Representing and Rejecting:

Vernacular in Fiction with primary focus on James Kelman and Irvine Welsh 1993-94

A Critical Study

Submitted by Leon A.C. Qualls
for the MPhil in Writing
University of South Wales

Director of Studies: Rob Middlehurst
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1. Introduction

The writing of my first novel, *Hell Mend Me,* has been a long, arduous task, involving more rewrites than I care to admit. No different from most authors, I dare say.

The idea for the novel was first conceived whilst studying for my BA Creative and Professional Writing. Here was I, a Glaswegian in Wales, hoping to find my writing voice through the channel of standardised English. I was told to write about what I knew, and yet my eagerness to portray what I knew through a voice of insipidness was not entirely apparent until I was asked by a tutor to write a short story using Glaswegian vernacular.[1]

The response to my newly-found Glaswegian voice was overwhelmingly positive. My fellow classmates, the majority of who were of a younger generation, embraced my efforts to tell a story using my own voice. During these three years of study, my main concern was how much vernacular to use? I wrote a Creative Writing Dissertation essay asking this very question and concluded:

> I find that it can take a brave decision to write completely in vernacular, as Kelman did, but also that vernacular should only be used as a way of telling a good story and creating humour, and not purely for aesthetic effect. There is a fine balance to be found between being true to one's self and being true to the reader, and although I may never perfect this balance, I do feel that a mixture of the standardised English and Glaswegian vernacular is the best way forward, as expertly shown by Jeff Torrington's inimitable *Swing hammer swing!*[2]

I gained a 1st Class degree with my efforts, and buoyed with enthusiasm I was accepted onto the MPhil in Writing with a clear aim of writing a full length novel, loosely based on the short stories I had written that were so popular in class. This time around, the class was different with middle-aged, middle-class women (most of whom were English) making up at least half of the

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[1] My short story, 'The Lion lies down with the Ox' was then used in a handout for the University of Glamorgan module - EW1S02 Writing Media: Writing Dialogue - alongside Ernest Hemingway's 'Hills like White Elephants'.

[2] Leon A.C. Qualls, "Treading the literary vernacular through Pattison, Kelman and Torrington", (University of Glamorgan, 2009), 12-13.

numbers. It soon became apparent that my new challenge would not be how much vernacular to use in my story, but how to portray my characters so that they would be understood by this new readership. Where once I had worried if my classmates would understand the dialect of the characters, I now had to worry if they would like the characters at all. Feedback ensued, telling me that what I had written was good in terms of literary style, vibrant dialogue, etc. I received great feedback regarding the verisimilitude of the novel and the black humour.

Of course, I wasn't expecting that everyone would get it. Any feedback I received which I would deem 'negative' was usually done with the best intentions, but there was one classmate who hated the main character, hated the supporting cast and hated the sex scenes. To paraphrase the offended, she hated it so much she wouldn't even read it!

This admission was a shock to me. Certainly, I did not expect my brand of literary storytelling to be universally appreciated by the masses. I have always welcomed constructive criticism, even on occasions when I have not entirely agreed with it. But for someone to say that they hated the story so much without actually reading it…it had me flummoxed. How could a person decide on the literary merits of a book which they hadn't bothered to read?

As a Scottish writer, writing about the working class and using a fair amount of vernacular I am not alone in receiving this kind of reaction. What was new for me, had already happened in 1994, with the controversy surrounding James Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late.* Kelman has been an author I've long admired, especially in regards to his experimentations with style and form, and his unfailing will to write about what he wants to write about on his own terms.

And thus, this study is a reflection, not only in regards to the challenges Kelman and Welsh have faced in the literary world, but also in regards to the challenges I also face in writing a body of work that is both authentic and with artistic merit.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Primary Texts

Here and in a large part of my Analysis in chapter 3, I will be focusing on two novels: primarily *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994) by James Kelman and, as a subsidiary text, *Trainspotting* (1993) by Irvine Welsh.

In section 3.4 of my Analysis, I will also discuss the use of vernacular in novels by three Irish writers: Trevor Byrne, Patrick McCabe and Roddy Doyle.

Below I will give a synopsis for each of the two primary texts:

'Folk take a battering but, they do; they get born and they get brought up and they get fuckt. That's the story; the cot to the fucking funeral pyre.'[3]

How Late It Was, How Late is stream of consciousness novel written mostly in Glaswegian vernacular. It follows Sammy, who wakes up after a drinking binge and gets into a fight with plainclothes policemen, taking a severe beating. He awakens from unconsciousness to find himself in a cell and he realises he is blind. The novel explores Sammy's blindness and the difficulties he faces as he struggles to cope with his disability. Other challenges Sammy faces are the unwanted attention from the police (who want to know who he was with during the drinking binge) and the bureaucracy he encounters when trying to sign on for dysfunctional benefits. The novel ends on an ambiguous note, leaving the reader to ponder Sammy's fate.

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[3] James Kelman, *How Late It Was, How Late*, 1994, (London: Vintage, 1998), 16.

'Basically, we live a short, disappointing life; and then we die. We fill up oor lives wi shite, things like careers and relationships tae delude oorsels that it isnae aw totally pointless. Smack's an honest drug, because it strips away these delusions.'[4]

Trainspotting is a non-linear, black humour novel, written in a mix of Scots, Scottish English and Standard English. The novel itself is split into seven sections, each section comprising of a few short stories—the stories are loosely connected, giving the representation of a whole subculture, rather than just one man's story.

It primarily follows the anti-hero Renton, as he tries to kick his heroin habit. However, the narrative splits between the views of many sub-characters: Spud, the kind-hearted, petty thief, simultaneously the whipping boy and solace of Renton's world; Begbie, the violent psychopath whose hatred towards heroin is only matched by his love for drink, speed and violence; Tommy, previously clean until he splits up with his girlfriend and tries heroin as a means of escape, leading to his eventual death; Sickboy, a womanising charmer, possible sociopath, who loses his infant daughter to asphyxiation during a heroin binge; Second Prize, named after the fact he always starts fights and ends up losing them, his fleeting football career was ruined by alcoholism; and Davie, educated at University and with a decent job, his world falls apart when he contracts HIV, and he takes revenge on the man he suspects raped his girlfriend and indirectly gave him the disease.

The stories are brought together by the very last chapter, where the gang head to London to seal a heroin deal, and Renton makes off with the proceeds.

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[4] Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting*, 1993, (London: Vintage, 2010), 3.

2.2 The Rejection of Standard English and Classical Realism

> The British public's hate for and love of Kelman's prose stems from fluency in and expectations for several novelistic traditions, all challenged and violated by fiction that resists easy classification. *How Late It Was, How Late* uses standard English only when it must, opting to rely instead on Scots, specifically Glaswegian, dialect[.][5]

In her article '"Middle-Class Wankers" and Working-Class Texts: The Critics and James Kelman', Mary McGlynn focuses on the rejection of classic realism in James Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late* and starts off by pointing out what she believes is the target audience of Kelman's work, namely a local audience:

> Kelman rejects the tastes and norms of the British metropole he is "supposed" to please. He writes instead for a local audience, his prose showing as well a studied application of both the techniques and ideas of continental European modernism. His unwillingness to fulfill the reading public's desire for easily consumable working-class Scottish voices places him at the epicenter of a movement shifting literature from the universal to the local.[6]

McGlynn goes on to say that Kelman negotiates with working-class literature, using his stylistic experience to meld together 'antihierarchical prose to regional identity, simultaneous to the divorce of realism and authority. The regional, working-class speech in Kelman's novels, realistic and disordered, confronts the neat conventions of realism as a style.'[7]

Pam Morris notes that classic realism employs the use of an omniscient narrator whose 'understanding of the world can be truthfully reproduced and communicated[.]'[8] She further muses that this 'perspective unites knowledgable generalisation…with empirical specificity[.]'[9] This form was popular before the 20th century and most associated with writers such as George Eliot and Charles Dickens.

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[5] Mary McGlynn, ""'Middle-Class Wankers" and Working-Class Texts: The Critics and James Kelman", *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 43, No. 1, (University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 51.

[6] McGlynn, *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 51-52.

[7] McGlynn, *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 67.

[8] Pam Morris, *Realism: The New Critical Idiom*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 12.

[9] Morris, *Realism: The New Critical Idiom*, 12.

This literary stance against a perceived hierarchy is something that is mentioned in many articles written about Kelman. But it is sufficient to say that Kelman has his reasons for circumventing the typical rules that classic realism demands:

> Kelman's position poses an interesting paradox: he needs to demonstrate that, contrary to conventional assumptions, working-class writers are capable of rhetorical heft and stylistic verve, yet this point is somewhat in tension with his political and technical desire to allow control of his narrative by his characters, whose voices have long been the defining counterweight to notions of learning and eloquence.[10]

This is a dilemma that many writers have had when trying to portray working-class characters. The notion that the vernacular-speaking character has less intelligence than the standard English-speaking character has always pervaded literature, yet there has been a backlash against the representation of the wordsmith vernacular-speaking character, who mixes his dictionary with his 'dickhead'.

I have tackled the same dilemma when writing *Hell Mend Me* as my protagonist Lucas is a smart lad, but not in the traditional sense—i.e. he is perhaps smarter than those around him, but his intelligence is not measured quantifiably in school qualifications or worldly status. The challenge therefore, was to portray Lucas as being smart in a believable way, e.g. through his reading, his humour, and his street smarts. Of course, the title *Hell Mend Me* is a play on the Glaswegian saying 'hell mend you' which means 'be it upon your own head', showing that even smart people can be complete idiots at times.

According to McGlynn 'Kelman's spelling…reveals a strategic use of Glasgow dialect, his rhythms impersonate speech, and his supposed realism flouts realism's conventions.'[11] She maintains that what is incomprehensible to Kelman's detractors, is in fact, a 'highly literary choice…which helps [Kelman] to escape the pitfalls of stereotypical urban realism'[12] which,

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[10] McGlynn, *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 66.

[11] McGlynn, *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 66.

[12] McGlynn, *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 66.

according to Simon Baker is ‘caught…between the limited scope of the strictly urban voice and the intrusive commentary of the urban narrator.’[13]

In my own novel, which is written in the first person, Lucas narrates in standard English with a fair flavour of Glaswegian syntax. This is symptomatic of the character himself, who has been brought up from a young age to—in the words of his mother—‘speak politely’, and thus has a contradictory relationship with language itself. Rather than be a low-level speaker aspiring to greater vocabulary heights, Lucas is often found dumbing down in certain social circles. Lucas is certainly a product of his upbringing and schooling, as seen in the very first lines of the novel, when his school teacher laments his essay, saying, ‘its scant regard for standard English merely amplifies the discomfort reading it.’[14] This teacher, someone of authority in Lucas’s world, is having an aversion to Lucas using the local vernacular in writing, and this has affected Lucas, whether he admits it or not.

McGlynn speaks of the world Kelman has created in the novel, and of how Kelman has managed description, saying of the protagonist and accompanying characters: ‘The fact that Sammy is blind places a particular weight on the novel’s voices: they are responsible for conveying all of a Barthesian “world effect” themselves, with no third-person omniscient narrator providing descriptions of the scenery.’[15]

In *Hell Mend Me* the descriptive nature is dependent on the current status of Lucas, who is often under the influence of drink, or suffering from hangovers. As Lucas is often in his own little world, the world around him is often a blank canvas, or might as well be, as Lucas is not aware of it.

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[13] Simon Baker, “‘Wee Stories with a Working-Class Theme’: The Reimagining of Urban Realism in the Fiction of James Kelman”, *Studies in Scottish Fiction: 1845 to the Present*, Susan Hagemann. (ed.). (Frankfurt: Lang, 1996), 247.

[14] Qualls, *Hell Mend Me*, 1.

[15] McGlynn, *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 54.

Finally, Linda Parent Lesher sums up *How Late It Was, How Late* as 'Using a militantly working-class Scottish vernacular (liberally laced with profanity)…Sammy is portrayed with great sensitivity and affection. However its episodic structure, reliance on interior monologue, and frequent use of expletives, particularly the "f" and "c" words, will make the novel rough going for some readers.'[16] In my analysis, I will try to uncover what kind of readers Lesher is alluding to.

[16] Linda Parent Lesher, *The Best Novels of the Nineties: A Reader's Guide,* (London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2000), 141.

2.3 The Parochial Booker and Literary Separatism

In her study 'How Late It Was for England: James Kelman's Scottish Booker Prize' Nicola Pitchford delves into the history of the Booker prize, starting with its conception as a publicity vehicle for the British agribusiness Booker McConnell Company, which had investments around the colonial world but was virtually unknown in the UK. As time progressed, the company withdrew from the developing nations and invested in the UK, eventually becoming a 'diversified multinational with annual sales of some 4.5 billion pounds'[17] as of 1997.

Pitchford suggests that the Booker prize succeeded as a publicity vehicle, saying, 'despite the fact the Booker still does not appear as a brand name on any products directly marketed to British consumers, it is now a household word.'[18] However, in addressing the perceived audience of the Booker prize, Pitchford questions the validity of the assumption:

> [It is] worth noting that the element of Booker hoopla most often cited by commentators as evidence of its authentically popular appeal—its presence at the high street betting shops—was in fact carefully manufactured: as part of the publicity budget, Ladbrokes is *paid* to take bets on the winner. Thereby, the prize acquires not only a sense of affiliation with working-class masculinity, but also an air of pub-culture *Englishness* that it might otherwise lack[.][19]

Pitchford quotes Ros Wynne-Jones of *The Independent* who said, 'Kelman's use of the Glaswegian dialect was deemed in itself a provocative act of incomprehensible Scottish separatism.'[20] She goes on to suggest that supporters of Kelman have separated the notions of England and Britain, finding them to be 'asserting the nonuniversality of an English literary tradition that has failed to represent the lives of many people elsewhere in the British Isles.'[21]

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[17] Nicola Pitchford, "How Late It Was for England: James Kelman's Scottish Booker Prize." *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 51, No. 4, (University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 696.

[18] Pitchford, *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 51, No. 4, 696.

[19] Pitchford, *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 51, No. 4, 697.

[20] Ros Wynne-Jones, "Time to Publish and Be Damned", *The Independent*, 1997, (Independent Print Limited, 23 Oct. 2011), Web.

[21] Pitchford, *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 51, No. 4, 701.

Kelman may be asserting his own language in the face of English literary oppression, but nonetheless, Pitchford maintains that Kelman's use of language is as authentic as they come, even surpassing that of legends of yesteryear:

> On…reflectionist terms, the version of spoken working-class dialect in *How Late It Was, How Late* has been praised by language scholar Anne King and others as an authentic, living Scottish language—as opposed to the artificially composite and anachronistic literary Lallans (Scots) employed previously by nationalistic poet Hugh MacDiarmid and his followers.[22]

Pitchford goes on to quote Cairns Craig who suggests that 'Kelman transliterates into a phonetic orthography that seeks neither to patronize nor to dignify the actuality of Scottish speech.'

Much the same for my own novel, I have chosen to represent the voices of the characters as authentically as is possible; this in itself is constrained by the need for clarity and reading enjoyment, in addition to the reader's own perception, i.e. how they read and pronounce certain words themselves, e.g. the Glaswegian word "wean", is pronounced like "wayne", but for the non-Glaswegian, it could be read as "ween". However, a true representation of dialect, via proper linguistic phonetic transcription, would not make for easy reading. Certainly there is humour to be found in the way some of the dialogue is presented, but any commentary on speech patterns is a by-product of the individual character's make-up and prejudices, rather than any kind of political statement on my own behalf.

Pitchford quotes Cairns again, who says, 'Kelman has found his own very specific means of overcoming the distinction between English (as the medium of narration) and Scots (as the medium of dialogue) which has proved a constant dilemma to Scottish writers.'[23]

This precise point is something I have also struggled with throughout my time as a writer, and I will comment more on this in my conclusion.

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[22] Pitchford, *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 51, No. 4, 702.

[23] Cairns Craig, "Resisting Arrest: James Kelman", *The Scottish Novel since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams*, Wallace, G. and Stevenson, R. (eds.), (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), 102-3.

Pitchford suggests that Kelman's novel generally denies the "hierarchy of discourses"—a term Catherine Belsey borrowed from the Scottish academic Colin MacCabe—which maintained that the hierarchy comprised of an authorial language that reigned over all other sociolects, in order to provide an accessible novel to the majority of readers.

Pitchford goes on to say, '[W]hen [the hierarchy] does appear it is inverted: the Standard English of the middle class—often described as the enemy tongue that works only to frustrate the intentions of the marginal speaker who adopts it…is framed within the narrative discourse in such a way as to appear exaggerated, artificial, and self-parodying.'[24]

It would seem that most research on Kelman's novel suggests that the criticism mostly stems from its non-conformity to style and its political undertones, but in my analysis, I will seek out further reasons as to why Kelman's novel has received such a torrid time from certain critics. In addition, I will look at Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*—a book that has received similar criticism but achieved commercial success—for comparative analysis.

[24] Pitchford, *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 51, No. 4, 703.

3. Analysis

3.1 Putting the 'fuck' in Fiction—Kelman's vernacular

Perhaps the most striking—and controversial—representation of the working class in Scottish Fiction is the 1994 novel by James Kelman: *How Late It Was, How Late.* Whereas Irvine Welsh shocked the literati with visceral images of sex, drugs and nihilism, Kelman was adjudged to have committed a much worse crime, namely, writing about the working class and having the audacity to consider it as art. Kelman believed that all areas of Scottish society were as significant as any others:

> It is important that each and every area of our richly diverse Scottish society is encouraged to explore itself artistically. It is equally important that we acknowledge the inherent right of each and every area to that artistic exploration. No single social arena has a greater claim than another.[25]

How Late It Was, How Late was certainly Kelman's most ambitious novel to date, abandoning the 'interiorised third person that dominates most [books]', in favour of a 'self-referring second person 'ye'.'[26] Kelman further experiments with interchangeable third and first person, which Dietmar Böhnke believes is done so subtly that the reader does not notice, concluding that Kelman has 'achieved a use of narrative voice that is highly sophisticated, and it is meant to mirror the sophistication of his characters which he so fiercely defends.'[27]

Cairns Craig elaborates on Kelman's style, saying:

> The Glasgow which Kelman's characters inhabit may be the geographical city on the Clyde but it is given very little physical specification…In Kelman's writing such physical environments are viewed only through the lens of the character's psyche… The traditional role of the narrator in explaining psychological motivation has disappeared; we are given only the audible, visible and occasionally tactile events in

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[25] James Kelman, *"And the judges said…" Essays*, (London: Secker & Warburg, 2002), 337.

[26] Dietmar Böhnke, *Kelman Writes Back: Literary politics in the work of a Scottish writer,* (Berlin: Galda + Wilch Verlag, 1999), 76.

[27] Böhnke, *Kelman Writes Back: Literary politics in the work of a Scottish writer,* 76

> the world, without the markers (inverted commas and so on) that normally separate them in a novel.[28]

We get our first taste of a novel without inverted commas when the protagonist Sammy approaches a group of policeman, in order to ask them for some money (a tap, as it is known in Glasgow) for the train home:

> They were playing for time, kidding on they werenay interested. But Sammy knew better and kept his eyes on them; he shifted his stance, relaxing his knees, getting himself ready. Naw, he said, I managed to tap half a quid already but I need another nicker, so that's how I'm asking for that, a pound, to get a train home, I mean fifty pee's nay good to nay cunt, know what I'm talking about, it's thirty bob or nothing.
> Fuck off.
> Naw but I'm telling ye
> Ya fucking idiot… The one that spoke had his hand up covering his mouth like he was hiding the fact he was talking.
> Ye alright mate? Ye got a sore tooth?
> Move it.[29]

This way of writing takes some time getting used to, although Carmen Callil suggests, 'If you can read the Victorian argot of The Pickwick Papers, it takes but a minute to understand the vernacular of Kelman's language of the Scots streets.'[30]

The absence of markers should render the text impossible to follow in a traditional sense, however, Kelman uses new lines to indicate a different speaker, and once the reader gets over the absence of what is familiar, the text becomes easy to follow, such as in the scene where Sammy is apologising to a hospital security officer for walking through security without stopping to identify himself:

> Sammy sniffed and said, It's cause I'm blind; I didnay see it.
> Aye well next time.
> Sorry, it's just I didnay see it.
> Alright, on ye go.
> It's cause I'm blind, know what I mean, I couldnay see it.
> …
> I didnay know.

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[28] Cairns Craig, "Kelman's Glasgow Sentence", *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman.* Scott Hames, (ed.), (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 75.

[29] Kelman, *How Late It Was, How Late*, 4-5.

[30] Carmen Callil, "James Kelman", *The Guardian*, (Guardian News and Media, 30 Mar. 2011), Web.

> Aye on ye go, okay.
> Know what I'm saying, I'm blind, I didnay see it, the gate, that's how I came through the road… Sammy was gripping the stick. He heard a movement, the guy going away maybe or somebody else. I'm very sorry, he said, very very sorry.
> Just keep moving.
> Sammy smiled. Fucking bastard. Okay. He started walking. The giro was cashed and the dough was in the pocket. Here he was. Fine. He should have been counting the steps but. Never mind, never mind.[31]

The scene is written in such a way, that it could be the narration speaking in full, or a mix of the narration and Sammy's interior thought, such as 'Fucking bastard' and 'Never mind, never mind'. Regardless of the occasional ambiguity, it is clear that Kelman had spent considerable time planning what he wanted to achieve with his novel, both from an aesthetic standpoint and character-based considerations. Kelman said:

> In order to fight against the house style you have to justify every single comma. Every comma in my work is my comma. Every absence of a comma or full stop or semicolon or colon is my absence. You have to be much more precise and bloody pedantic. You have to revise and revise and proof at every bloody stage to ensure that everything's spot on, especially because you're working in what other people regard as inconsistent ways, so you have to be really sure.[32]

This was not the first time Kelman had written in Glaswegian vernacular, nor was it the first time Kelman would provoke a reaction from the critics, especially in regards to the Booker prize. H. Gustav Klaus says:

> The 1984 chairman of the Booker Prize panel, commenting on the enormity of the task of having to read some 80 novels in as many days, was reported as saying 'There is even a novel written entirely in what appears to be Glaswegian. Lacking a dictionary, I soon gave up!' (The reference was to Kelman's first novel *The Busconductor Hines*.)[33]

The Chairman in question was Richard Cobb, who admitted, 'I found [Kelman's book] very heavy going and only read two chapters.'[34] Anyone who has to read 80 novels (of varying

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[31] Kelman, *How Late It Was, How Late*, 88.

[32] Sarah Lyall, "In Furor Over Prize, Novelist Speaks Up For His Language", *The New York Times*, (Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr., 29 Nov. 1994), Web.

[33] H. Gustav Klaus, *James Kelman (Writers and Their Work),* (Devon: Northcote House Publishers Ltd, 2004), 1.

[34] Cited in Simon Kövesi, *James Kelman (Contemporary British Novelists)*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 156.

quality) over 80 days has my sympathy, but to not finish reading a novel on the basis that it's written in a vernacular you are not willing to attempt to comprehend is hard to accept. Ten years later, it seemed the world—and the Booker—had opened its mind to new possibilities, with Kelman winning the 1994 Booker prize for *How Late It Was, How Late*. However, the critics' reactions to Kelman's win were fierce. Klaus quotes some of them:

> A dissenting judge called it a 'disgrace'. 'Foul-mouthed novel is a £20,000 Booker winner,' the Independent blared. A journalist spoke of 'literary vandalism', and another actually invested time counting how often the word 'fucking' cropped up in the text so as to be able to voice his indignation in a quantifiable way.[35]

Blake Morrison, literary editor of the *Independent on Sunday*, notes that 'Kelman's method has been compared to that of the camera, but a tape-recorder would be nearer the mark: he writes what he hears, without judgment or condescension; what we dislike is the sound of our own voices on the tape.'[36]

Presumably this particular sentence was picked up on by the Conservative politician Alan Clark who offered his thoughts of the book: 'I am trying to avoid the word 'written' – by a Glaswegian [which] consists of a series of transcripts taken from a running tape (there can be no other explanation) of a maundering old drunk.'[37] Were Clark to say this in a newspaper today, we could be forgiven for thinking his comment was merely click bait. However, his comment was made pre-internet in 1994, and it is clear that Clark has no respect for what Kelman was hoping to achieve, his comment both belittling and mocking Kelman's novel and Booker win.

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[35] Klaus, *James Kelman (Writers and Their Work)*, 2.

[36] Blake Morrison, "Book Review: Spelling Glasgow in four letters: 'How Late It Was, How Late'", *The Independent*, 1994, (Independent Print Limited. 23 Oct. 2011), Web.

[37] Cited in Scott Hames, "Kelman's Art-Speech." *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman*. Scott Hames, (ed.), (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 86.

Clark sums up *How Late It Was, How Late* as the ramblings of a marauding old drunk, forgetting the protagonist Sammy has lost his sight, which is the main aspect of the story. Craig Cairns sums up Sammy's world far better, saying:

> Sammy is a walking vernacular dictionary, defining words by other words, and revealing that language, and therefore human life, rests upon an existential nothingness; if that is the case that 'ye cannay look at nothing ye cannay see nothing,' 'nothingness' may nevertheless be there. Standard language, by having rules which give us the illusion of a shared and stable world, conceals the nothingness from which language emerges; dialect, by breaking those rules, unveils the emptiness from which standard language defends us. Sammy's language turns a social misfit (who has almost nothing) into a existential quester (confronting nothingness).[38]

The difference between someone (Craig) who has read the novel with an open mind, and someone (Clark) who has read it with their mind made up before they started it, is clear to see. When reading Clark's and Craig's comments, it is difficult to accept that they are speaking of the same novel, such is Clark's snooty dismissiveness of a culture he does not understand, and seemingly does not want to understand.

As Klaus stated, yet another barrier to acceptance in the upper-echelons of the literary world was Kelman's insistence on using swear words in his novels. Klaus mentioned the word 'fucking', but the reactions to my own novel have regarded that particular word as blasé, with my detractors preferring to zoom in on another word often used in Glaswegian fiction.

The word 'cunt' features frequently in James Kelman's novels, reaching its zenith with 195 uses of the word in *How Late It Was, How Late* alone.[39] Using the same search method as Müller, I found that my final draft of *Hell Mend Me* has 199 uses of the word 'cunt'.[40] Are we to assume that James Kelman and Leon A.C. Qualls are both foul-mouthed writers who revel in

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[38] Cairns Craig, *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman*, 85

[39] Müller, *A Glasgow Voice: James Kelman's Literary Language*, 356.

[40] *Hell Mend Me* has only 960 uses of the word 'fuck', less than half of Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late.*

the language of the gutter, or can it be said that the word 'cunt' does not have the same vulgar meaning in Glasgow as it does in other parts of the English-speaking world? Müller says:

> Depending on the situation, *cunt* can act as an intimate, disparaging or neutral term, to refer to a person…This tends to reflect the primary use of *cunt* as commonly having a nonliteral meaning in working-class Glasgow usage…in Kelman's work, swearing can be used to express a sense of humanity and it asks the reader to share the sympathy the story has for the people who need to be looked after.[41]

Having ascertained that Kelman uses the word 'cunt' in a nonliteral way, Müller expresses her surprise that critics—of Kelman's Booker win—did not pick up on the 195 uses of the word 'cunt', suggesting that 'perhaps it was taboo to even indirectly discuss Kelman's use of the word in the novel.'[42]

It is clear that Kelman does not refer to a vagina when using the word 'cunt', thus we can see the differences in its usage within a few pages. After being referred to as a 'fucking arsehole' by a pub's doorman, Sammy threatens him, saying, 'fucking bampot ya bastard I'll ram this stick down yer fucking throat…You wanting it as well ya cunt?'[43] A few pages later Sammy is in another pub and is shown kindness by a drinking buddy, Herbie, who buys him a pint. Herbie makes his excuses after a couple of minutes, saying he has to return to his friends, a comment which Sammy is not entirely certain is true, and he sums it up, 'Fuck it but ye couldnay blame cunts, if that was the score.'[44] In these two instances, 'cunt[s]' is first used as a byproduct of aggression, and then used to epitomise friendly people.

As far back as 1985, Kelman was interviewed by Duncan McLean, and addressed the criticism aimed at his use of swearing in his novels:

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[41] Müller, *A Glasgow Voice: James Kelman's Literary Language*, 258.

[42] Müller, *A Glasgow Voice: James Kelman's Literary Language*, 259.

[43] Kelman, *How Late It Was, How Late*, 271.

[44] Kelman, *How Late It Was, How Late*, 275.

> You see when you use the term 'swearing' it's a value. I don't accept that it is swearing at all…Obviously if I say 'Look at that sun, it's fucking beautiful', obviously I'm not swearing. I'm doing the exact opposite…So in a sense I object to taking part, for instance, in a discussion that hinges on the use of swear words in literature, because right away you've begged the question of what those words are, you know, and you're involving me again in a value system that isn't your own to deny.[45]

Furthermore, in 2012 Kelman continued his defence of including swearing in his novels, reiterating his 1985 comment by saying, 'If you say something is 'fucking beautiful', how can it be swearing, because you're emphasising the beauty of something.'[46] Further proof that the passing of 27 years did not soften the criticism aimed at him, did not change the questions aimed at him, and did not change his own inner conviction for using swear words in his novels.

In the book, *Scottish Literature*, the editors argue for Kelman's use of swearing, coming to the conclusion that Kelman captures the emotive sounds of Glaswegian life:

> One of Kelman's most telling achievements throughout his fiction is to repeat 'swear words' in casual talk in such a way as to reveal their lack of 'verbal violence' (Kelman's term for what he does regard as potentially offensive in language use)…The language Kelman constantly uses takes place in reality in Glasgow and Britain. If it is heard as a kind of background noise, a rhythmic punctuation, then the more subtle things being punctuated by it can be recognised. The reader of Kelman who tunes in to this kind of listening, which no longer feels the obligation to shock-response, finds a rich and complex world of irony, self-mockery, allusion and sophistication, which argues convincingly that very ordinary people are much more self-aware, articulate and rich in redeeming humour, than is conventionally allowed.[47]

This further begs the question: if Kelman's writing uses swear words, not for shock value but for authenticity, then why were the critics so harsh against the artistic merits of *How Late It Was, How Late*? Around the time of Kelman's Booker win, though the critics were out in force, Kelman had his admirers, too, and in the same newspaper that belittled his win, Robert Winder of the *Independent* raised an interesting point:

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[45] Cited in Douglas Gifford et al, (eds.) *Scottish Literature.* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), 874-5.

[46] Decca Aitkenhead, "James Kelman: 'Why is my work so upsetting for people?'", *The Guardian*, (Guardian News and Media, 29 Jul. 2012), Web.

[47] Gifford et al, (eds.) *Scottish Literature*, 875.

> Roddy Doyle, whose novel Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha is the biggest-selling Booker winner ever (320,000 copies in paperback) has not attracted the least opprobrium for his benign love of earthy slang. In a tender moment of reconciliation towards the end of The Van, the young Jimmy Rabbitt murmurs to his father: 'I love you, you fucking gobshite.' It is not merely a coincidence that this impish and good-humoured variety of swearing goes down more easily than Kelman's harsher, less transigent and much more politicised version.[48]

Kelman's novel is not without its humour. The protagonist Sammy goes from loathing the police who caused his blindness, 'it didnay just HAPPEN; fucking spontaneous, it wasnay spontaneous, it was these bastard sodjers, it was them, stupit fucking fuckpig bastards'[49], to self-loathing, much as one does when in a position of powerlessness. His one redemption is Helen, the only one who seems to care for him yet is absent for the duration of the novel. Helen is '[t]he one thing he had going for him…See when you come to think about it, she was it, she was fucking it. There was nothing else. Sammy had fuck all!'[50]

Sammy is a man who is so close to the edge. This is a man who feels worthless, abandoned (in his own mind, rightly so), and is drowning in self-pity after having lost his sight and possibly his woman. What man in such a situation would not lose the plot and swear? Especially in his own thoughts.

> [Y]e couldnay fucking blame her man know what I mean like christ almighty she had probably met some young cunt, somebody that went to the pub, a customer; some smarmy bastard, he had probably got off with her. And they fuckt off the gether. That was the fucking story. Just as well she had went afore this, afore this fucking shit man this fucking blind shit, fucking blind blind blind fucking blind man blind a fucking blind bastard, a walking fucking
> a walking fucking
> fuck knows what.
> The other guy farted again. This is what he was doing. Farting in his sleep.[51]

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[48] Robert Winder, "Highly literary and deeply vulgar: If James Kelman's Booker novel is rude, it is in good company, argues Robert Winder", *Independent*, 1994, (Independent Print Limited, 23 Oct. 2011), Web.

[49] Kelman, *How Late It Was, How Late*, 172.

[50] Kelman, *How Late It Was, How Late*, 173.

[51] Kelman, *How Late It Was, How Late*, 173.

His interior monologue is interrupted by the farting of his unconscious cellmate. Even in the darkness, Glaswegians have humour.

As mentioned in the literature review, Kelman rejects the notion of classic realism, and Craig points out the weaknesses in conventional literary realism:

> Since it cannot have its characters 'talking the language they talk', conventional literary realism defeats its own end; what it purveys is an illusion in which everyday reality is rendered both inaudible and invisible. Kelman's writing, on the other hand, takes seriously what many branches of modern linguistics have sought to prove: namely, that the very nature of the world we experience is a function of the language we use, and that it is only in and through understanding of the workings of language that we can understand the 'reality' of the world we inhabit.[52]

Perhaps it is suffice to suggest that certain people, in certain circles, simply have a deep-rooted hatred for the representations of the hardened working class, especially if said working class resides in Glasgow, a city which to this day struggles to shed its image as 'No Mean City'.[53]

Let us not forget the dissenting judge, Rabbi Julia Neuberger, who resigned in protest over the decision to award Kelman the Booker prize. Matt McGuire reports: 'Neuberger objected to the novel on the grounds of its use of 'broad Glaswegian dialect', the fact it was 'littered with F-words' and that it was too inaccessible, and simply too dull.'[54]

If the organisers of the Booker Prize thought that Kelman would be grateful to be awarded the prize in the face of all this controversy, they were wrong, as Kelman came out of the blocks, all guns blazing. McGuire states:

> In [Kelman's] acceptance speech he delivered a vitriolic attack on what he regarded as the inherent elitism of contemporary literary culture. In another highly ironic moment Channel 4, who televised the event, cut from Kelman's condemnation and went to a commercial break just as the author was getting into his stride. The silencing and censorship of the artist, whether premeditated or not, has rarely been so enticingly acted out before the public gaze.[55]

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[52] Craig, *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman*, 76.

[53] Dave Graham, "Glasgow fights "No Mean City" tag, 75 years on", *Reuters*, (Thomson Reuters, 5 Jan. 2010), Web.

[54] Matt McGuire, *Contemporary Scottish Literature*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 103.

[55] McGuire, *Contemporary Scottish Literature*, 103.

Kelman's speech may have been cut off in the homes of the viewers, but at the event, he soldiered on, and defended his whole sense of being, saying 'my culture and my language have the right to exist, and no one has the authority to dismiss that right[.]'[56]

As for Kelman's novel itself, the Scottish author A.L. Kennedy summed it up best:

> A lot of the reviews that complained about the language were actually complaining about the type of people who would be allowed in a "nice" novel…The problem with Kelman was never that he said "Fuck", it was that he wrote about the wrong kind of people.[57]

Kelman further muses:

> Obviously as a writer you have to reflect on why your work is provoking such hostility, because all you want to do is write your stories as best you can. You're forced to reflect on, why is my work so upsetting for people? The agenda behind it is clear. They don't want to see these people in literature. These areas of human experience [I write about] should not appear in public; we don't want to know. We know that people are in the street, that they have no money and are maybe begging, but we don't want to see them in literature. They should be swept under the carpet.[58]

I will leave the last word to Carmen Callil—founder of Virago Press, a publisher for female writers—who is no stranger to Booker prize controversy herself. In 2011, she withdrew from the judging panel after Philip Roth won that year's award. Of Roth she said, 'he goes on and on and on about the same subject in almost every single book. It's as though he's sitting on your face and you can't breathe…Emperor's clothes: in 20 years' time will anyone read him?'[59] Of

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[56] Cited in Roel Daamen, "A Confluence of Narratives: Cultural Perspectives in Postmodernist Scottish Fiction." *Cultural Identity and Postmodern Writing*. D'Haen, T. and Vermuelen, P. (eds.) (New York: Rodopi, 2006), 126.

[57] Cited in, Joe Brooker, "The Art of Offence: British Literary Censorship since 1971." *Prudes on the Prowl: Fiction and Obscenity in England, 1850 to the Present Day.* David Bradshaw and Rachel Potter (eds.). (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 193.

[58] Decca Aitkenhead, *The Guardian*, Web.

[59] Alison Flood, "Judge withdraws over Philip Roth's Booker win", *The Guardian*, (Guardian News and Media, 18 May 2011), Web.

Kelman however, Callil said he 'is a true original, who writes with genius about those at the margins of society, but at the very centre of the human heart.'[60]

[60] Carmen Callil, *The Guardian*, Web.

3.2 It's Cool to be a Cunt—The *Trainspotting* Phenomenon

Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* arrived on the scene in 1993, with the original Secker & Warburg edition having a lengthy blurb from Jeff Torrington, the Glaswegian writer who had won the Whitbread award the previous year with *Swing hammer swing!* The blurb said:

> *Trainspotting* marks the capital debut of a capital writer. A heavyweight champion of the vernacular, Irvine Welsh, using a bare-knuckled prose style, mounts ferocious attacks on the body state. A wickedly funny, yet irredeemably sad book, its author (what a mimetic gift the man has for gutter patois and junkie jargon!) takes us on a Hell tour of those psychic ghettos which are the stamping grounds for junkies, boozers, no hopers and losers. This marvellous novel might feel like a bad day in Bedlam, but boy is it exhilarating. Yes, it truly is![61]

It was Torrington's novel that was lauded when Welsh was first making a name for himself. Welsh says:

> When I made it into print myself, I cheekily asked [Torrington] for a quote for my first novel, and he gave me a cracker. It's very hard for a first-time novelist to get attention, and Jeff was the man in the spotlight then, and he happily chose to shed some of that glare on Trainspotting, bringing it to the world's eyes.[62]

Trainspotting is a novel that is uncompromising from the first page, especially with its usage of Edinburgh vernacular and swear words:

> The sweat wis lashing oafay Sick Boy; he wis trembling. Ah wis jist sitting thair, focusing oan the telly, tryin no tae notice the cunt. He wis bringing me doon. Ah tried tae keep ma attention oan the Jean-Claude Van Damme video.[63]

Like James Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late*, Welsh's novel would be a body of work that would challenge the perceptions of the critics as to what a novel should really be, and like Kelman's novel, many critics would not acknowledge *Trainspotting* as a 'proper' novel. Aaron Kelly explains:

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[61] Cited in Robert Morace, *Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting: A Readers Guide.* (London: The Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd, 2001), 72

[62] Irvine Welsh, "Obituary: Jeff Torrington: Author of 'Swing Hammer Swing!'", *Independent*, 2008, (Independent Print Limited, 23 Oct. 2011), Web.

[63] Welsh, *Trainspotting*, 3.

> The inability or unwillingness of critics to regard *Trainspotting* as a novel is directly related to its refusal to mirror and endorse a standard model of what a novel should be and should do…It is not a question therefore of why Welsh's work falls short of an already agreed and universal standard, but one of why that standard fails to justify its own claims to universality and typicality.[64]

Welsh reminisced about a conversation he had with a middle-class Glaswegian student, whose image of Edinburgh was one of a bourgeois and tourist city:

> That image was a lie: it was at best just a small constituent part of the culture of that city. That of the middle-class, festival city. Yet it had a hegemony over all the other images of this urban, largely working-class but multi-cultural city. Other realities existed, had to be shown to exist.[65]

It was not until *Trainspotting* was released, and the subsequent film, that Glaswegians (and many other Scots) saw this other side to Edinburgh.

The *Trainspotting* effect brought other mediums into play, such as the 1998 BBC drama *Looking After Jo Jo* which featured Robert Carlyle as Jo Jo McCann, a habitual criminal who has been in and out of jail and was now a drug dealer. The fact the characters resided in Edinburgh was no longer a surprise, more a strengthening of the reality Welsh had been suggesting all along.

James Kelman was not alone with regards to Booker prize controversy. Welsh's *Trainspotting* was thought to be in the running for the 1993 Booker prize (the year Roddy Doyle won with *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*), but alas, did not make the final shortlist, amongst rumours of two female judges threatening to resign.

Gillian Beer, one of the 1993 Booker prize judges, rejected the notion: 'No, I have absolutely no recollection of any judge having threatened to resign over *Trainspotting*, which did indeed come close to the short list.'[66]

Welsh seemingly did not care, speaking with John Neil Munro he said:

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[64] Aaron Kelly, *Irvine Welsh (Contemporary British Novelists).* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 15.

[65] Kelly, *Irvine Welsh (Contemporary British Novelists)*, 26.

[66] John Neil Munro, *Lust for Life! Irvine Welsh and the Trainspotting Phenomenon.* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2013), 148.

> This does not square with [Lord] Gowrie's (the chair of the judges) comments on radio some years after, when he publicly said that two women judges threatened to resign from the panel if the book was considered. I'm in no position to state which is the more accurate account, nor am I particularly interested.[67]

Welsh said he was now considered a 'strange creature schooled in darkness…The response to what I'd done showed me it was political.'[68] Accordingly, Welsh has stated in the biography on his website (as of 2015), 'According to Lord Gowrie, the chairman of the panel, the novel was rejected for the Booker Prize shortlist after offending the sensibilities of two female judges.'[69]

And in 2012 (a full nine years after the alleged slight), Welsh attacked the Booker prize organisation (as reported in *The Guardian* by Charlotte Higgins):

> The Booker prize's contention to be an inclusive, non-discriminatory award could be demolished by anybody with even a rudimentary grasp of sixth-form sociology…[the award is] based on the conceit that upper-class Englishness is the cultural yardstick against which all literature must be measured.[70]

As a matter of coincidence, Higgins, was one of three judges in an event in which I participated in 2010 called Dragon's Pen—a literary version of the BBC show *Dragon's Den*—and like the TV show, I had to sell my product, in this case my germ of an idea for *Hell Mend Me,* to the judges in a pitch. All judges were English, but Higgins was the well-spoken judge who attempted to rip my novel idea apart because she didn't understand the character or accent. The other two judges gave favourable feedback. It should be noted that after the event, Higgins apologised and gave me a hug!

Despite the Booker rejection, *Trainspotting* put Welsh on the literary map, affording him a level of fame that would invariably attract yet more criticism, this time attacking the way Welsh portrayed women in his novel. Christopher Whyte suggests, 'While the men…are far from

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[67] Munro, *Lust for Life! Irvine Welsh and the Trainspotting Phenomenon*, 148.

[68] Carl MacDougall, *Writing Scotland: How Scotland's Writers Shaped the Nation.* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2004), 196.

[69] Irvine Welsh, "Biography", *Irvine Welsh website,* web.

[70] Charlotte Higgins, "Irvine Welsh tears into Booker prize", *The Guardian*, (Guardian News and Media, 19 Aug. 2012), Web.

idealised, the book does not exactly apologise for the contempt they show their women.'[71]

Welsh defended himself:

> They *are* believable female characters. They might be cowering victims or abused or in the background, but the main characters are generally desperate guys going through bad times…they aren't going to be surrounded by strong, dynamic, self-actualised women. If you tried to put those sort of women into the context I'm writing about, it just wouldn't ring true.[72]

Aaron Kelly looks at it from both viewpoints and suggests:

> [T]he male characters are dealt with in much more depth and sustained interest than the occasional interventions of female personae. Often the male characters relate to women as objects upon which they project their various anxieties, hostilities, desires…Nonetheless, there are moments in the novel which the female characters are permitted a voice that radically redraws the male dominated narrative…[73]

The criticism came from all directions, with literary agent Giles Gordon even suggesting that Welsh (and Kelman) were pandering to the types of English who rub their hands together with glee at the notion of a broken Scotland, saying that Welsh and Kelman 'present the Scots as the English like to see them: drunken or drugged, aggressive, illiterate, socially inept, boorish.'[74]

What Gordon and other critics failed to appreciate, or simply didn't want to admit, was the fact that Welsh's novel was representing a community whose existence (certainly at the time) was barely acknowledged, let alone celebrated in print. Welsh understood the link between the image the city of Edinburgh wanted to portray and the reality behind that image:

> Tourists want to come to the Athens of the North rather than the HIV capital of Europe…and the people who suffer from HIV [are] deemed implicitly detrimental to tourism…So the schemes are taken out of existence.[75]

Aaron Kelly argues:

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[71] Cited in Kelly, *Irvine Welsh (Contemporary British Novelists)*, 51.

[72] Munro, *Lust for Life! Irvine Welsh and the Trainspotting Phenomenon*, 152.

[73] Kelly, *Irvine Welsh (Contemporary British Novelists)*, 51.

[74] Cited in Morace, *Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting: A Reader's Guide*, 51.

[75] Kelly, *Irvine Welsh (Contemporary British Novelists)*, 26.

> Welsh's technique unleashes an Edinburgh demotic that gives voices to a social class that either had been completely silenced or appeared in caricature form without thought or emotional and inner complexity…Welsh's vernacular monologues and epiphanies grant an interiority to a class of characters who would once have been represented as thoughtless idiots whose personalities are transcribed and explained to readers in Standard English.[76]

Sales for *Trainspotting* started off slow with an initial 3,000 copies printed by Secker & Warburg. By the time the film version arrived, 100,000 copies had been sold, and after that 'sales [totalled] half-a-million and [were] still growing.'[77] John Arlidge, writing for the Observer, pointed out that *Trainspotting* was 'the fastest-selling and most shoplifted book novel in British publishing history.'[78] This point that seems to have been confirmed by a conversation Welsh had with a fan:

> I was in this shop in Edinburgh one time…and this wee guy comes up to me like: 'You're Irvine Welsh, aren't you?' And I goes: 'Aye, I am.' And he said: 'I've read every one of your books.' And I said: 'Oh that's great.' And he goes: 'I fucking stole them all, I never paid for one.' Well that's brilliant![79]

Welsh has enjoyed a fortuitous career, whereas James Kelman has bemoaned the lack of financial reward, saying in 2011, 'As a writer, last year I think I earned about £15,000. And that after being a writer for about 40 years.'[80] Welsh acknowledges a debt to Kelman, saying that reading Kelman's *The Bus Conductor Hines* was a key moment in his writing history, stating, 'Kelman was like Year Zero…it's like James Kelman, to me, is doing [his own voice] but just taking it one stage further.'[81] For Welsh personally, Kelman was where writing in a Scottish identity all started.

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76 Kelly, *Irvine Welsh (Contemporary British Novelists)*, 50.

77 Morace, *Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting: A Readers* Guide, 73.

78 Cited in Morace, *Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting: A Readers Guide*, 73.

79 Decca Aitkenhead, "Irvine Welsh: 'I'm the same kind of writer as I am a drinker. I'm a binger.'", *The Guardian*, (Guardian News and Media, 15 Apr. 2012), Web.

80 David Robinson, *The Scotsman*, Web.

81 Cited in Kelly, *Irvine Welsh (Contemporary British Novelists),* 11.

Welsh reserves a special affection for both James Kelman and Jeff Torrington, saying that both authors 'were brilliant to me. Two kinder-hearted, more generous men you'd be hard pushed to find.'[82]

And much like Kelman, Welsh has not given up the fight in regards to writing in a voice that belongs to your own culture.

At the Edinburgh International Book Festival in 2012, Welsh presented his keynote speech 'A National Literature?' and questioned the current climate for new working-class writers:

> So from an aspiring author's point of view, if you're from the so-called margins, do you play the current publishing game – eg shoehorn yourself into writing genre fiction, and 'work within the system', as the successful Scandinavian writers have done in crime fiction, effectively globally rebranding (at least in the eyes of outsiders) an entire genre – or do you exercise the freedom of the author and simply do what the fuck you feel like?[83]

Welsh concluded with a call to arms to all aspiring authors:

> [H]ave a look around, it's a big world, and if bits of it move you, don't be afraid to write about it…be bold, and proud of who [you] are and where you come from. Express your culture, your concerns and those of your community and the voices within it, however movable a feast that is. Because if you don't, the chances are that it might not be around in the future…don't get obsessed with histories and legacies or markets and 'rules', just hit those keys and see what happens.[84]

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[82] Munro, *Lust for Life! Irvine Welsh and the Trainspotting Phenomenon*, 127.

[83] Irvine Welsh, "A National Literature?" Edinburgh World Writers' Conference. (Edinburgh International Book Festival, Edinburgh, 19 Aug. 2012), Web.

[84] Welsh, Edinburgh World Writers' Conference, Web.

3.3 Fight like You're Painting the Forth Bridge

The Booker prize likes to be known as the prize for the best English literature (originally in Britain and the Commonwealth, now open to any literature written in English). Yet as of 2015 only six Scottish authors have been shortlisted for the Booker prize in its 46-year history (no Scots were shortlisted in 2015).[85] James Kelman's 1994 success remains the only win by a Scottish author.[86] These facts led Kevin Williamson to humorously ask if someone had 'shat haggis or thrown up whisky in the Man Booker Head Office?'[87]

Naturally, not all Scottish authors have gone down the route of writing in non-standard English, although some have thought about it, then changed their minds, such as the crime writer, Ian Rankin:

> Rankin has said how impressed he was by Kelman's use of Scottish vernacular and how he enthusiastically showed Kelman's stories to his father. 'But he said he couldn't read it because it wasn't in English. Now my dad is from the same working-class linguistic community as Kelman writes about. If he couldn't read it, but half of Hampstead [London] was lapping it up, that to me was a huge failure and I decided then not to write phonetically.[88]

To Rankin's mind, having stories written in Scottish vernacular being appreciated by yuppies in London, but not reaching the core readership in Scotland, is a massive failure, and he sees no reason to be a part of it. Yet, the fact *Trainspotting* was the most shoplifted book in British publishing history, suggests a readership that was nowhere near your yuppie London scene.

I tested this conundrum, writing a short story comprised entirely of Glaswegian interior thought on a phonetic scale that would make Kelman's novel seem favourable to standard English. When I let my mother—who is working class and has a stronger accent than myself—

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[85] "Timeline", *The Man Booker Prize,* (n.p., n.d.), Web.

[86] Nan Spowart, "Profile: Is the Man Booker prize biased against the Scots?", *The National*, (Herald & Times Group, 13 Oct. 2015), Web.

[87] Kevin Williamson, "The Man Booker Prize & 44 Years Of Institutionalised Anti-Scottish Racism", *Bella Caledonia*, (n.p., 26 Jul. 2012,) Web.

[88] Cited in Kövesi, *James Kelman (Contemporary British Novelists)*, 7.

read it, she initially had a similar reaction to Rankin's father, saying that it was strange to see words written in this way. However, she asserted that after a few pages she got into the flow of the piece, and said from then on it was easy to read and enjoyable. Perhaps it can be said that writing in the vernacular is not simply a case for difficult reading, more a case of the patience of the reader and their willingness (or not) to immerse themselves in an unfamiliar written world.

In an interview on BBC's *HARDtalk*, Welsh chats about the writing process behind *Trainspotting* twenty-two years after the fact. He admits that he 'originally tried to write some of the chapters in Standard English, the dialogue as well as the narrative, and it just seemed so silly and pretentious.'[89]

He goes on to admit that he was concerned about the reception from readers: 'When I printed it all out I thought to myself "nobody's going to understand this, I can't read it myself" because you're not used to seeing words on a page in that way…the visual theatrics of it, the way it was hitting the brain, "this is kind of strange, nobody's going to look at it."'[90]

Welsh believes readers get into the flow of the written style after a few pages, which backs up my mother's assertions.

Welsh previously admitted a certain naivety in regards to the challenges Scottish writers face:

> [Kelman] fought a lot of battles with the upper-crust literary establishment to validate different voices. It allowed the rest of us to have fun. I was determined not to get drawn into this; the point had been made as far as I was concerned. I never realised that, sadly, this hegemony is entrenched, and each generation of new writers will fight the same battle – like painting the Forth Bridge.[91]

Painting the Forth Bridge was once a yearly chore: as soon as the paint team arrived at the end of the bridge, they would have to immediately go back to the other side and start again. Even if

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[89] Stephen Sackur,"Irvine Welsh - Author", *HARDtalk*, (BBC News, 22 Apr. 2015), Web.

[90] Sackur, BBC News, Web.

[91] Munro, *Lust for Life! Irvine Welsh and the Trainspotting Phenomenon*, 127.

we accept that the new formula of paint applied on the bridge in 2011 is to last the advertised twenty-five years[92], then the point is the same. Twenty-two years after *Trainspotting* was published, Scottish writers like myself are still fighting to have our voices heard.

[92] "Forth Bridge painting completed", *BBC News,* (BBC, 9 Sep. 2011), Web.

3.4 Vernacular in related Fiction and its Influence

Jeff Torrington's *Swing hammer swing!* is a tour-de-force of Glaswegian vernacular—it is also a book which I named as 'the book that changed my life', in a short story for the Scottish Book Trust anthology of the same name. In my story I noted:

> Torrington used the mix of standardised English and Glaswegian vernacular dialogue to supreme effect, judging each and every word on its own merits, to be approached and pronounced in the manner that the context and situation of the moment demanded.[93]

Torrington's book was a wake-up call. I had started my Creative Writing degree fearful of my own voice, wondering if I could express myself adequately in Standardised English. After reading *Swing hammer swing!* I realised I could flavour my writing with Glaswegian vernacular, but in such a way that would not completely alienate the uninitiated reader.

If I had considered my raw self as the bastard child of James Kelman and Irvine Welsh, then Jeff Torrington was surely my edited Godfather.

Whilst many of Torrington's characters speak in the Glaswegian dialect, the narrator Thomas Clay, speaks to the reader in first person standardised English. However, narration is presented in such an intelligent and subtle way, that language varieties are put together in a manner only spoken by the Glaswegian, such as 'fly bastard' and 'half the tick was down to ciggies'[94]. Occasionally the odd Glaswegian/Scots word is thrown in, seemingly by chance, but no doubt painstakingly on purpose (hence the thirty years of self-editing done by Torrington), providing idioms like 'The auld bugger made me fork up'[95] and 'Ach, so what? A necrotic hero was in tune with this pisser of a day.'[96]

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[93] Leon A.C. Qualls, "Jeff Torrington: Swing hammer swing!", *The Book That Changed My Life*, (Edinburgh: Luath Press Ltd, 2010), 98.

[94] Jeff Torrington, *Swing Hammer Swing!*, 1992, (London: Minerva, 1993), 58.

[95] Torrington, *Swing hammer swing!*, 58.

[96] Torrington, *Swing hammer swing!*, 373.

Within a paragraph the narrator uses the same word in both English and Scots referring to someone as 'the **auld** yin with lecherous grin'[97] and then saying 'the fly **old** bugger grabbed three ciggies from [my packet]'[98]. This could be viewed as some kind of continuity error; an internal confusion of whether to use the Scots or English language. I would say it is perfectly appropriate, as the Glaswegian vernacular is the natural bastard child of Scots and English, and depending on the context of the sentence, *auld* and *old* could and would be used within breathing space of each other.

This shows that Torrington did not rest on his laurels by having a preset list of words to use in either language, and instead judged each and every word on its own merits, to be approached and pronounced in the manner that the context and situation of the moment demanded. This way of writing heavily influenced my own process with *Hell Mend Me*.

Another writer who jumped feet first into the pool of vernacular is the Irish author, Trevor Byrne, whose 2009 novel Ghosts and Lightning is an episodic adventure with the thread linking it all together being Denny Cullen after he returns to Ireland for his mother's funeral. The novel was endorsed by Roddy Doyle (who I will discuss later), and was a colourful representation of the Dublin dialect.

Upon first reading this novel, comparisons can be made between Byrne and Irvine Welsh, not least the absence of quotation marks, with dialogue being represented by the em-dash and often flowing-on into narration without break:

> —Fuck off, you! Paula screams. —This isn't your fuckin home!
> Shane turns his back on her and walks to the gate, then turns around and looks at her. His sister. His only sister.
> —Yeh demented bitch, Paula, he says and reaches behind him, pullin open the door o the car. —We'll fuckin see tomorrow, alright? We'll fuckin see tomorrow. He shakes his head and crumples into the seat. The car pulls away, cuttin through the dark.

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[97] Torrington, *Swing hammer swing!*, 198.

[98] Torrington, *Swing hammer swing!*, 199.

—Prick! Fuckin poxy fuckin prick![99]

In Welsh's *Trainspotting* the same melding of style can be seen:

> — Interested in fitba? he slurs
> — Naw
> — Rugby? he's soundin desperate now.
> — Naw, ah sais. Whether he wis oan the make or jist wanted company wis difficult tae determine. Ah don't think the cunt knew hissel. He hud lost interest in me anywey, n turned tae Sick Boy.
> — Interested in hoarses?[100]

Yet in an interview with the *Sunday Times*, Byrne states that he didn't want his novel 'to be thought of as the Irish Irvine Welsh…a really grungy, dark, smelly heroin novel.'[101] His novel is set in Clondalkin, a working-class town west of Dublin city centre, and Byrne wrestles with the reality of a setting that was 'in the 1980s and 1990s…a heroin haunted place [which conversely had] an incredible sense of vibrancy and wonder.'[102]

It is this duality that primarily interests Byrne, as he focuses on the *carnival* aspect of the people and the place. Byrne's point is relevant to aspects of the theory of the Russian literary critic, Mikhail Bakhtin, which David Lodge neatly summarises in *The Practice of Writing*:

> The novel as Bakhtin defines it is both a type of discourse and a frame of mind. As a discourse it is characterized by the interweaving of a variety of different voices and styles, oral and written - what Bakhtin called dialogism or polyphony. As a frame of mind it questions and subverts all totalizing ideological systems by the liberating power of laughter and the celebration of the body - what Bakhtin called the carnivalesque.[103]

In this context, it is a nice irony that Lodge was referring to the works of James Joyce, a fellow Dubliner of Byrne's and an author whose choice of the novel as a writing medium afforded

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[99] Trevor Byrne, *Ghosts and Lightning*, (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2009), 150.

[100] Welsh, *Trainspotting*, 173.

[101] Mick Heaney, "Green Green Glass of Home", *Sunday Times,* (News International Trading Limited. 7 Jun. 2009), Web.

[102] Heaney, *Sunday Times,* (News International Trading Limited. 7 Jun. 2009), Web.

[103] David Lodge, *The Practice of Writing*, 1996, (London: Vintage, 2011), 138.

him rhetoric and speech encapsulating the 'sublime or coarse, fantastic or realistic, according to need - and often within the same paragraph or even sentence.'[104]

Bakhtin believed the novel, as a form, was dialogic, allowing the incorporation of different styles and voices to collaborate with one another. In *The Art of Fiction*, in a section called 'Telling in Different Voices', Lodge says that at the most basic level, the novel uses an 'alternation of the narrator's voice with the voices of the characters, rendered in their own specific accents and idioms of class, region, occupation, gender, etc.'[105] Lodge muses on Bakhtin's literary theory, and comes to this conclusion:

> [T]he language of the novel is not *a* language, but a medley of styles and voices, and it is this which makes it a supremely democratic, anti-totalitarian literary form, in which no ideological or moral position is immune from challenge and contradiction.[106]

What *Ghosts and Lightning* has in common with *Hell Mend Me* is a type of narration that could be considered *skaz*, a Russian word that denotes a type of first-person narration that has the characteristics of the spoken word. Lodge considers such authors to be using 'vocabulary and syntax characteristic of colloquial speech…relating the story spontaneously rather than delivering a carefully constructed and polished written account.'[107] He maintains that the reader doesn't so much as read the narration, than listen to it, as if he were listening to spoken conversation.

After using second-person narration to open *Ghosts and Lightning*, Byrne slips effortlessly into first-person narration for the remainder of the novel. As Lodge noted, a *skaz* narration has

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[104] Lodge, *The Practice of Writing*, 138.

[105] David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction*, 1992, (London: Vintage, 2011), 128.

[106] Lodge, *The Art of Fiction*, 129.

[107] Lodge, *The Art of Fiction,* 18.

'a character who refers to himself…as "I", and addresses the reader as "you".'[108] Or in Denny Cullen's case, 'yeh'.

> Wha d'yeh do when yer ma's gone, like? I can feel the sadness coming back, an echo o that horrible raw hurt from the day I got back from Wales. I pulled aside these pale blue plastic curtains and there's me ma, lying in the bed. Her face was different somehow. Have yeh ever seen someone yeh know after they've died?[109]

In *Hell Mend Me,* Lucas occasionally adopts 'you' for addressing the reader.

> Edinburgh was the capital, and we both hated each other. Fair play, whenever I visited there I had a nice time, but I couldn't even contemplate living there. That left two other cities, Dundee and Aberdeen. The latter was another no-no, there was no way in Hell I was going to move there, not with the animosity between Rangers and Aberdeen fans after Neil Simpson broke Ian Durrant's leg. If you don't know about it, I'd forgive you for thinking Simpson played for Rangers, but no, he played for Aberdeen and yet they hate us. Cannae make this shite up[.][110]

Both Denny and Lucas are written in a style that imitates speech, but as Lodge says, 'this is an illusion, the product of much calculated effort and painstaking rewriting by the "real" author.'[111] And it's true. Many a draft was discarded or rewritten while trying to find the right voice for the narration of *Hell Mend Me*.

When Lucas narrates, there's a flavour of his speech incorporated with a sprinkling of vernacular:

> There was a wee French café called Le Patissere. Or as we all called it, Le Pishtakery, due to the fact everything was extortionately priced. Mind you, to the humble Scotsman from the Glaswegian Valley, used to the Co-op and thieves—aka tea leafs—undercutting the Co-op with its own goods, everything in London was extortionate. So usually we'd have given this French café a huge dingy, but as an exception to the rule, their teas were cheap and tasty. Thus, twice every day I'd walk two streets to this café and order four teas which were always piping hot and full of sugar. I'd go in there starving, gander at all the delicious baguettes and pastries, whose smell wafted up my nose and wouldn't dissipate until an hour after I'd left the café. Knowing I couldn't afford any of them was a right flour tease.[112]

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108 Lodge, *The Art of Fiction*, 18.

109 Byrne, *Ghosts and Lightning*, 6.

110 Qualls, *Hell Mend Me*, 231.

111 Lodge, *The Art of Fiction*, 18.

112 Qualls, *Hell Mend Me*, 18.

Place is as important as character, for what is a Glasgow boy without Glasgow? Byrne makes the connection between his writing and Dublin, saying, 'What I really love about Dublin is this seanachie, oral storytelling tradition…So this was a story that would be about the stories we tell ourselves and how we make sense of our lives through these narratives that we impose.'

Much in the same way, *Hell Mend Me* is a contemporary written extension of the oral storytelling tradition of Scotland—a country that Valentina Bold explains 'has a distinguished tradition of valuing its stories, if not – until relatively recently – its story tellers'[113]—from its roots in folk tradition within the travelling community, to its renaissance in contemporary times.

Bold cites a dedication written by J. F. Campbell who spent years collecting oral stories from communities who were dying out under the influence of a dominating British culture:

> You will find the creed of the people, as shewn in their stories, to be, that wisdom and courage, though weak, may overcome strength, and ignorance, and pride; that the most despised is often the most worthy[.][114]

The under/working class that inhabit the novels of Byrne and myself, couldn't have been summed up any better.

The poet Sheenagh Pugh, when reviewing *Ghosts and Lightning*, said, 'One reason this novel lives so vividly for the reader is the liveliness and realism of its voices.'[115] It is this realism that I have tried to incorporate into my writing, especially with *Hell Mend Me*. Byrne's novel, if not to be compared too closely with Welsh's *Trainspotting*, certainly can be compared favourably with Roddy Doyle's *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* (1993) and Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* (1992) (another novel endorsed by Doyle).

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[113] Valentina Bold, "Twenty-first-century Storytelling: Context, Performance, Renaissance." *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature,* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 371.

[114] J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands: Volume 1,* 1860, (London: Forgotten Books, 2007), 1.

[115] Sheenagh Pugh, "Review of Ghosts and Lightning.", *Sheenagh Pugh - Poet and Prose Writer.* 4 June 2009. Web.

However, whereas Doyle uses the em-dash for quotations, McCabe abandons any use of quotation or em-dash, preferring to incorporate dialogue within the narration.

> The next time I called Mrs Purcell answered it and when I asked her was Joe coming out to the river she said he was at music. Music, I said, I didn't know he went to music Mrs Purcell. He never went to music before did he? No, she says, he didn't.[116]

I found this kind of narration to be more in the James Kelman approach, and was not what I was looking to achieve with *Hell Mend Me*. However, in *The Butcher Boy*, despite the reader being privy to the main character's—Francis Brady's—thoughts, the narration is largely a variant of standardised English, only straying into vernacular when dialogue is being presented, or perhaps recalled. Doyle follows a similar pattern regarding the use of vernacular, but Byrne injects vernacular into both the dialogue and the narration.

> …I hear someone callin me.
> —Denny, yeh bleedin deaf of wha?
> I turn and it's Ned, half-hid behind a bockedy oul dealer's stall. This used to be the nearest yid get to old Dublin[.][117]

Notice how Byrne interchanges 'oul' and 'old', much in the same way as Torrington does with his representation of Glaswegian vernacular. Language is fluid and I tried to represent this fluidity in *Hell Mend Me*. In this extract from my novel, fluid language is on full display, from the interchanging 'you' 'ye' 'ya', to the 'oan' and 'on':

> 'What? Ye're harassing innocent cunts oan the street? Fuckin hell, Kenny.'
> 'Fuck you, Lucas. He got away cause you wanted tae talk tae me. Fuck. Noo I cannae noise anybody up, cause they'll know it's me.'
> 'I knew it was you, anywie.'
> 'How the fuck could ye know?'
> 'Yer phone number comes up on ma phone ya daft bastard!'
> There was silence and then Kenny said, 'Fuck you, Lucas' and the line disconnected.[118]

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[116] Patrick McCabe, *The Butcher Boy*, 1992, (London: Picador, 2001), 115.

[117] Byrne, *Ghosts and Lightning*, 55.

[118] Qualls, *Hell Mend Me*, 12.

It is important for writers from cities with strong cultural identities—such as Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dublin—to express their identity in the distinctive language varieties of these cities. These language varieties come to life via the characters—in the description of their actions and in the characters' often vivid dialogue.

As a writer born and bred in Glasgow, the language used in my home city is unique, not only as a Scottish city compared with other British cities, but as a city compared with other towns and cities in Scotland. Glaswegian vernacular ensures that the Glaswegian is rarely mistaken for a citizen of anywhere else, and it was important to get that authenticity across in my writing, but in the most accessible way.

I have felt a shared experience of personal and creative kinship with writers of Celtic cities such as Edinburgh and Dublin, and reading/analysing these writers has shown me: though we may be different, we are not alone.

5. Conclusion

In his collection of essays, James Kelman admitted that literature (and the writing of it) had come late into his life and that the realms of possibility were undefined:

> It didn't occur to me for about five or six years after leaving school that literature was something I could be involved in. Then I discovered it was possible to write stories myself…I could even write stories about ordinary people if I wanted to. There wasn't anybody going to stop me by using physical force.[119]

I always enjoyed writing in primary and secondary school, but the apathy of my teachers (and in some cases, the downright discrimination of where I came from) put me off pursuing a career in literature (or anything artistically based). Leaving school at 16, I was under no illusion that writing a novel was not for people like me. I abandoned the pen but kept up with my reading. If I could not write, at least I could enjoy the writing of others, those special ones who were lucky to have been born with money, a well-spoken accent and connections; school and life had taught me that I had none of the three. It wasn't until I was 25 years old that I decided to follow my writing passions.

Purely by chance, fate you could say, I was unemployed, aimless, hopeless. I enlisted with a media charity who helped people acquire skills in journalism, film, etc. As part of a group we did a mandatory creative writing task. At this point I did not have my own voice, but whatever I wrote, the tutor saw something in it, and she encouraged me to continue writing. From that, I applied to university, and a few years later graduated with a 1st class degree. If I thought I had reached the top of the mountain, I was sadly wrong. The writing process never ends, I never stop learning.

Hell Mend Me is the culmination of five-years of writing, editing, rewriting, and re-editing. The novel has gone through many different iterations, with various experiments attempted in the use of language and narration: its first iteration comprised entirely of phonetic Glaswegian vernacular, the second iteration was an insipid standardised English version, finally settling on

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[119] Kelman, "*"And the judges said…" Essays*", 73.

the third iteration, a melding of standard English and Glaswegian vernacular, that best represented the journey that the protagonist Lucas goes through. Finding a suitable mix of vernacular authenticity in the dialogue to sit alongside a standardised English that has elements of Glaswegian syntax and Scotticisms was risky, considering my ambition to make the novel as accessible as possible without losing its local flavour.

Much like Kelman, whose novel only strayed into complete standard English when representing those of a perceived class above, I have similar moments in my novel, such as in the first chapter, when Lucas is telling the reader about a film crew coming to Maryhill (specifically The Valley). In this passage, there are Scotticisms and when Lucas is imagining what the director would say, he uses an exaggerated standardised English to represent a kind of person he is not familiar with, adding a 'fanny' at the end, because this is Lucas's imagination after all:

> I wondered what kind of film they'd be making. Who in their right mind would come to The Valley and commit its aesthetic ugliness to celluloid for posterity? I reasoned that they must be making a foreign film. Aye, I thought, The Valley makes a nice substitute for Bosnia.
>
> It became clear that this film was about scum, but none of us scum around here were being asked to participate. It probably didn't help that the crew were robbed in the first week. I'd have a brass-neck asking for a part then.
>
> Yet, if I could get past the director's security, spoke with him man-to-man, convinced him that I wasn't like the other scum, that the thieves were merely friends of a friend; if I was obliged, I imagined the director saying, 'Lucas, *stop* looking into the camera. You're an extra in this film. A completely superfluous addition to the drama I'm creating. It's not all about *you*. And don't dare open your mouth. I'll have your voice edited out in post-production and you'll be onscreen looking like a pair of miming fanny lips.'[120]

My novel features culturally specific lexical items, such as greetin (to cry), Hogmanay (New Year's Eve), ned (a hooligan, in recent years referred to as a non-educated delinquent), mince (nonsense, substandard), numptie (an idiot), pish (to pee, or same meaning as mince), teuchter (a highlander) and wean (a child) to name a few. Some of these words, such as wean, are almost exclusive to Glasgow. Of course, there are some lexical words that are mentioned in the novel

[120] Qualls, *Hell Mend Me,* 9

that are not in popular usage in Glasgow, such as bairn (a child, the East-coast equivalent to wean), ken (know) and weegie (a Glaswegian).[121]

It was extremely important to use the correct words for the appropriate characters, to provide a level of authenticity to the novel. To the uninitiated, the novels of Kelman and Welsh may seem like the same Scottish entities, but to the trained eye, the language used by both are complementary but certainly different.

For example, Welsh uses the word 'radge' which—similar to Kelman's usage of 'cunt'—has different meanings dependent on the circumstances. The popular meaning of 'radge' is to signify a wild, crazy, mental person. Yet Welsh uses the word for multiple meanings in *Trainspotting*, as seen from these three extracts:

'Nae skag now ya radge cunt! he gently chides us, likesay.'[122]

'[A]h'm pittin smack intae ma body tae claim power over it vis-à-vis society in general. Radge, eh?'[123]

'Ah'm nearly endin masel as Gary goes radge; standin up n bootin the sole ay Begbie's trainers.'[124]

Welsh makes good use of this word throughout his novel, and it's a word I've grown fond of, but the word is never mentioned in my novel, as there are no characters from Edinburgh, and a Glaswegian saying that word would not ring true.

In my novel I have tried to acknowledge, yet make light of, the lexical differences between Lucas and non-Glaswegian characters, as shown by his first interaction with Boyd 'the Body':

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121 No self-respecting Glaswegian will refer to themselves as a weegie, as the term originated in the East-coast and had derogatory connotations, yet in recent years, it seems many of the younger generation have been appropriating it for themselves.

122 Welsh, *Trainspotting*, 120

123 Welsh, *Trainspotting*, 185

124 Welsh, *Trainspotting*, 89

> 'Haw you, get aff my fuckin chair!'
> 'Dae I ken you?' said the alkie. I had done my research on the bus up to Dundee by reading the annual copy of *The Broons*, a comic strip that told the story of a large Scottish family based in the fictional town of Auchenshoogle. But seeing as *The Broons* was created in Dundee, I deduced that they must all speak the same: that is, with actual Scottish words sprinkled in with English. There was none of your bastardisation of the English language aka Glaswegian slang to be found here.
> 'Naw, ye fuckin don't ken *or* know me,' I said.[125]

Also, certain lexical differences are something which Lucas is aware of himself, most notably when speaking with his American friend, Michele:

> 'But don't worry, lass, we're no mental like they Edinbra cunts, er, people. Nae danger. Still I wouldnae advise ye tae visit there yersel, but if ye're wae me, ye'll be fine cause I know aw the mad cunts. Anywie, generally Glaswegians are dead friendly, I kid ye not.'
> 'I believe you.'
> 'How? I mean, why?'[126]

I purposely made Lucas self-aware of this, as most Glaswegians are themselves. It is not an uncommon sight to see a Glaswegian with a heavy accent purposely trying to speak more clearly to a tourist who is asking for directions.

The books of Kelman and Welsh have both inspired my writing, and allowed me certain licence to explore and attempt similar ways of writing. However, one important aspect of the novels mentioned in this study, which I have not gone down the route of employing, is the absence of markers.

As mentioned in the analysis, Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late* does not use inverted commas for dialogue; Welsh's *Trainspotting* does not use them either, substituting them with em dashes at the beginning of each character's dialogue (though it should be noted, the narration often continues on after the speech has finished, sometimes with no visible signs to signify the movement from dialogue-to-narration, though mostly preceded by a 'he said' that concludes the dialogue).

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[125] Qualls, *Hell Mend Me*, 236

[126] Qualls, *Hell Mend Me,* 51

As much as I applaud this distinct way of writing which aims at denying the hierarchy of discourses, I felt that *Hell Mend Me* was a better read with inverted commas, and that Lucas's narration was an important aspect of his character. The differences between Lucas's thought patterns and speech are a key insight to Lucas's persona—in his childhood his mother encourages him to speak politely (that is, in standardised English) in the hope that Lucas will one day escape the relative poverty of his surroundings, and his schoolteachers chide him for using vernacular in his creative essays; yet on the other hand, as a child, local folk insult him for speaking politely, and his close friends mock him for having ambitions to go to college/ university: Lucas has been pulled in all directions when it comes to his use of language, yet this is both his main strength and his weakness, the ability to interchange his voices and be whom he wants to be at that particular moment in time.

As such, I felt the battle that Kelman and Welsh fight against the hierarchy was one that Lucas himself acknowledges but does not fight against, as he is one and both. To that end, I persevered with the traditional way of expressing narration and dialogue, the byproduct being a (hopefully) more accessible novel, much in the way Jeff Torrington achieved with *Swing Hammer Swing!*

Researching the writing histories of James Kelman and Irvine Welsh has shown me both the possible pitfalls and success that can be experienced as a writer of Scottish literature. My writing career looks set to follow my formative years: a hard slog fighting to have your own voice recognised. It is a slog that I will never ever abandon, no matter the obstacles put before me by inevitable detractors. My passion for writing continues unabated.

I leave my last lines to Kelman's antihero Sammy: 'Ach it was hopeless. That was what ye felt. These bastards. What can ye do but…ye just plough on, ye plough on, ye just fucking plough on, that's what ye do[.]'[127]

[127] Kelman, *How Late It Was, How Late,* 36-37.

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