situation. In this way, Kelman reflects the various styles and registers which his characters speak in. For instance, when Patrick Doyle tells his brother's children the story of how he finds the pipes, he speaks in a soft, gentle style which is different from his speech in the rest of the novel. He tells them, "whenever I get down in the dumps I just sit back and play these pipes and I get cheered up. I dont always get the tunes right but sometimes I do and it sounds great" (D 299). Patrick does not swear when he speaks to his brother's children because he knows it would not be appropriate. Instead, he opts for a style which is kind and expresses his affection for his niece and nephew. Generally, the language of Kelman's novels is harsh and unrelenting, but, at times, he allows us to recognize that there are other ways of speaking. Like most people, his characters have access to a number of different registers of speech. A Disaffection's Patrick Doyle can speak in a variety of styles since he is university educated. The speech of Sammy and Rab in How Late it Was, How Late and The Busconductor Hines, however, shows less variation because they are working class and uneducated.

It is apparent that Kelman resists the hegemony of standard English speakers in his novels. He writes in an urban Scottish dialect because standard English could not possibly accurately reflect the speech, and values, of his community. Kelman's work belongs to a tradition of decolonization in which peripheral writers appropriate the language of the centre to portray life in their communities and further anti-imperial ends. The Glasgow speech of his novels resists the homogeneity of standard English and rejects the ideology of southern England. Kelman reinvests value in slang, local, working-class and Scottish modes of speech, resisting the dominance of middle-class, standard English. He explains why this is significant: "once you start dismantling language like this," he argues, "you start to dismantle all the power they hold over you" (Pederson A13).

The next chapter illustrates how the dominant class in society attempts to ensure the continued hegemony of standard English speakers. It also argues that nonstandard English constitutes a counter-hegemonic force which has the potential to challenge this dominance.

CHAPTER 4

NONSTANDARD ENGLISH AS A COUNTER-HEGEMONIC FORCE

Wherever there is power there arises resistance to it.

Roger Simon, Gramsci's Political Thought

"Language is an instrument of control as well as of communication," (6) claim Gunther Kress and Robert Hodge in Language as Ideology. The dominant class in society maintains its hegemony and controls access to positions of power through the use of standard English. In general, the language spoken by an individual is closely related to his or her class: different classes speak dialects that reflect their position in the class structure, although individuals tend to speak in a variety of registers depending on whether or not the occasion is public or private. In English-speaking countries the hegemonic dialect, 'standard English', is spoken by the dominant class with a number of regional accents. Regional variation, however, is more pronounced among members of the subordinate class who are much more likely to employ nonstandard forms of English. How do speakers of standard English maintain hegemony in a country? And, what sort of challenges can be mounted

against this hegemony?

In attempting to answer these questions, I will base my main explanation on Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony. I will also take into account Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and Louis Althusser's views on ideology. Standard English language users maintain their hegemony through a combination of persuasion and consent and may even adapt through passive revolution--adopting some elements of nonstandard English--in order to remain dominant. However, I maintain that, in general, the use of dialects, slangs and what is considered to be grammatically incorrect language enables nonstandard speakers to challenge the hegemony of standard English speakers and indicates that the formation of a new historic bloc in language may be possible. As Milroy states in Language and Social Networks,

we may view the vernacular as a positive force: it may be in direct conflict with standardized norms, utilized as a symbol by speakers to carry powerful social meanings and so resistant to external pressures. (19)

In our society, the hegemony of standard English speakers is maintained through "Ideological State Apparatuses" (Althusser 77) such as the educational system and media. Counter-hegemonic movements have, however, in the past, been able to displace hegemonic forms of language. In Britain, for instance, a variety of different accents have displaced 'received pronunciation' (RP) as the hegemonic form of speech. RP is a social accent of the dominant class,

however, RP speakers speak the dialect standard English. It is necessary to point out that although several accents are now considered prestigious, standard English continues to be the dominant dialect. Writers who write in nonstandard forms of English, like James Kelman, challenge the hegemony of standard English speakers. For the purposes of this chapter, I will distinguish between 'dialect' and 'accent' in the same manner as Arthur Hughes & Peter Trudgill:

"DIALECT...[will] refer to varieties of grammar and vocabulary. ACCENT, on the other hand, will refer to varieties of pronunciation" (Hughes and Trudgill 2). The term 'standard English' will be used to refer to written and spoken language which is considered grammatically correct and the term 'nonstandard English' will be used to refer to dialects, slangs and what is considered to be grammatically incorrect language.

First, the dominant class maintains the hegemony of standard English through the ideological state apparatuses of the school and the media. "All ideological State apparatuses (ISA's)," Althusser argues, "contribute to...the reproduction of the relations of production" (81). He claims that, after the decline of the church, the educational ideological apparatus became the dominant ISA:

the ideological State apparatus which has been installed in the *dominant* position in mature capitalist social formations as a result of a violent political and ideological class struggle against the old dominant ideological State apparatus, is the *educational ideological*

apparatus. (80)

Language plays a central role in the educational apparatus. The school system compels children, regardless of their native dialect, to learn standard English. In "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," Althusser illustrates that, in France, children "learn to 'speak proper French', to 'handle workers correctly', i.e. actually (for the future capitalists and their servants) to 'order them about' properly" (65). The manner in which language is organized in society mirrors the class structure. Standard English is the hegemonic form of communication and nonstandard forms of English are considered to be subordinate to it. Language is also organized in this way in the classroom: the middle and upper class children generally speak standard English, the lower class children nonstandard English.

Language thus reinforces the class structure in the classroom. Labov claims that at school the child "will learn the social meaning of language differences: that there are sets of values clustering around language which are very different in his own peer group and in the adult world" (SNE 9). In the end, the child learns that standard English is the language of power and that in order to become part of the dominant class he or she must learn how to speak 'properly'.

Children from the dominant class have many advantages in the educational system over those from the subordinate

class due to their parents' "cultural capital" (Bourdieu 243). The concept of cultural capital, developed by Pierre Bourdieu, is useful because it makes

it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes by relating academic success...to the distribution of cultural capital between the classes and class fractions. (Bourdieu 243)

Children from the dominant class do well at school because the educational system is designed to reward the skills of their class such as their use of standard language. Since the educational ideological apparatus is designed to reproduce the relations of production, and is administrated by the dominant class, this comes as no surprise.

Nonstandard forms of speech are devalued in the educational system. As Kress and Hodge put it, "A dominant class will inevitably disvalue the modes of thought and language of a subordinate class" (67). The concept of verbal deprivation which Labov criticizes in "The Logic of Nonstandard English" is the main way in which the language of the subordinate class is devalued. The belief, still prevalent today, "is that children show a cultural deficit as a result of an impoverished environment in their early years" (Labov, LSC 179). This 'cultural deficit' is then used to explain lower-class children's lack of verbal participation in the classroom. However, it is clear that this so-called lack is actually the result of their encounter with standard English, the hegemonic dialect, and

the values of the education system that are essentially the values of the dominant class. For, as Labov argues, "children in the urban ghettos receive a great deal of verbal stimulation" (LSC 179). However, despite Labov's persuasive argument against it, cultural deficit theory remains a pervasive force. Its success is due to the fact that it is fostered by both the dominant and subordinate class: the subordinate class--such is the nature of social myth--is as convinced of the illogical and inferior nature of its speech as the dominant class. Roger Simon explains in Gramsci's Political Thought that "a class and its representatives exercise power over subordinate classes by means of a combination of coercion and persuasion" (22). By persuading the subordinate class of the inferiority of its language, the dominant class attempts to ensure the continued hegemony of standard English speakers. V.N. Voloshinov argues:

The ruling class strives to impart a supraclass, eternal character to the ideological sign, to extinguish or drive inward the struggle between social value judgements which occurs in it, to make the sign uniaccental. (23)

The dominant class tries to ensure its linguistic dominance by convincing the subordinate class that language is not ideological, that there is simply a right way and a wrong way to speak.

However, it is apparent that socio-economic class determines the point at which a person leaves the

educational system and, as a result, the language skills he or she attains there. Althusser explains,

Each mass [of students] ejected en route is practically provided with the ideology which suits the role it has to fulfil in class society: the role of the exploited...the role of the agent of exploitation...or the agent of repression. (82)

A command of standard English is one of the ideological components which the agent of exploitation and the agent of repression are provided with at school. In school, children who will become members of the dominant class are taught to speak authoritatively. A person from the subordinate class, however, is likely to leave the educational system earlier, without attaining a complete command of standard English. Upon leaving school, he or she may revert to speaking a form of nonstandard English. Arthur Hughes and Peter Trudgill explain, "the longer a child stays at school, and the more successful he is, the less regionally marked, grammatically and lexically, will be his speech" (11).

Another group of ISAs which help maintain the hegemony of standard English is the media. British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) radio is a good example. In 1926, John Reith, the first general manager of the BBC, established an advisory committee on spoken English (McDowell 30). "He sought to avoid bringing local accents and dialects to the microphone...[and] he wanted announcers to sound intelligible in all parts of the country" (McDowell 30). Earlier this century, BBC announcers spoke with a southern

English accent called RP. The problem that arose from this was that regional listeners tended to identify the BBC with the south of England and with the dominant class (McDowell 31). In his article "Diglossia" C.A. Ferguson explains that often when a high and low form of a language co-exist, only the high is regarded as 'real' and the low is reported not to exist (237). BBC radio's treatment of regional accents and dialects certainly conforms to this pattern. However, from the 1960s onwards BBC Scotland has increased the range of regional accents heard on the air. This change was the result of a broader democratic movement which has demanded more autonomy for the regions in the United Kingdom. As a result, the hegemonic form of speech in Britain has shifted from RP to a form of standard English which can be spoken with a variety of regional accents. The media utilize the dominant form of speech in society, however, as we have seen, the type of speech they use will change if the hegemonic form of speech shifts. The gradual acceptance of a broader range of accents in British society seems to indicate that counter-hegemonic change in language is possible.

Second, Gramsci's concept of counter-hegemony provides an interesting account of the way change occurs in society. There is no evidence to suggest, however, that instantaneous, revolutionary change in language is possible. But, Gramsci's concept can be used to illustrate that

changes in language can occur over long periods of time.

Initially, it might be useful to determine the effect that socialist and communist revolutions have on the class character of language. It seems reasonable to assume that a change in power, especially one driven by working-class interests, would result in a dramatic change in language. Under these circumstances, one might assume that language would become more democratic, however, the opposite actually appears to be the case. Labov argues that social revolutions "characteristically fail to overturn the sociolinguistic norms of a society" (SNE 31). "Prohibitions against using vernacular forms in writing," he states, "may grow even stricter" (SNE 31). And, in fact, when the communists came to power in the Soviet Union this is exactly what happened. To illustrate, in Marxism and Linguistics, Joseph Stalin argues that language does not have a class character. He claims that "dialects and jargons have no grammatical system" (16). "Anyone who believes that dialects and jargons...are capable of ousting and supplanting the national language," he argues, "has lost all sense of historical perspective and has abandoned the Marxist position" (16). Stalin was a hegemonic leader and his comments reflect a desire to maintain the dominance of a particular historic bloc. Although I agree that nonstandard speech cannot supplant the hegemonic language completely, I believe that it allows nonstandard speakers to resist the

homogeneity of standard English, expose the strategy of coercion and persuasion employed by the dominant class and force the dominant class to become more accepting of different cultures and variations in speech patterns.

In Gramsci's Political Thought, Roger Simon points out that "the advance to socialism consists in the building by the labour movement of a counter-hegemony" (18). In order to create a new hegemony, there must be a "transformation of popular consciousness" (Simon 26). He goes on to claim that the subordinate class can only create a successful counter-hegemonic movement if it appeals to the national-popular consciousness and creates a wide range of alliances between classes (Simon 46). Gramsci's concept of the national-popular consciousness includes the "demands and struggles of the people which do not have a purely class character" (Simon 24). This raises the following question: what would a counter-hegemonic movement in language look like?

As we have seen previously, the hegemony of RP speakers in Britain has been supplanted by people who speak standard English with a variety of regional accents. Standard English, however, continues to be the dominant dialect and, although it allows for variation in accent, it does not allow for variation in grammar. RP is a social accent of the upper-class in England and "it is claimed the label derives from the accent which was 'received' at the royal court" (Holmes 143). RP, Janet Holmes argues in An

Introduction to Sociolinguistics, "is essentially a social accent not a regional one...indeed it conceals a speaker's regional origins" (143). Holmes reproduces two diagrams which originally appeared in Peter Trudgill's

Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society to show the relationship between social and regional variation in language (see fig. 1. and fig. 2.). Figure 1 and figure 2 illustrate that regional variation is much more limited in the speech of the dominant class than it is in the speech of the subordinate class. Both diagrams also point out that the subordinate class employs nonstandard forms of English more often than the dominant class. Figure 1 illustrates the hegemony of RP by its position at the pinnacle of the pyramid where there is no room for regional variation in speech. As I have argued, however, the process of globalization and increased regionalism in the United Kingdom have caused the hegemony of the RP accent to go into decline. The current state of language use is illustrated in figure 2.

Today, more than one accent is associated with the dominant class in Britain. Janet Holmes explains, "most well-educated Scots, Irish and Welsh speakers do not use RP, and there is more than one socially prestigious accent in these countries" (144). Earlier this century, when the British empire went into decline, regionalism functioned as a counter-hegemonic force. Part of this process included

the liberation of a variety of accents from the dominance of RP. This appealed to the 'common sense' of the people because the majority of them did not speak with an RP accent. Despite the fact that the dominant accent has changed, standard English continues to be the dominant dialect. Ultimately, however, this new historic bloc is more democratic because it allows people to be judged by what they say rather than how they say it. "Standard English," Janet Holmes explains, "is more accommodating than RP and allows for some variation within its boundaries" (145). The flat top of the pyramid in figure 2 reflects this. In fact, "it is estimated that up to 15 per cent of the British regularly use standard British English" (Holmes 145).

The shift in hegemony from RP to a form of standard English which is more accepting of regional variation contains aspects of a counter-hegemonic movement as well as the bourgeois strategy Gramsci terms "passive revolution" (Simon 25). Even though RP is in decline, the dominant class continues to maintain its linguistic hegemony. This is made possible by the fact that standard English remains the dominant dialect. This raises the question of whether or not nonstandard forms of English can challenge the hegemony of standard English in the same way that regional accents once challenged the dominance of RP.

Third, James Kelman illustrates how language can be

Fig. 1. Social and regional accent variation

Fig. 2. Social and regional accent variation⁴

⁴Fig. 1. and Fig. 2. are reproduced from Janet Holmes, An Introduction to Sociolinguistics (London: Longman Group UK Ltd., 1992). They originally appeared in Peter Trudgill's Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society (1983).

used to resist and, in fact, challenge the hegemony and homogeneity of the dominant culture. "Wherever there is power there arises resistance to it," Roger Simon claims (75). In terms of language, one form this resistance takes is nonstandard English. In "Language Conflicts and Political Community", R.F. Inglehart and M. Woodward outline the options available to a subordinate language group:

Where a dominant group holds the positions of power at the head of the major bureaucracies in a modern society, and gives preference in recruitment to those who speak the dominant language, any submerged group has the options of assimilation, non-mobility or group resistance.
(360)

Kelman has chosen group resistance. By writing in nonstandard English he allows voices from outside the mainstream to be heard, reminding us that there are stories which cannot be told realistically in standard English. In this way, he illustrates the restricted nature of standard English as a code. In opposition to the way dialect is conventionally treated in fiction, Kelman refuses to enclose nonstandard words in inverted commas or to use apostrophes for abbreviations. He opposes the cultural deficit theory and attempts to prove to both the dominant and subordinate class that nonstandard language is not inferior to standard English. Kelman works to expose the strategy of coercion and persuasion which the dominant class employs in order to maintain its linguistic hegemony.

Roger Simon states that "the working class

must...create its own organic intellectuals if it is to succeed in becoming hegemonic" (60). Kelman is, I believe, one of the 'organic intellectuals' of the counter-hegemonic movement in language. He is attuned to the relationship between language and power and raises issues related to it in his work. His writing is closely connected to that of the poet Tom Leonard, who is also a member of the 'Glasgow school'. Leonard's "Unrelated Incidents" interrogates the hegemonic position of standard English in Britain:

this is thi
 six a clock
 news thi
 man said n
 thi reason
 a talk wia
 BBC accent
 iz coz yi
 widny wahnt
 mi ti talk
 aboot thi
 trooth wia
 voice lik
 wanna yoo
 scruff. (Leonard 88)

This is an interesting critique of the hegemonic position of standard English. Leonard illustrates how society values standard speech more highly than nonstandard speech: the language of the dominant class is perceived to be the language of truth. Leonard's poem is ironic because the voice of authority in it speaks with a Glasgow accent. It illustrates that nonstandard forms of English are capable of tackling complex, intellectual questions and are not, in fact, the restricted codes Bernstein suggests (CCC 176). In

the same way, James Kelman's work illustrates that the language of the subordinate class can be used to tackle intellectual issues and can be employed as the narrative voice in fiction. Sammy, the protagonist of Kelman's How Late it Was, How Late is very aware of hegemonic structures in language: "Now he [Sammy] heard voices, one was kind of posh, English" (HL 14). Sammy's resentment of the dominant class and the power of its accent is apparent. In opposition to the dominance of standard English, the characters and narrative voice in the novel speak in Glasgow voices, using words like "werenay", "cannay", "ye", "fuck" and "cunt". This is also true of Hines and Patrick Doyle in The Busconductor Hines and A Disaffection. They speak nonstandard English and refuse to acknowledge the middle and upper-class values implicit in language. The variety of ways in which Kelman employs nonstandard English to resist the homogeneity of standard English were explored in more detail in the previous chapter. Although socialist revolution is unlikely to bring about change in language, the continued promotion of linguistic diversity could result in a more democratic historic bloc. Of course, the dominant class will oppose such change and will attempt to adapt in order to remain hegemonic. However, the potential for some readjustment of the inequalities of language is there.

The controversy which followed Kelman's Booker Prize victory is indicative of the struggle for control of

language in society. Debate on the question of appropriate or 'literary' language raged in the papers following the announcement. Was Kelman's language suitable for literature? Many critics supported Kelman but others spoke out against him. The controversy, however, points to the general reluctance for change in society: the dominant class will always attempt to maintain its linguistic hegemony. Even the awarding of the Booker Prize to Kelman may be seen as an attempt by the dominant class to assimilate him and reduce the counter-hegemonic potential of his work.

"A class cannot achieve national leadership and become a hegemonic class," Roger Simon claims, "*if it confines itself only to class interests*" (43). The counter-hegemonic movement in language must not limit itself to class interests. Kelman, for instance, appeals to "the popular and democratic demands and struggles of the people" (Simon 24). He writes in a Scottish context and appeals to anti-imperialist and nationalist as well as working-class sentiments. The language he employs is symptomatic of Scotland's struggle for political independence yet, to be successful, his work has to be part of a larger endeavour. "The working class can only become hegemonic if it gains the leadership of an alliance of classes and strata" (Simon 46). The counter-hegemonic movement in language could be strengthened by forming alliances with feminists and ecologists, among others. The interests of these groups are

generally not realized in society and they might be interested in forming a common front.

The struggle for linguistic hegemony is ongoing and, although writers like Kelman struggle for increased linguistic diversity, the dominant class attempts to retain the power inherent in its language. As Roger Simon points out, "the system of alliances on which...hegemony is based (historic bloc) has to be continually re-adjusted and re-negotiated" (41). However, it seems possible that the continued promotion of nonstandard English could result in a more democratic linguistic historic bloc. For instance, the pyramid in figure two might be flattened more, giving an even broader range of classes access to the hegemonic form of speech. However, the dominant class will try to counter these efforts by attempting to keep languages of power exclusive.

It is obvious that counter-hegemonic change in language does occur. Although the hegemony of standard English is protected by the dominant class and ISAs, there is a counter-hegemonic movement in language constantly challenging its authority. Through forming a series of alliances and by appealing to common sense and the national-popular consciousness, nonstandard speakers function as a counter-hegemonic force. In the same way that regional speakers once challenged the dominance of RP, nonstandard speakers and writers like Kelman challenge the homogeneity

and hegemony of standard English, expose the strategy of coercion and persuasion employed by the dominant class to retain its linguistic dominance and struggle for the creation of a more democratic linguistic historic bloc. Change in language is inevitable. Attempts to "preserve a language from...putative elements" (Thomas 12) are continually challenged by speakers of nonstandard English. In challenging the hegemony of standard English language users, the counter-hegemonic movement in language challenges the relationship between language and class. If this challenge is successful, a new historic bloc may arise in language which resists homogeneity and is more tolerant of an array of nonstandard forms of speech.

CONCLUSION

James Kelman is a significant figure in the recent renaissance in Scottish fiction. His work is inspired by the values of the working-class novel and of recent post-colonial writing. It functions as a site of resistance to English imperial authority and the dominant class in Britain. Kelman's perception of the problems facing modern Scottish society is similar to that of Beveridge and Turnbull, the authors of The Eclipse of Scottish Culture, who argue that Scotland has lost its "self-belief" and suffers from a sense of inferiority (112). In Some Recent Attacks, for instance, Kelman claims, "by the criteria of the ruling elite of Great Britain so-called Scottish culture...is inferior, just as *ipso facto* the Scottish people are also inferior" (71). By opposing the criteria of British elite and by challenging the perception that his culture is inferior, Kelman explodes many of the conventions of British literature, and opens up the process of writing to different voices. His work is part of a drive for increased cultural and political autonomy for Scotland. In The Busconductor Hines, A Disaffection and How Late it Was, How Late he illustrates the hopelessness of a working-class

world in which there is no hope of political salvation, he challenges traditional narrative strategies which he believes "colonize" (McNeill 2) the characters and the reader, he rejects the middle-class values inherent in literature and he resists the hegemony of standard English speakers by writing in a working-class Glaswegian voice.

It is difficult to know exactly what effects Kelman's work might have on Scottish culture. In The Break-Up of Britain, Nairn points out that "over-concentration upon cultural factors (especially literature) can lead easily to an over-subjective or idealist diagnosis of the country's modern situation" (164). Citing the case of Hugh MacDiarmid, Nairn argues that literary nationalism is unlikely to be a "comprehensive-enough agency" to bring about political independence for Scotland (126). However, the situation facing Scotland in the 1990s is much different than it was in MacDiarmid's era. Today, as Nairn himself suggests, the combined forces of globalization and neo-nationalism threaten to break-up the old British state. This indicates that literary nationalism is no longer under great pressure to be a vehicle for change. It would be unwise to ascribe too much influence to Kelman's work, but his validation of his own community is symptomatic of these larger movements.

Scottish affairs may be of some significance in the impending general election in Britain. The Labour party

announced in October 1995 that, if elected, it would set up a separate Scottish parliament. Foreign affairs and defence, however, would continue to be controlled by the British government. In what seems to be a response to the Labour party's actions, the Conservative party announced in July 1996 that, after 700 years, the Stone of Scone, a symbol of Scottish nationalism, is to be returned to Scotland. Although these events are politically manipulative, it remains unclear whether or not anything will come of them. The recent dubbing of the film adaptation of Irvine Welsh's novel Trainspotting (1993) for North American audiences indicates that the forces which seek to inferiorize Scottish culture are still very real. As in Kelman's novels, the Scots are caught up in a political system over which they have little control. They are split roughly down the middle, half supporting the union and the other half supporting independence. As the two main parties jockey for position going into the next election, Scotland is caught in its post-colonial bind, powerless, disaffected and apparently unable to decide its own fate.

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