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ANARCHY AND ANARCHISM IN THE WORKS OF JAMES KELMAN

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

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Abstract:

This BA thesis handles the ways in which anarchism manifests in the works of James Kelman, and the merit of Kelman's claim to the title 'anarchist' is investigated. One of the main concerns of anarchism as a political ideology has been individual liberty free of oppression from authorities and hierarchical relationships; for this reason the starting point of the thesis is to discover the basis of the concept of freedom Kelman operates with: what are its sources, why the concept is so crucial to him and what role plays authority (and authorities) in it. The topics of freedom, political representation and direct action in Kelman are investigated and their relevance is sought after in author's fiction. Representation in literature and his stance on hierarchies is investigated. Strictly politically dogmatic point of view is not always taken to reproduce the anarchist position concerning author's fiction.

To make this possible, first, the political essays and other texts from Kelman are investigated from which a base of his standpoint on the anarchist concepts mentioned is constructed; similarity to various anarchist ideas is considered. These are later translated into his approach to fiction and artistic vision in general, and the way the notion of freedom and fight against hierarchy express in its content and style; the common gripes of critics are considered and related to class position. Hierarchy is examined in connection to cultural domination of the English literary establishment and the English language in Scotland; pertaining anarchist as well as authors not explicitly anarchist are brought in to compare with Kelman's position; the possible application of Gilles Deleuze, as a favourite of Kelman's critics, and his anti-authoritative philosophy are brought to attention. The principal critical apparatus is taken from Jesse Cohn's essay "What Is Anarchist Literary Theory?" in which Cohn theorizes that a relatively forgotten volume of work of anarchists and authors whose thoughts have been recognized as having anarchic qualities could be used to build a self-contained approach to

literary criticism similar to other minor oppositional theories such as postcolonial or feminist theory.

The research confirmed Kelman's libertarian, anarchist leanings; they are vital for his politics as well as activism and manifest in the style and use of language in his novels that challenge cultural and linguistic hierarchies and question their validity. By employing demotic varieties of language used by working class people Kelman shows possibility of other than middle class culture and advocates use of non-standard English in literature and by extension in other fields where Standard English holds sovereign position. Primarily it is by his refusal of authority that interprets the world, which manifests in refusal of electoral politics and attempts to dismantle hierarchies that assign cultures or languages their respective use and by extension worth. In the stories, Kelman tries to liberate the subject from the third party omniscient narrator and let them speak from themselves. When one confronts Kelman's art with the anarchist literary theory the preoccupation with representation without stereotyping is revealed; it shows that Kelman's standpoint is overall moral, free from nationalist tendencies (as is the anarchist) and is interested in transforming the world by introduction of under- or misrepresented portions of society into literature.

Especially research based on Cohn's essay promises further uses and developments; it could be applied to other authors and at the same time, together with other texts, proves that one does not need to reach for ideologically motivated analyses and that to reconstruct anarchist theoretical point of view one can draw on authors not outspokenly anarchist. The anarchist position promises a non-dogmatic approach which liberates one's insight from moulds and is feasible to be used on every other author to escape from the shackles imposed by already existing theories.

Abstrakt:

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá způsoby, kterými se anarchismus projevuje v díle Jamese Kelmana a prověřuje Kelmanův nárok na titul 'anarchista'. Jedním z hlavních problémů anarchismu jako politické ideologie je individuální svoboda bez útlaku autorit a hierarchických vztahů; z tohoto důvodu je jedním z prvních cílů práce objasnit základ konceptu svobody, s nímž Kelman pracuje: jaké jsou jeho zdroje, proč je to pro něj tak zásadní koncept a jakou roli v něm hraje autorita (a autority). Zkoumána jsou témata svobody, politické reprezentace a přímého jednání v Kelmanově aktivistické tvorbě a jejich význam pro autorovu beletrii. Studován je jeho postoj k hierarchiím a literární reprezentaci. Práce nutně nezaujímá politicky dogmatické stanovisko k dosažení anarchistického výkladu.

Aby to bylo možné, jsou zkoumány nejprve Kelmanovy politické eseje a další texty, z nichž je vytvořen základ jeho stanoviska k uvedeným anarchistickým koncepcím; je zvažována podobnost s anarchistickými myšlenkami. Později jsou přeneseny do Kelmanova přístupu k beletrii a umělecké vizi obecně a ke způsobu, jakým se v nich pojetí svobody a boje proti hierarchiím projevuje v obsahu a stylu; společně s tímto jsou zvažovány časté námitky kritiků a jejich souvislost s třídní pozicí. Hierarchie je zkoumána v souvislosti s kulturní nadvládou anglického literárního establishmentu a nadvládou anglického jazyka ve Skotsku; anarchisté i autoři, kteří nejsou otevřeně anarchisté, jsou srovnáváni s Kelmanovou pozicí; je upozorněno na možné využití Gilla Deleuzeho, oblíbence kritiků Kelmanovy tvorby, a jeho anti-autoritativní filosofie. Hlavní kritický nástroj je převzat z eseje Jesse Cohna "What Is Anarchist Literary Theory?", ve které Cohn teoretizuje, že práce anarchistů a autorů, jejichž myšlenky sdílí anarchistické principy, by mohly být použity k vybudování tradice literární kritiky podobné ostatním menšinovým opozičním teoriím, jako je postkoloniální nebo feministická teorie.

Výzkum potvrdil Kelmanovy liberální, anarchistické sklony; jsou důležité pro jeho politiku stejně jako aktivismus a projevují ve stylu a použití jazyka v jeho románech, které zpochybňují ospravedlnitelnost hierarchií, ať už jsou kulturní nebo jazykové; poukazují na možnost existence jiné než kultury střední třídy a využití jiného než centrálně standardizovaného dialektu angličtiny. Především je to tím, že odmítá autoritu, která interpretuje svět nebo nahrazuje hlas zastoupeného, což se projevuje odmítáním volební politiky a pokusy o dekonstrukci hierarchií, které zvenčí přiřazují kultuře nebo jazykům jejich použití či místo. Kelman se v příbězích snaží osvobodit subjekt od omniscientního vypravěče. Při konfrontaci anarchistické literární teorie s Kelmanovým uměním je odhalena snaha o zastoupení bez stereotypů jakožto nástroj k emancipaci jedince založená na jeho bezprostřední vědomosti si preskriptivních vlivů, které může literární reprezentace mít; ukazuje, že Kelmanův světonázor je veskrze založený na morálních principech (stejně jako anarchistický) a má zájem transformovat svět tím, že dá špatně nebo málo reprezentovaným částí společnosti možnost projevu.

Cohnova esej přislibuje další využití a vývoj; její principy by mohly být aplikovány i na jiné autory a současně spolu s dalšími texty dokazuje, že není třeba ideologicky motivované analýzy k dosažení anarchistického teoretického pohledu a že lze čerpat z autorů, kteří nejsou otevřeně anarchisté. Anarchistický postoj slibuje nedogmatický přístup, který osvobozuje od násilného kategorizování a jeho použití se nemusí omezovat na Kelmana, ale může být aplikováno na ostatní autory, aby bylo dosaženo nového přístupu oproštěného od útlaku existujících teorií.

Table of contents:

1. Introduction

James Kelman provoked a powerful reaction in the beginning of the 1990s, if not in general public, then at least in academia and journalism; he fascinated and enraged. While that was arguably the peak of interest in Kelman it can reveal some profound truths about culture in the United Kingdom. What was immediately apparent was Kelman's preoccupation with the working class as opposed to majority of authors at the time who focused on rather higher class set novels which caused a whirlwind of opinions denouncing his work as non-culture. From the sharp contrast of class interests sprung the means of deciphering Kelman's writing: in academia prevalent Marxist analysis as well as other oppositional strains of critical theory such as postcolonialism or feminist theory; in the light of this bias Kelman's anarchist inclinations seem to have been somewhat ignored.

Anarchist literary theory, however, is not a developed strain of literary criticism; it lies dormant in authors like Bakunin or Proudhon who inspired Noam Chomsky's politics and others and draws on the tradition of the oppositional movement's theories already mentioned. The leading work to consider is going to be Jesse Cohn's essay on this problematic in which he outlays the main concerns of said approach and the guidelines which anarchic reading proposes for engagement with a work of literature. The basic points that concern what one should focus on in a work of literature are modelled on anarchism as a political ideology: freedom on one hand as the positive side, on the other, refusal of hierarchy as the negative. The overarching problem of this is the role that authoritative oppression has on both.

There have been attempts to connect Kelman's work (most often the peak novel *How Late it Was, How Late*) with Deleuze and Guattari's work; Cohn cites Deleuze as well in his essay. Often Deleuze and Guattari are described as anarchic thinkers, most notably for their anti-state (or State with a capital S in their case) stance. Authors like Saul Newman have written

about their connection to anarchism and precisely that they "share with anarchism a relentless critique of all forms of authority, and particularly a rejection of the idea that certain forms of authority can be liberating[1]" Deleuze has also famously written on Kafka and his position in what he calls a minor literature whom Kelman admires for his narrative technique, therefore it seems feasible that their work is going to be used as the post-modern link in the thesis which is not explicitly anarchist but exhibits anarchic inclinations.

Kelman is famously fairly activistic and these efforts cannot be omitted from consideration because his fair share of writing has been done in political essays. It is aggregated mainly in the collections *Some Recent Attacks* and *"And the Judges Said..." Essays*; those are going to be the keystones of this thesis. It seems to be sensible to inquire into those because they can provide one with an insight into what forms Kelman's artistic vision where, indeed, freedom and hierarchy play a vital role. These themes are going to be sought after in Kelman's socio-political view first. Inspection of his style is going to concern the writing and criticism that has been written and is aimed at author's anti-hierarchical tendencies and how these pieces, often without the mention of the word anarchism, support anarchic reading of his texts.

The thesis is structured into two major parts to allow this, each concerning the respective field of Kelman's agency, i.e. his activism and his fiction. In the first section on activism the concept of freedom is going to be discussed in relation to Noam Chomsky and Kelman's rather lengthy essay "A reading from Noam Chomsky and the Scottish Tradition in the Philosophy of Common Sense". Kelman's relationship to Chomsky, given the fact that he is described as one of the pillars of anarchist literary theory by Cohn, allows one to consider other anarchists related to him when one tries to relate Kelman to this tradition; these are Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Mikhail Bakunin or Murray Bookchin. This is followed by the

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[1] Saul Newman, "War on the State: Stirner and Deleuze's Anarchism," *Anarchist Studies* Vol. 9. available online < https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/saul-newman-war-on-the-state-stirner-and-deleuze-s-anarchism>

question of representation in political terms which conception impinges on freedom. To do this, American anarchists such as Emma Goldman and Voltairine De Cleyre are going to be brought into view because of the strong tradition of individualist anarchism in the American tradition, and Colin Ward, on the other hand, for his intimate connection to Kelman's homeland; Ward further strengthens the validity of Chomsky branch of anarchism. Rudolf Rocker and aforementioned Bookchin are going to be the anarchist brought forward when concerning culture and nationalism for their direct engagement in the problem. The second part on fiction is going to include view on hierarchy not necessarily ideologically weighed by critics and academics such as Peter Marshall, Mary McGlynn, Nicola Pitchford or Simon Kövesi and Aaron Kelly. Kelman's mature novels *How Late it Was, How Late* and *A Disaffection* are going to be in the centre of the thesis.

The aim of the thesis is to establish a solid link between Kelman's anarchist political worldview and his prose, to cement the connection between his principles of freedom and the concept of representation with the way he writes his characters and how they are presented to the reader by him as an author and the authorial voice. At the same time some aspect of the traditional class politics should not be eschewed and their potential to give insight into what constitutes culture in Kelman's eyes and in what ways this promotes the elitist air in literary establishment, after all, the cultural hierarchies already in place are to be under scrutiny as well, and their recognition relies largely on traditional class distinctions.

A distinctive feature of anarchism, as a political movement, is that it roots itself not in a fixed epistemological schema, e.g., a set of propositions about the true structure of history, capital, patriarchy, etc., but in an ethical stance, the positive side of which consists in a fundamental affirmation of freedom, equality, and the coexistence of the different not only as ends but as means, the negative side of which consists in a fundamental refusal of domination and hierarchy per se, not only as instanced in relations of class or gender or race, etc., but in any and all relationship.

– Jesse Cohn, "What Is Anarchist Literary Theory?[2]"

2. In Activism

2.1. Liberty as the Leading Principle

While James Kelman's politics have been described as far- or radical-left countless times, it might be useful to narrow down the view to a definite branch of leftism, as Simon Kövesi writes "he is, by his own definition, a 'libertarian socialist, anarchist'"[3]. However, Kelman scorns orthodoxy. He himself wrote that "a too rigid adherence to one line or idea or theory is a hindrance[4]" and "[as] far as the world's concerned, the mysteries of the universe, there is no one system that can explain that [...] [no] one idea, no one person, none of that sort of stuff.[5]" Similar strains of thinking can be found in anarchism and authors that have openly claimed to be anarchists and are now ranking among the classical anarchist writers. Let us take for instance Emma Goldman, an anarchist political activist and writer, who formulated a similar thought: "Finalities are for gods and governments, not for the human intellect […] life is

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[2] Jesse Cohn, "What Is Anarchist Literary Theory?" *Anarchist Studies*, Vol. 15 Issue 2, 116.
[3] Simon Kövesi, *James Kelman*, (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2007) 5.
[4] James Kelman, *Some Recent Attacks*, (AK Press: Stirling, 1992) 76.
[5] Kelman, *Attacks*, 48-49.

something more than formulas.[6]" And as Rudolf Rocker, an anarcho-syndicalist writer and activist, noted: "I believe there is no such thing as a final goal. Freedom will lead us to continually wider and expanding understanding and to new forms of social life.[7]" This is a practical position because it rejects the absolute and gives freedom to seek. Both Goldman and Rocker work with a similar notion to Kelman, that of non-finality - the idea that there probably is not one unifying theory for the world and therefore the world has to be explored constantly; they describe a method not a self-enclosed though-system. That is because, as Kelman writes, "man is uniquely beyond the bounds of physical explanation[8]".

While none of these authors were addressed by Kelman directly, there is a one contemporary outspoken anarchist who has received attention of both Kelman, who wrote a relatively long essay on his work in connection with the Scottish tradition of the philosophy of common sense, and lately society at large – Noam Chomsky. Worth mentioning is the fact that Jesse Cohn in his "What Is Anarchist Literary Theory?" puts Chomsky as the resultant of one of the traditions of anarchist theory which started with Proudhon and Bakunin[9]. With the introduction of Chomsky – of whom Kelman is undoubtedly aware when making the statements in the first paragraph – the issue of impossibility of arriving to a comprehensive, all-embracing, authoritative system of thought becomes more convoluted and receives a treatment beyond the form of truisms. The main concern for Kelman is to point out Chomsky's lack of awareness about the parallel between Enlightenment continental thinkers and the tradition of Scottish Common Sense Philosophy that paralleled it[10] but will be sidelined for the purposes of this thesis.

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[6] Emma Goldman, "What I Believe," *New York World*, July 19, 1908.
[7] Rudolf Rocker, *The Essential Works of Anarchism*, (New York : Quadrangle Books, 1972) 421-422.
[8] J. R. Lucas, quoted in James Kelman's "...And the Judges Said" Essays, (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2008) 150.
[9] Cohn, 115-116.
[10] Kelman, *Judges*, 175.

As he writes, Kelman first became acquainted with Chomsky's work through linguistics and his work concerning finite automata theory and recursive function theory[11] but his interest in him was also aided by Chomsky's political beliefs and life in general. For Kelman things like these cannot be divorced; it is unthinkable to excerpt the author from their surroundings: "These details can be decisive; so called background or personal information is often the difference between taking us into the work of somebody or not.[12]" As Jesse Cohn points out in his essay about anarchist literary theory, it is crucial for anarchists that "each text […] be viewed both in retrospect, as a sequel to other events (other texts, *the facts of the author's* life […])[13]."

Thanks to his insight into Chomsky's work with the two theories it is possible that Kelman sees that the impossibility of one system to describe everything as rooted in the fact that said system emerges outside of the whole it is describing and authoritatively judges. There has to be another theory to describe the theory before it and so on, *ad infinitum* to achieve progress; "there cannot be any method of proving it [theory, system] [being right] – not unless the proof can employ rules and procedures different from the actual system itself.[14]" In other words, to stop one theory to have the authority to control everything is arguably one the main concerns of Kelman precisely because in his eyes every theory serves an ideological or social end; it is important to ask "what social or ideological needs are being served by such a theory.[15]" A major insight for Kelman then is that there seems to be a trend to foreground the strata of society that in one sense or other control the interpretation of the world.

Kelman notes that, when asked, Chomsky said that he has no particular method of investigation, "what he does is 'look hard at a serious problem and try to get some ideas as to

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[11] Kelman, *Judges*, 141.
[12] Kelman, *Judges*, 144.
[13] Cohn, 121. italics own
[14] Kelman, *Judges*, 182.
[15] Kelman, *Judges*, 152.

what might be the explanation for it, meanwhile keeping an open mind about all sorts of other possibilities'.[16]" The ability to overcome the intimidating terminology of philosophical/scientific thinking (such as finite automata theory) should also be the cure for the monopoly of the experts to control the aforementioned interpretation, a simple removing of the obtuse methods of investigation so that everyone can and is willing to follow the path to the solution of a problem. With this Kelman argues against behaviourists such as B.F. Skinner, whom he foregrounds, who said that "the control of the society as a whole must be delegated to specialists.[17]" Those specialists then have the correct set of criteria to evaluate by be it literary critics who determine the worth of a piece of art or the police who enforce the law. Relevantly, Kelman notes that the outcome of this can for example (but for Kelman very importantly) be that "politics is a field of endeavour best left to those who specialise in it" and thus, so on, "poverty and deprivation become the concepts of social science, death and disease the experience of the medical profession[18]"; in this way life get divorced from reality and the ordinary (in Kelman's context working class) person adopts a resigned attitude to their fate. The ideal state is reached when people have wide knowledge of a different spectrum of inquiry; only then, Kelman seems to be saying, they can determine their own lives.

Cohn describes this in connection to critics of New Criticism and revolutionary vanguardist movement:

> […] the critical faculty, elaborating its laws too far from its immediate object, may construct categories or ideals that are in the nature of impassive moulds […]. This deductive model of inquiry is directly analogous to the vanguardist model of political action, in which the revolutionary élite, possessing 'correct' theory, imposes this rigid schema upon a 'mass' conceived as essentially homogenous and passive.[19]

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[16] Kelman, *Judges*, 145
[17] Kelman, *Judges*, 152.
[18] Kelman, *Judges*, 164.
[19] Cohn, 117.

Same as Kelman, Cohn argues that there is a need to be able to react to a particular situation and the ability to reconstruct and rearticulate principles is imperative for an encounter with any text. The vanguardist model of revolutionary action was criticised by Kelman in "Oppression and Solidarity":

> There is nothing more ridiculous than these so-called radical left-wing parties coming along to some demonstration or protest [...] spending their time arguing with the people out doing it on the street [...] about the theoretical incorrectness of their ideological approach [...].[20]

Kelman argues that to overcome this hurdle people need to take interest in as many fields as possible, so that they are able to understand the world without 'guidance'. Although talents vary, there is no reason not to hone one's skill and that there is essentially no difference between what skills and faculties are used for the 'expert' thinking employed in physics and the everyday activities like horse race betting[21]; there needs to be communication between both what is seen as everyday and the specialized or academic. This, Kelman suggests, enables one to 'stumble' upon the unexpected. One example for all could be: how the comprehension of Brownian motion can influence the way one thinks about society, to aid an emergence of a theory? This is where Kelman takes a leap using his remark which rehashes Brown and the aforementioned principle of interdisciplinarity seems to be suggesting that the statement that a "particle is a network of impulses or motions of a self-determining/self-regulatory kind, i.e. it seems to be governed by itself and for itself" can and has been be translated to social life and the life of an individual within society intuitively. What is of interest these notions are abound in anarchism particularly: Wolfi Landstreicher says in the beginning of his *Autonomous Self-Organization and Anarchist Intervention: A Tension in Practice* that autonomous self-organization [is] a specific phenomenon that tends to arise

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[20] Kelman, *Attacks*, 77.
[21] Kelman, *Judges*, 141.

whenever people, angered by their conditions and having lost faith in those delegated to act for them, decide to act for themselves.[22] This aligns with the idea of having the world interpreted and values delegated in a way that is unsatisfactory by an elite minority group that were mentioned earlier. Kelman is inconspicuously circles variety of libertarian ideas at that point.

The source of libertarian principles Chomsky sees derived from Cartesian principles of body and mind. Their discussion parallels the discussion of authoritative descriptive systems; if mind is purely mental and opposed to it is the physical world, there can be no evidence in the physical world that is beyond doubt; the only certainty is that one thinks and therefore exists – as René Descartes described it with what Kelman calls in his essay a natural judgment[23]. This was in attempt to construct one common foundation to all sciences and, at that time in history, hopefully to establish a connection between God and men[24]. These are the roots from which the libertarians derive the impossibility of such a system and the need for a wedding of those two approaches, of materialism and idealism; there are borders to human knowledge.

Withal, it is hardly graspable to those with authority to set the categories and theories that the in-their-eyes unqualified portions of the society could work and organise by themselves[25] which can lead to much more banal consequences. As an example Kelman uses the USA's problem with communism and the approach to the Chinese communist party in the 80s which organized by itself without any apparent aid or direct order from the Soviet Union. The basic thesis that there must be a world-wide but very well hidden communist conspiracy was held as a tenet of the US government and it was in no way adjusted so the most absurd theories to uphold the authority of that premise. The explanations to justify it reached from alien

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[22] Wolfi Landstreicher, *Autonomous Self-Organization and Anarchist Intervention: A Tension in Practice*, (Last Word Press, 2014) available online < https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/anonymous-autonomous-self-organization-and-anarchist-intervention-a-tension-in-practice>.
[23] Kelman, *Judges*, 158.
[24] Kelman, *Judges*, 157.
[25] Kelman, *Judges*, 152.

infiltrators to Satan, the important thing was to deny any possibility of the two separate instances of a form of communism to be independent from one united Communist mastermind which endangers the USA[26]. The lengths the government is able to go suggest a remarkable rigidity of the state in maintaining theories that were at that point in obvious need for rearticulation.

This segmentation to parts that exhibit similar traits but are independent forms the basis of libertarian ideologies; an individual is free but exists in a society, a community is independent but interacts with the world. As an example of this segmentation where the parts seem to be able to come up with own agenda Kelman brings in Andrew Fletcher, an anti-union Scottish writer and politician, who proposed that cities were modelled on "the Greek ideal of the little nation whose seat of government would remain in a city small enough to contain a face-to-face community where people could be under one another's eyes most of the time[27]" as a response to the oppressive dualism of the state, the state and the church respectively. This is federalism and as such is a strong current in anarchism with Proudhon, Bakunin or Kropotkin being the obvious proponents of it, as they are mentioned and their importance is highlighted in Colin Ward's *The Anarchist Sociology of Federalism*. Same as Ward or other anarchists respectively, Kelman seems to point to the positive effect of federalization, mainly in connection to authority (or the lack of its centralisation) and its pursuit of different needs from the needs of the subordinates. Additionally, Cohn relates federalism in literature to a nuanced, non-absolutizing literary representation: "Rather than a static 'harmony' then, anarchism produces a 'continually modified' series of arrangements, 'a temporary adjustment established among all forces acting upon a given spot […].[28]" However, representation in the sense of

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[26] Kelman, *Judges*, 152-153.
[27] Kelman, *Judges*, 160.
[28] Cohn, 122.

communication, meaning and relationship has to be permeated, without that the text would cease to exist; more about that in Kelman's writing further on.

Rousseau, who is regarded as a forerunner of anarchism/libertarianism in the ways that the state corrupts its citizens, was aware of Fletcher as it is rightfully pointed out by Kelman. There seems to be importance for Kelman in connection to the pursuit of freedom. Peter Marshall in his book on history of anarchism describes Rousseau as someone who

> reacted against the artificiality of European civilization by suggesting that we should develop a more natural way of living. The natural goodness of man had been depraved by government and political institutions; it was therefore necessarily to create them anew in order to let the natural man flourish.[29]

Kelman underscores Rousseau's dedication to freedom as well, according to his Rousseau perceived the strength of the will to self determination that led him to propose "the struggle for freedom (as) an essential human attribute.[30]" Anarchists very strongly disagree with Rousseau's idea of rebuilding the institutions or the fact that he looked back on a past golden age of man, but the idea of freedom of a man impinged by a coercive authority is central for them; for that Rousseau is sometimes considered as one of the fore-runners of anarchism. Rousseau thought liberty of a person to be central: "the noblest faculty of man[31]" or "a gift which they hold from nature as being men[32]". However his concept of liberty is different from Kelman's in that it is divorced from social life. Cohn formulates this thusly:" the alternative to the State is not a Rousseauvian 'state of nature,' a collection of absolutely [sic] selfcontained individuals; it is the self-management of society.[33]"

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[29] Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*, (London: Harper Perennial, 2008) 15.
[30] Kelman, *Judges*.
[31] Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 123.
[32] Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 123.
[33] Cohn, 122.

Liberty and/or freedom are central to anarchists and as such this is what separates them from the authoritative strands of leftism. One can illustrate that on the continuation of the Goldman quote in the beginning: "in the battle for freedom [...] it is the struggle for, not so much the attainment of, liberty that develops all that is strongest, sturdiest and finest in human character.[34]" Cohn pin-points that in the beginning of his essay saying that anarchism is rooted in ethical affirmation of freedom and equality; in Kelman's words: "the basic principle of humankind is freedom.[35]"

Kelman takes this as the most moving principle of Chomsky's work. Arguments about human nature and fixed principles must lead to hierarchy,[36]" which is what he opposes. He assumes that this leads to "people being born to rule or to serve; people being born lazy or talented[37]" and so on. "Such arguments are thought to suggest that we are not born free at all but are chained to out essential selves.[38]" This is a position that Saul Newman highlights Gilles Deleuze, whose philosophy has been used to interpret Kelman, holds and that his "poststructuralist rejection of State thought, and more importantly, the ways in which their anti-essentialist, post-humanist anarchism transcends and, thus, reflects upon, the limits of classical anarchism.[39]" A true democracy in this day and age is a form of meritocracy where the most educated experts in their very focused fields govern on behalf of others and receive incomparable compensation while Kelman thinks it should not be so – or as he quotes from Chomsky: "Those who assume otherwise must be adopting the tacit premise that people's right or social reward are somehow contingent on their abilities.[40]" The basic premise is – he notes – the fight for freedom. Not a new one, he admits, but still relevant. His stance is anti-positivist and when read against the anarchist literary theory Kelman follows its principles.

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[34] Goldman, "What I Believe".
[35] Kelman, *Judges*, 185.
[36] Kelman, *Judges*, 184.
[37] Kelman, *Judges*, 184.
[38] Kelman, *Judges*, 185.
[39] Newman.
[40] Kelman, *Judges*, 185.

2.2. Voting, Political Representation and Direct Action

Political representation is the way to delegate people to speak, act or indeed represent on behalf of those who elected them, and there are various issues and struggles specific to Scotland and Glasgow (i.e. the asbestos related diseases of dock workers) which embody the problem of representation or perhaps non-representation discussed by Kelman; who and how does interpret what one needs? Representing workers in issues such as work related diseases, in his own words, "isn't fight for the politicians [...]. It should be, but it isn't.[41]" Kelman states bluntly in one of the talks recorded in writing concerned with the victims of asbestos in the city of Glasgow that "we know the government doesn't govern on behalf of the people, it governs on behalf of those who control them.[42]" The argument that he tries to develop throughout the talk is that government and the state operate in such a way that aids the corporations in avoiding taking (financial) responsibility for the asbestos related diseases of the workers who came into contact with the substance. The author then posits a resolution to the people involved; a more direct way to deal with the seemingly isolated world of 'political' issues: "The only sure way to fight against this and similar tragedies is from the ground upwards.[43]" Namely in the case of the asbestos victims the unions have not been helpful and the only viable means of support is a self-organized, worker-led Clydeside Action on Asbestos.

Politicians are seen by Kelman as one of the elite castes of people who are more versed in the subject of politics – the experts in the field but alas serve different agenda – Kelman remarks upon a disconnection between people and the world of politics. The apathy towards the electoral system is then interpreted as an apolitical stance and it is inadmissible that this stance could mean rejection of the political system. The fact that people do not vote could be

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[41] Kelman, *Attacks*, 62.
[42] Kelman, *Attacks*, 59.
[43] Kelman, *Attacks*, 62.

seen then as their refusal, however, it is interpreted neglect – the non-voting option is not taken into consideration, even if majority of the society refused to go and vote. "That 25 percent would have been transformed into a 100 percent, [...][44]" and in doing so the rest would be totally omitted, Kelman notes. In addition to that critique, he even says that "[a]ll the public assets now under threat (the ones not yet closed or sold off) will not be saved by political representation.[45]"

It is indeed in his essay "Let the Wind Blow High, Let the Wind Blow Low" Kelman discusses voting thoroughly, namely the various form of not-voting. Firstly, in the USA "some 85 percent of the population are apparently 'apolitical' since they don't bother registering a vote[46]"; these people do not vote because of choice; the choice then can take multiple forms – conscientious abstention or simply having different problems at the time of the election, neglect of sorts. Secondly, as it is exemplified on the apartheid state of South Africa, portions of the society cannot vote – this can also happen for political or in this case racist reasons. However, still the turnout of the South African elections could have been scrutinized by experts who offered back-to-front analyses of it, only to omit the most important aspect: staggering nine tenths of the population were not allowed to cast the ballot[47], Kelman says. While commenting on the example, Kelman does not hide his contempt for these experts:

> "An occasional [one] will fly in from an off-campus think-tank, referring to the 'South African model' as an Athenian Democracy, like pious Professor Paul from St Andrew's University who is thoroughly favour of the system and wants it extended to all corners of the globe[48].

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[44] Kelman, *Attacks*, 87.
[45] Kelman, *Attacks*, 42.
[46] Kelman, *Attacks*, 87.
[47] Kelman, *Attacks*, 88.
[48] Kelman, *Attacks*, 88.

The situation in the Scottish political establishment at the time of the election is discussed as well. Kelman says that those who voted overwhelmingly rejected the Tory government as a gesture that seemed to signal disillusionment with the UK political system that allows running Scotland as a subsidy to England. 64 % of the whole population of Scotland voted from which the 84 % rejected the UK political system; conversely, only 16 % endorsed it[49]. The 84 percent voted for the Scottish National Party or the Labour Party to change the system from the inside; following Kelman's reasoning, it seems to have been their only choice because, effectively, as is remarked by Kelman, it is the only sanctioned way how to discuss and fight against the system – from within the system – and what he calls 'pure politics' (a revolutionary change/change to the system) is hushed, the discussion always seems to be confined, the barriers set:

> 'Pure' politics is pushed to the sidelines. [...] It becomes bad form to discuss one's differences. Unity [against the Tories] is the watchword, It isn't a time for awkward questions. Those who persist are shown up as perverse, slightly bammy, crackpots – or occasionally unpatriotic. What we discuss is what we are allowed to discuss.[50]

Arguably, these are the points where Kelman converges with the anarchist thought most obviously. To showcase the similarities Colin Ward's "The Case Against Voting" will be used. Ward, being born in England, uses the 1983 elections instead to comment on the same issue as Kelman. He uses Tony Banks' example, a Labour MP at the time – to whom the non-voters are not only considered politically inactive, they are ignorant. Had they voted, the votes would surely have been cast for someone from the establishment, someone favourable for Banks, Ward says. He writes, quoting the MP: "Banks reckons that they form 24 per cent of the electorate and he claims that 'those ten million or so who failed to vote in 1983 have a

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[49] Kelman, *Attacks*, 88.
[50] Kelman, *Attacks*, 86.

great deal to answer for to those who did'.[51]" Ward also notes on the South African example that there might be large portions of society barred from voting. Likewise in Ireland similar approach was adopted by the Westminster government, the government that is discussed and criticised by Kelman:

> Having abolished an Irish Parliament the government made sure that the majority of the Irish were ineligible to elect MPs to Westminster, and after the passing of the Roman Catholic Relief Act, ensured that this majority still couldn't vote by raising the property qualification from ownership of land worth 40 shillings a year to a figure of ten pounds a year.[52]

Those absent in the polling stations fall into different groups, Ward says, and makes distinctions which Kelman does not make "the sick, the indifferent and the idle, those who have something more pressing to do on a Thursday, as well as the hilarious prohibited categories like peers, the insane and Anglican clergymen.[53]" However, it seems unlikely that Kelman would not see those differences in motivation and consider all of the folk who practice abstention to be revolutionaries – they are chiefly disillusioned about the voting system that does not empower them. The next camp, as we can see on the case of the South African Republic and Ireland, consists of people who are not desirable to have a say in public affairs; conscientious refusal to vote (the revolutionary thought, one could argue) is hard and ultimately meaningless to trace.

Trying to change the system from within it is futile and no progress can be achieved, that seems to be the consensus of Ward as an anarchist and Kelman. The reason for this is not only the remarkable rigidity and unwillingness for change, the vote for any party would mean participation in the system *ergo* a premise the anarchists and Kelman refuse because of the

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[51] Colin Ward, "The Case Against Voting," *Freedom* Vol 48 No 6, June 1987. available online
<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/colin-ward-the-case-against-voting>
[52] Ward.
[53] Ward.

fundamental flaws of the system. The people working towards a change within the system only find themselves not heard, not only because they seem to have been using ineffective weapons but because it is not built to represent them; in the current system in western democracies, Kelman says, "voting is usually just a method of "ratifying decisions that have already been made" by one or two people in an office.[54]" Kelman points that out with abundant sarcasm in "Let the Wind [...]"; it is at that point where the essay turns into satire:

> We shall march on Westminster itself, the entire voting population of Scotland, and when we arrive, we shall demand of U.K. ruling authority that they pay heed our unified cry for self determination. Our demand shall be carried by our appointed representatives. [...] Her Majesty's Government listens as it has never listened before. [...][55]

The reaction to the scenario where these demands are not met is mock-ominously described, it reaches comical highs. Ultimately, however, these threats ring pathetic and benign:

> And if they don't pay heed to us now then this is our very last word and we cannot vouch for our continued participation in the rules and procedures of state [...] And by the Gude Lord Jasus the entire voting population would just damn well carry on waiting right there on this pavement and see what Her Majesty's Government was going to do about that! [...] We'll carry on waiting until they give us an answer, that'll show them the measure of our resolve.[56]

Using archaic language in the address, its backwardness seems to mirror the outdated monarchic system and serves as yet another layer of critique largely synergizing with anarchists such as Bakunin who says that they "are firmly convinced that the most imperfect republic is a thousand times better than the most enlightened monarchy[57]"; monarchy is the worst of states for anarchists.

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[54] Kelman, *Judges*, 160.
[55] Kelman, *Attacks*, 90.
[56] Kelman, *Attacks*, 91.
[57] Mikhail Bakunin, ed. Sam Dolgoff, *Bakunin on Anarchy*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1971) 144.

His sentences concerning representation are imbued with the same tone; they convey his image of what it means representation. It can be assumed that for Kelman it means ranks of people who are unlike those whom they represent because representation in western democracies mirrors only those who are in power. There is certain variety but it is pointed at as mere tokenism or variety for the sake of variety which is irrelevant and benign to the government; it exists for the sake of people represented: they are not supposed to feel too disconnected from their representatives it can be assumed that what is sorely missed here by Kelman is the variable of class, and aforementioned divorce with power. Voting can never achieve any true form representation – assuming such thing even exists in for Kelman – but a bunch of party leaders, media personalities and constitutional experts[58]. Kelman parodies this situation, the people are caricatures:

> When we march forward we shall march solidly not breaking ranks; we shall comb our hair and wear smart leather shoes, dress in suits and shirts and ties – formal highland attire will not be frowned upon – this includes females and those from an ethnic background.[59]

The same refusal of the authorities can be seen in the language which is littered with mock-official terms such as "Home Office Junior Minister-Without-Portfolio"[60], "Her Majesty's constabulary (bobby division)"[61] or "Under-Secretary's assistant"[62]. What is also remarkable is the abundant usage of genitive by which Her Majesty's duties are assigned to someone else, or the fact that for the same reason the Under-Secretary has their own assistant; nearly every one of the officials has their delegated representative.

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[58] Kelman, *Attacks*, 90.
[59] Kelman, *Attacks*, 90.
[60] Kelman, *Attacks*, 90.
[61] Kelman, *Attacks*, 90.
[62] Kelman, *Attacks*, 90.

Nevertheless, Kelman seems to not eschew representation altogether, he only wants to see it serve its ends, to be fluid; there are times and places where representation can be effective as he puts it in "Oppression and Solidarity":

> It's not that making representation to our elected and constitutionally attested-representatives might not be a good move, as far as *your* particular struggle is concerned; bit within my struggle, [...] within the context of [Glasgow's] culture(s), such move is absolutely worthless, a waste of time and resources [...].[63]

This corresponds with general anarchist view which poses itself against positivism, i.e. primacy of science over life and actual situations in praxis. Likewise, Cohn points out precisely where the point of distinction is: "anarchism has always posed a rigorous and profound critique of the intersection of representation with power[64]". Representation needs to be plural and able to change the positions. "[R]epresentation is thus not rejected but *reconcieved*[65]"; it is a constant "forming and disbanding of thousands of representative [...] bodies[66]".

How to politically profess the freedom one gains when their needs are met if today's political representation is not enough then? Kelman sees the importance of "thinking in terms of organising social movements, organising in the workplace, organising in the neighbourhood, organising collectives.[67]" This means essentially direct action instead of representation, in the most common sense terms; each person thinking for themselves, their needs and acting in a way so that these needs are met. Kelman puts direct action in contrast with the voting system and the world of 'politics' in "Some Recent Attacks on the Rights of the People." He writes about how the *status quo* is presented as an unmoving condition; the imperative of the state is "cling to what you have, in the face of irresistible forces. Only the 'loonies' think otherwise,

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[63] Kelman, *Attacks*, 76.
[64] Cohn, 122.
[65] Cohn, 122.
[66] Cohn, 122.
[67] Kelman, *Attacks*, 45.

dewy-eyed idealists and sentimental fools, people who live in a dream world.[68]" Direct activity towards change seems to be faced with fatalistic approach from the state.

In the face of powerlessness and the monopoly of experts, Kelman sees a shift "in this and other countries [...] to direct action, mobilisation – know in the fame as 'civil disobedience' – giving the lie to the "change-is-not-possible" message[69]". There is always the possibility of radical change and direct action which is a vital component of anarchism enables that. Voltairine De Cleyre, an American anarchist, contemporary of Emma Goldman, described it in the most plain terms as an everyday life experience "Every person who ever had a plan to do anything, and went and did it, or who laid his plan before others, and won their co-operation to do it with him, without going to external authorities to please do the thing for them, was a direct actionist."[70] Goldman comments on it as a strategy "against the authority in the shop, [...] against the authority of the law, [...] against the invasive, meddlesome authority of our moral code" that is according to her "the logical, consistent method of Anarchism.[71]" This needs seems to spring not from an idealist, purely intellectual setting but because for the most immediate needs in life, direct action is the most potent problem solving method, and it is in direct opposition to the way it is seen by the state; it engages people without delegating outside authority and in itself could be described as common sense. Kelman also comments on the position of people who point finger at the 'dewy-eyed idealists', who propagate this radical change, namely on the insufficiency of their approach turning the positions on its head, asking "[where] have the 'realists' been during the past dozen years' riots, strikes,

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[68] Kelman, *Attacks*, 45.
[69] Kelman, *Attacks*, 45.
[70] Voltairine De Cleyre, *Direct Action*, (The Anarchist Library: Oct 17, 2009). available online < https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/voltairine-de-cleyre-direct-action.pdf>.
[71] Emma Goldman, ed Alix Kates Schulman, *Red Emma Speaks* (New York: Humanity Books, 1988) 76-77.

protests and demonstrations?[72]" He sees those people as the motor for social change and the

fact that state employs forces to check on direct actionists proves their efficacy.

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[72] Kelman, *Attacks*, 45.

3. In Prose

3.1. Scottish Miserablism

"The primary critical question, for anarchists, is how a given text can be seen to represent life."

– Jesse Cohn, "What Is Anarchist Literary Theory?[73]"

While the previous part of the thesis is about author's activist writing, Kelman's socio-political view and what positions hold freedom, authority and representation in it, now, let us move to his prose. In what way can these categories be considered? Kelman's prose faces the world of post-Thatcherite Great Britain with unyielding authorities that have grown apart from the people in offices, at doctor's waiting rooms or in courts; people who have to face these institutions driven by profit with said disregard for human life or health are often represented. In the words of John Kirk

> [Kelman's] writing projects proletarian consciousness struggling to understand the condition of modernity, which has driven a wedge between essence and appearance, fact and value [where the citizen] knows he is at the mercy of a vas machinery of officialdom whose functioning is directed by authorities that remain nebulous to the executive organs let alone the people they deal with.[74]

and that

> [his] stories articulate this condition through the figure of the down-and-out [...] or through representations of urban and industrial dereliction.[75]

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[73] Cohn, 123.
[74] John Kirk, "Figuring the Dispossessed: Images of the Urban Working Class in the Writing of James Kelman," *English*, Vol. 48 (1999) 108.
[75] Kirk, 104.

Among others Kövesi writes about the vigorous reaction to this, mainly about critics who have voiced their displeasure with what they perceive as a style of life unfit to be represented. Stuart Cosgrove and Alexander McCall Smith, Kövesi notes, "have launched separate controversial condemnation of a 'miserablist' tendency in Scotland's cultural output.[76]" Addressing Kelman (and his compatriot Irvine Welsh), they claim that most Scots are in fact not like the characters in Kelman's (or Welsh's) fiction. Albeit Cosgrove lauds Kelman's breath of fresh air into Scottish literary stereotypes he still argues that "Scottish artists should re-focus on the positive aspects of Scottish life.[77]" In truth, according to Andrew O'Hagan, another one of the quoted by Kövesi, "Scotland actually has no idea just how impoverished it is[78]" because of Kelman's and other's narrow view of the world. Aaron Kelly notes the major oversight of these attacks which omits the facts that "Kelman's work is able to engage and affirm the existence of those whose lives take place outside the liberal consensus" and reminds one that

> country house wedding which neatly resolve novels with due social import, daring trips to exciting new lands where travelogues trace the burgeoning development of the sophisticated souls [...] do not embody a culture [...] they instead instantiate merely the privilege, money and ease necessary for the plot, content and form of such culture to take place.[79]

Kelman has often had to fend off these men who try to judge his output, be it when they criticize content of his works or evaluate the propriety of the material for publishing. Such was for example the case with the film version of *The Busconductor Hines*, because "in order to secure funding, his script had to be assessed by the publicly funded body Scottish Screen[80]" which Kelman vehemently opposed and the film had to be cancelled relatively far in the

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[76] Kövesi, 2.
[77] Kövesi, 2.
[78] Kövesi, 2.
[79] Aaron Kelly, *James Kelman: Politics and Aesthetics*, (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013) 9.
[80] Kövesi, 4.

making. In *Some Recent Attacks* he stated that there are kinds of art that are freer from censorship and film (television film that is) is on the opposite side of the spectrum[81] because of these organs. Kelman argues precisely against what the aforementioned journalists and critics would bar him from doing – writing on whatever subject he pleases in whatever manner he finds honest. The imperative is to "go and write a story for X amount of pounds; any story at all, providing you stay within the bounds,[82]" he writes, however, that this censorship is implicit and is "carried out by a series of nudges and winks and tacit agreement.[83]" With that one has to reach for compromise which then leads to "the end result which is dishonesty, deceit, falsity.[84]"

The principle of oppressive authority and 'the experts' interfering with individual's life plays important role for Kelman only not in the field of politics, academia or journalism but also in the fiction he produces. It is the interplay between the outside world and the characters that react to their environment and create their own unique coping mechanics to their particular struggles. This reflects Kelman's remark that "every human being is unique[85]" and by extension that "no one can ever hope to fully comprehend anyone else[86]" because, as Cohn quotes Bakunin, "each individual is the ever-renewing result of numerous material, intellectual, and moral influences of the surrounding individuals and of the society into which he is born.[87]" Kelman remarks in the interview for *The Independent* from 15th July 2016 about the average experience of an average working class person. Along with it he again points finger at the elites and experts:

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[81] Kelman, *Attacks*, 84.
[82] Kelman, *Attacks*, 83.
[83] Kelman, *Attacks*, 84.
[84] Kelman, *Attacks*, 84.
[85] Kelman, *Judges*, 151.
[86] Kelman, *Judges*, 151.
[87] Cohn, 122.

I think that is an essential working-class experience. [...] Intimidation, provocation, sarcasm, contempt, disgust and so on. You learn how to cope with it as a young person, because you see your parents in that situation, for example if they're dealing with the doctor or the headmaster [...][88].

This helps to elucidate what Kelman's intention is in the end: to put the working class experience which he knows intimately but could not find in literature. "The stories I wanted to write would derive from my own background [...]. I wanted to write and remain a member of my own community[89]" he claims.

An Old Pub Near The Angel (a collection of short stories that is "preoccupied with the difficulty of communicating truth outside the perceptions of a single subject[90]") represents the early attempts of Kelman, in his own words "flexing of muscles"[91]. In "Nice to be Nice," a story about a man that is too nice to others to the point that they use him for it, the protagonist, Stan, tries to help his neighbour and her daughter not to get evicted. His efforts are met not with hostility or violence but rather indifference; the bureaucratic environment cannot be reasoned and where compromise is not an option. Later on stories such as "In with the Doctor" from *Greyhound for Breakfast* present a different angle of confronting indifferent or arrogant authorities. The man confronting the doctor in this story is hostile to him immediately from the beginning, he is aware of their respective positions: at first its subtle distaste that comes though the man's shock at being too servile to the doctor, later this transforms to open hostility inspired by the elitist behaviour of the doctor. The overarching thought behind this is the fact that certain structures of everyday life, structures that ordinary people meet on regular basis are there not to serve them.

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[88]Libby Brooks, *The Independent*, 15 July 2016 , available online <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jul/15/books-interview-james-kelman-working-class-experience> 24 Oct 2016.
[89] Kelman, *Attacks*, 81.
[90] Paul Shanks, *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman*, "Early Kelman," (Edinburgh University Press, 2010) 10.
[91] Shanks, *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman*, "Early Kelman," 15.

In his later prose there are characters such as Robert Hines in *The Busconductor Hines* who are conscious of their position within the society but are unable to produce an effective answer. Working as a conductor in busses he finds himself trapped in work that is dull, living in a flat without a bedroom; Hines is in a position that is hardly graspable for him. Kirk describes this condition as "a strong sense of powerlessness[92]" and "a terrible alienation which dominates Hines' existence.[93]" His responses are the strongest in his language as his "subjective, and often circular, musing yield to a more direct and quasi-political (perhaps quasi-anarchistic) discourse.[94]" Even Hines' involvement in the strike ends in disappointment – the end result which bares naked the hierarchization of unions who do not serve the interests of the workers but as "a body designed simply to mediate and defuse conflict.[95]" Because, the world of the working class in no longer sufficiently covered by depicting strikes and valiant struggle against the oppressor, such framing of the workers' life would be dishonest: "one would search Kelman's writing in vain [...] for other 'epic' figures of thirties working class writing: the 'heroic' Communist or working class autodidact with a Marxist analysis to relieve worker's ills. [...] No-one is fighting [...] for a cause, but merely to get by.[96]"

The characters often but not exclusively found in Kelman's earlier prose find their way out of this powerless alienation by the way of enjoying their time unemployed. Be it Jack Duncan of "The Cards" or Sammy Samuels from his most known piece *How Late It Was, How Late*, these people choose not to fulfil the function of a dutiful employee. Shanks even notes a certain optimism in some characters who found themselves unemployed, which derives from their nothing-to-lose social status, such as in "Abject Misery":

> The rain started falling heavily.

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[92] Kirk, 107.
[93] Kirk, 107.
[94] Kirk, 109.
[95] Kirk, 109.
[96] Kirk, 102.

> 'Who cares,' he shouted waving his fist upwards. 'Who cares anyway eh? My feet are soaking already ha ha ha.'[97]

Yet these periods of jobless freedom do not provide a solution but induce even more anxiety in the characters and their bouts of perceived freedom are mere episodes in what Kirk describes as "hopelessness of a long term-unemployment[98]". As one can see when Patrick Doyle of *A Disaffection* is taken out of his working class background, disengages himself from the working class reality and muses about leaving his job because it does not personally satisfy him on an intellectual level seemingly ignorant workers reveal their deep knowledge of the situation. It is then when Gavin, his unemployed brother, retorts berating Pat for leaving a stable job and inadvertently not only reveals his awareness of the problem of structural unemployment in Scotland but also hints at his brother's disconnection with the working class reality.

There we can see that the characters are not simple, without any means of rationalizing the world or only of purely working class background; Patrick is capable of "existential questioning, reminiscent of Piaget and Descartes among others.[99]" As a teacher, Pat's "work is defined by an abstract content, by an abstract and unquantifiable object[100]" and it is for that reason that Patrick intends to get back to the more tangible assets in life (leave his job), get back from the routine of school-teaching where he is to rehash a set of abstract thoughts to his pupils every day; thoughts, "dusty webs[101]" of them, nonetheless, that he claims to see through as a tool in the hands of those who control the system, unleashed to control the future citizens. He is aware of his position in the society and relies on knowledge about leftist politics to solve its mysteries for him. Mary McGlynn comment on that thusly: "Not unlike

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[97] Shanks, *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman*, "Early Kelman," 10.
[98] Kirk, 101.
[99] Mary McGlynn, ""Middle-Class Wankers" and Working-Class Texts: The Critics and James Kelman," *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Spring, 2002) 76.
[100] Roberto del Valle Alcalá, *British Working-Class Fiction: Narratives of Refusal and the Struggle*, "Beyond Civil Society," (Bloomsbury: London, New York, 2016) 95.
[101] James Kelman, *A Disaffection*, (Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd, 1989) 10.

Gavin's uninformed embrace of Marx, Pat's supposedly more educated view, in its failure to account for labor, misinterprets what it means to be a worker.[102]"

Pat's frustration extends into the area of personal relationships where, for him, classes collide; it is exhibited in close family ties with his parents and brother. These ties are severed by upward mobility of the son who once reintroduced into the working class household no longer 'fits', even to the point of seeing the parents and brother as dumb, unaware or ignorant. When Patrick comes as a guest to their households there can be seen what Kirk describes as "localised working class history, class memory and politics[103]" and "a materialistic desire to share, signified by the central placing of food and drink;[104]" put in simple terms, the people from the neighbourhood are friends. The condescension arises from what is, or perhaps is not, discussed among those friends: Patrick interprets that banalities prevail in their discourse; he exhibits "a Heideggerian contempt for what he perceives as 'small talk'[105]". His adherence to the knowledge he obtained through education is again strictly doctrinal, and thus he is not able to pick up from the conversation that grave issues are being discussed among the men; he misses those much like he misses the goal in the football game in the TV[106].

One evening his previous intellectual revolt transmutes into a possibility of physical threat to the window of a bank, a quasi-direct action against private property one might say, in fact keeping in line with De Clayre's description of direct action as not necessarily sentient political action but an impulsive reaction to one's conditions:

> This was the window Patrick's brick would smash. If the was about to become seriously engaged in the world then this was the time and this was the place. [...] He could be smashing in the windows of each and every bank [...]. And also those of

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[102] McGlynn, 79.
[103] Kirk, 113.
[104] Kirk, 113.
[105] Kirk, 113.
[106] Kirk, 113.

building societies and insurance offices – anything at all connected with the financial institutions of the Greatbritish Rulers[107].

From doing this the on looking police stop him; his threat is purely theoretical. His doctrine is clear, he is educated and knows all the revolutionaries and their mottos, yet he is unable to apply them in real life situations, not as an individual anyway. It can be postulated that he is contemplating the appearance of how things ought to be and how to properly engage in working class struggle but he does not know how to reconcile the rules with reality because they do not seem appropriate or effective.

A conceptual turn is taken in *How Late it Was, How Late*. We follow Sammy's blind journey throughout the novel we witness the encounters with authorities in search of financial recompense who has created a particularly salient strategy of making sense of the world; he is blind in literal and figurative sense in the realm of state apparatus. Yet Sammy traces the rebel strain in Kelman's prose. He is instinctively aware of the possible ways the clerks can deceit, and is uneasy about the possibility of them taking charge of his life, perhaps taking what he perceives as freedom; he is in the know of the system he deals with and chooses to flee from its grasp. The long interrogation style visit in the office to claim his benefit for losing his sight to beating by the police (note the similarities to Kelman's talk on the victims of asbestos and the painstaking procedure of claiming their benefits to cover the cost of treatment written around the same time as *How Late it Was, How Late*) ends in resignation of the anti-hero for the official way of settlement: the state sanctioned way of settling matters is a no way to go for Sammy, because after the first encounter he recognizes that the structures of the state are quite similar: Fuck them. Fuck them. He sighed and leant back on the chair; [...] Fuck them.

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[107] Kelman, *A Disaffection,* 335.

She was talking, fuck her. Fuck ye hen. Sammy lifted the stick then got himself onto his feet. Bla bla bla.[108]

How Late it Was, How Late shows a person who is an ex-convict in a society whose repressive apparatus is very well known to him. The police who arrest and interrogate him later in the novel are well acquainted with his criminal history but Sammy does not yield to their efforts to retrieve information either; he takes the "line of flight[109]" in the terms of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* and in every interaction with the authority and the state apparatus: when the police first apprehend him he remarks on the fact as "the usual" and sees the world of state repression as an external fact. In "Beyond Civil Society" Alcalá points out the connection of this and Sammy's life philosophy that was epitomized thusly by the man himself: "Some folk just keep going man they push ahead. And that's what the cunts dont like, they want ye to fucking do yerself in. See if ye dont but, see if ye go and fucking attack, then that's them man they're fuckt."[110] Sammy constantly shifts his position, he refuses to be represented – in the literal way when he vehemently turns down Ally's proposals to do so for him – and figuratively with his constant *becoming* (in Deleuzian terms).

It is not always misery and filth that is represented, nonetheless, it seems that examining these examples on the plot level cannot yield a satisfying conclusion about the nature of Kelman's revolt; the only qualities one can find is somewhat hopeless fight against the authorities, confusion and aggression as a filter to that confusion, attempts to make sense of the world each character in their own unique way; there is no valiant working class hero like there was in the working class literature of the past and their attempt to interpret the world is futile. Kelly judges the defences of Kelman's works to be on the same level as the attacks: "Again

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[108]James Kelman, *How Late it Was, How Late*, (London: Vintage, 1998) 107.
[109] Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guatarri, *A Thousand Plateaus*, (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, London, 1987) 3.
[110] Kelman, *How Late,* 118.

there is an effort to make a case for Kelman yet a persisting assumption that his work is limited by its own content, that its range and merit is circumscribed by the depleted sphere which it reflects.[111]" It is imperative to look elsewhere, behind the facade, and see that the politics largely happen there: on the level of culture that is denied the same material outlets for its existence and in language by the sheer fact that the characters exist on paper; in what these characters and language represent and how it is presented. Mikhail Bakhtin, who is quoted by Jeremy Scott, sees that "form and content in discourse are one,[112]" and that "verbal discourse is a social phenomenon – social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors.[113]" Cohn notes what Kelly wrote about as well, that an aesthetic point of criticism needs to be taken where one engages with the text in a conversation after which the text and the critic are changed, an anarchist position indeed.

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[111] Kelly, 9.

[112] Mikhail Bakhtin qtd. by Jeremy Scott, "Talking Back at the Centre: Demotic Language in Contemporary Scottish Fiction" *Literature Compass 2* (2005) 3.

[113] Bakhtin qtd. by Jeremy Scott, 3.

3.2. Levelling Cultural and Linguistic Hierarchies

"A style of speech is an hypothesis about how the world is."

– Benjamin Whorf, cited by Jesse Cohn in "What Is Anarchist Literary Theory?"[114]

Hierarchies are in the anarchist view permeate every aspect of life; important aspects for the thesis are cultural and language hierarchies. Let us start from the nationalist question. For his use of demotic Glasgow patter, intensive involvement in cultural issues and in various local causes such as independence of Scotland from Great Britain, Kelman is often described as a nationalist – position irreconcilable with anarchist politics. Yet Kövesi claims that Kelman is "solidly anarchic and existentialist in his rejection of nationalist identity[115]" as a proof he gives a passage from *Some Recent Attacks* where Kelman details his approach to what some might call nationalism:

> Entities like 'Scotsman, 'German', 'Indian' or 'American'; 'Scottish culture', 'Jamaican culture', 'African culture' or 'Asian culture' are material absurdities. They aren't particular things in the world. There are no material bodies that correspond to them. We only used those terms in the way we use other terms such as 'tree', 'bird', 'vehicle' or 'red'. They define abstract concepts [...]. We use these terms for the general purpose of making sense of the world, and for communicating sensibly with other individuals.[116]

Indeed this is what Cohn says in his thesis for a common anarchist literary criticism when he writes, drawing on André Leo, that "language [...] as a "structure of intelligibility[117]" is necessary to communication" and on Caroline Granier with "representation ensures the coherence of social exchanges.[118]" Without these there could be no social bond, so they say. Kelman points out similarly that it is "[w]hen we meet with people from different groups and

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[114] Cohn, 123.
[115] Kövesi, 5.
[116] Kelman, *Attacks*, 72.
[117] Cohn, 123.
[118] Cohn, 123.

cultures we try to tighten up on these loose, unparticularised definition and descriptions.[119]"
One needs to use them to communicate yet in no way they should hold absolute power to define the individual.

To add a more focused view on the issue, it is noteworthy that Kelman also wrote about the importance of Glasgow in his work from which many parallels with the national question can be drawn. Even the initial tone of the talk written for gathering at Extra Mural Department of Glasgow University creative writing group titled "The Importance of Glasgow in My Work" seems dismissive of the actual importance and rather flips the whole argument upside down – "why Glasgow isn't important[120][?]" There is nothing whatsoever special about the city in itself, he suggests; it is rather formed by the *relationships* with other parts of the world. In addressing the relation we can again hear Cohn's words about his anarchist literary theory reverberate. Kelman then, in a Barthesian manner, proceeds to strip the city of all mythology that could have been associated with it and sees only the subjective qualities and facts: "Glasgow just happens to be the city that I was born within and where some of my family, some of my relations, some of my friends and some of my neighbours happen to live.[121]" The principal quality of Glasgow for Kelman is the freedom he has as a writer to write whatever he wants, namely mainly stories, and, given Kelman's activism, socially 'committed' stories to be most precise. According to Kelman, in other parts of the world the idea of staying committed to a political cause would force the artists to "[become] organizers, activists, soldiers with little or no time left for their own art." Had Kelman, according to his own words, been born in a "different part of the world, a different social and cultural environment,

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[119] Kelman, *Attacks*, 72
[120] Kelman, *Attacks*, 78.
[121] Kelman, *Attacks*, 78.

then the fact of that in itself might have been crucially important[122]" because of the ability or inability to use freedom, to interrogate, to question

When one is talking about Scottish culture, Glasgow is just a part of a culture that is shunned at best, not allowed to exist at worst, and that is the level where the political battle takes place. Kelman famously commented on the state of culture in Scotland when he attended an event of the literary establishment (provocatively underdressed for that occasion) with the proclamation that: "My culture and my language have the right to exist, and no one has the authority to dismiss that.[123]" Very similar calls echo through Murray Bookchin, anarchist and libertarian socialist author, who wrote:

> [S]pecific peoples should be free to fully develop their own cultural capacities is not merely a right but a desideratum. The world would be a drab place indeed if a magnificent mosaic of different cultures does not replace the largely decultured and homogenised world[.][124]

Therefore Kelman does not deny the existence of nations – an idea that none of the anarchists refuse but rather elevate – but strip this fact of its state aspect in the same manner Kelman does and elevate the cultural one; when Kelman sees nation as an important factor it is, too, when culture and mainly language are concerned. As Rudolf Rocker puts it "nation is not the cause, but the result of the state. It is the state that creates the nation, not the nation the state.[125]" Every state "is an artificial mechanism imposed upon [people] from above by some ruler"[126] but

> a nation [...] encompasses a whole array of different peoples and groups of peoples who have by more or less violent means been pressed into the frame of a common

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[122] Kelman, *Attacks*, 78.

[123] James Kelman, "Elitist Slurs Are Racism By Another Name," *Scotland on Sunday: Spectrum Supplement*, 16 Oct 1994. available online <https://rosedetivoli.github.io/kelman/>.

[124] Murray Bookchin, "Nationalism and the 'National Question'", *Society and Nature*, No. 5, 28-29.

[125] Rudolf Rocker, *Nationalism and Culture*, (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1997) 221.

[126] Rocker, *Nationalism and Culture*, 221.

state. In fact, in all of Europe there is no state which does not consist of a group of different peoples who were originally of different descent and speech and were forged together into one nation solely by dynastic, economic and political interests.[127]

The controversy of Kelman having been awarded the Booker Prize was the culmination of the anti-English sentiment that many critics have picked up upon in Kelman's works. The domination of what here will be called English culture, namely English literary establishment, over the Scottish (or perhaps more locally focused – Glaswegian) writing is nicely exemplified in it and brings forth the question of colonization and the status of England as a former colonial power, effectively subjugating the peoples of different nations including Scotland, it might be argued. Fittingly, The Booker Prize was initially founded by a colonial trading corporation. The history of the prize could be in short laid down as follows: Booker McConnell was a colonial business like many in the 19th century that significantly contributed to GDPs of colonised states, but was virtually unknown in the UK. To help put the name Booker on the market the company funded the founding of the prize in order to secure profits when the empire ceased to exist as such[128]. The official aim was, and continues to be, according to Kelman's view, the mission of the English to civilize other countries into which they underwent the colonial expansion; in a sense the English cultural identity is intimately bound to colonialism and the quest to enlighten the world with 'high culture' which is then synonymous with English culture. Ironically enough, the prize nowadays comprises of majority of 'foreign,' non-English authors[129], if not as winner then, more commonly, as the ones shortlisted for the award. Still, the prize serves as means to confer credibility to those not from the centre; the words of Rocker about the essence of the English people ring oddly true in this mythology: "The Englishman appears to us as the living embodiment of sober

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[127] Rocker, *Nationalism and Culture*, 221.
[128] Nicola Pitchford, "How Late It Was for England: James Kelman's Scottish Booker Prize," *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 697.
[129] Pitchford, 698.

understanding to whom any sentimental consideration of things is denied.[130]" Who else could better judge acceptability of a cultural output?

The hostility of the judges to *How Late it Was, How Late* being awarded the prize was remarkable and stems from the fact that the Brits (English) and the award are here to certify value from the centre to the periphery but the value then was ascribed to Kelman whose grotty renditions of working class life were unhesitantly described as "monotonously foul-mouthed," "unreadably bad," indigestible," "crap" or as "just a drunken Scotsman railing against bureaucracy" by one of the judges, Rabbi Julia Neuberger[131]. Kelman perhaps not object to these words to describe his work. As one could see his concept of 'good literature' is something else entirely; looking at his "Artists and Value" where he says that "if a lecturer calls a writer 'good' it might just mean the writer [...] in question knows how to use semi colons and paragraphs in a certain manner, or has a very large vocabulary [...] or exhibits a *certain educational or cultural background*.[132]" By that he hints at his perception that the English author will always be seen as someone who is having more literary value (viz. chapter 2.1.). This, of course, is in direct conflict with many academics who have admired Kelman for his accomplishments in innovations in narrative.

Nevertheless, this represents the kind of critique which spurs from the conflict with the English cultural forces that are operating outside of the working class or have a definite vision of what working class literature is. For Kelman the English narrator, that stems from these force, has been in Scottish literature for long almost exclusively an authoritative voice, a type of voice that oversaw hero or heroine's steps, someone who is conferred credibility to the story. Kelman speaks about what traits the English narrative voice ascribed to the English characters in contrast with the Scot characters in novels; with that he essentially argues for a

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[130] Rocker, *Nationalism and Culture*, 490.
[131] qtd. by Pitchford, 701.
[132] Kelman, *Attacks*, 8. italics own.

more nuanced representation of the character without anyone having the power to render them in a particular way that stereotypes them:

> How do you recognise a Glaswegian in English literature? [...] He's the cut-out figure who wields a razor blade, gets moroculous drunk and never has a single solitary 'thought' in his entire life. [...] None of them knew how to talk! What larks! Every time they opened their mouth out came a stream of gobbledygook. Beautiful! their language a cross between semaphore and morse code; apostrophes here apostrophes there.[133]

Comparatively the English hero: "[their] words on the page were absolutely splendidly proper and pure and pristinely accurate, whether in dialogue or without. And what grammar! Colons and semi-colons![134]"

Kelman comes to the presupposition that the English narrator owns the narrative and that his type of narrator needs to be backgrounded as much as possible because of the perception of art in society and the characterizations used in it "is subject to control by those in authority;" every conventionally accepted characterization is dangerous because they invite the interpretation of those thus described as non-individuals: "Everybody on the broo is lazy. Jews are greedy. Black people are criminals. Red haired people are bad tempered. [...] Glaswegian working class males are drunken wife-beaters.[135]" Representation needs not to be clichéd so that it does not meet with power much like Cohn postulates:

> The 'representation of life' that it suggests to us, often independently of its explicit propositional content (and indeed, often largely independently of any conscious intention on the part of the author or authors), is highly political; 'every fiction

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[133] Kelman, *Attacks*, 82.
[134] Kelman, *Attacks*, 82.
[135] Kelman, *Attacks*, 9.

prescribes as well as (or more than) it describes' – or prescribes by describing, acquires its performative force through its constativity. That is to say, a text embodies 'a worldview,' a 'view of what life 'really' is' – and, implicitly, of what it 'should be'.[136]

The dominant forces within a given society then give an authoritative view on how the world looks like and subjugates the minor ones. In Deleuze's words:

> "the State is a concrete assemblage which realises the machine of overcoding a society [...] This machine in its turn is thus not the State itself, it is the abstract machine which organises the dominant utterances and the established order of a society, *the dominant languages* and *knowledge*."[137]

How to breakdown the *status quo*, end the dominance of the English within Scotland? Firstly it is achieved by levelling the very basic preconception of storytelling which is the presence of a narrator within the story who serves as a mediator that presents the story itself to the reader; the narrator is no longer an agent to confer legitimacy to the story – a principle which directly follows Kelman's overarching pursuit of freedom (this time it is the freedom of the character within the story) and with that connected absence of authority over the narrative. To achieve this to abandon the distinction between the author as a narrator and his characters was vital. Roderick Watson notes that Kelman "was unwilling to make any distinction between the working-class speech of his characters and the narrative voice of his own text[138]" and the author himself said that he "was uncomfortable with 'working class' authors who allowed 'the voice' of higher authority to control narrative[139]". One could argue that Franz Kafka has been a major influence on Kelman in his efforts, mainly in his admiration of Kafka's use of the third party narrative: "He fills the page with absences and possible absences, possible

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[136] Cohn, 124.

[137] Gilles Deleuze, *Dialogues*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) 129, italics own.

[138] Roderick Watson, *The Literature of Scotland: The Twentieth Century*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007) 229.

[139] Kelman, *Judges*, 41.

realities.[140]" The result of this technique is that "entire value system can no longer be taken for granted, they become problematic, they are open to question[141]" and to question that is Kelman's goal. With that the characters get a certain freedom to define themselves, of course within the limits of the medium.

There are some technical features that make this possible. The most noted among them is the absence of quotation marks. The novels such like *How Late it Was, How Late* deploy free indirect discourse: the narrator's voice is indistinguishable from the main protagonist's voice. This has dire consequences in relation the Standard English being used as the language that supports the hierarchy where said variety holds the place of the most understandable dialect. Catherine Belsey commented on this, defending the hierarchy, as bringing novels to a broader audience, i.e. arguing that hierarchy of discourses has a purpose[142]. For Kelman it means that the standard variety can no longer contain (literally with the brackets) the non standard, minority one. Representation in Kelman's prose then merges with the actual being: "[his] narration does its utmost to collapse this difference between the represener and the represented[143]" but it does so in favour of the represented. McGlynn notes that the "choice to disintegrate narrative hierarchies [is a means] of critiquing social ones[144]".

In the effort against hierarchies the language hierarchy plays a seminal part – it is what one sees already in the first sentence of his novel, albeit at the first glance it is for its distinctive demotic features or profanities. It has been described as "rough, recorded vernacular[145]" that "could be overheard on any night in a Glasgow pub.[146]" There no longer can be the distinction based on the ability to use language of the English and Scottish hero; instead the characters

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[140] Kelman, *Attacks*, 6.
[141] Kelman, *Attacks*, 6.
[142] Catherine Belsey, qtd. by Pitchford, 703.
[143] Pitchford, 704.
[144] McGlynn, 57.
[145] McGlynn, 53.
[146] McGlynn, 53.

speak the language they would speak – Kelman's "concern [is] with the world of the working class, its language[147]," he has taken it on himself "to give a credible literary voice to a voiceless constituency[148]". Though, Glasgow is as an industrial city changed by immigration "even render it ethnically distinct from the idea of a Scottish race[149]" and even the language is an amalgamation of various dialects which today constitute a 'Glaswegian dialect'.

While it is true that Kelman want to provide an outlet to this specific voice, it would be a simplification of a more complex relationship. Similar ideas are explored in *Toward a Minor Literature* where the criteria for a language to be "minor" are laid down. The example upon which Deleuze explains the concepts is Kafka; the parallels with Kelman are rather easy to be drawn. The minor literature which Michael Gardiner describes not merely as unimportant one or resistant to markets can be defined as an attempt of a minority to construct their language within the major language[150]. Gardiner elaborates on this when he writes that "Kelman writes in Deleuzian free indirect style[151]" and talks about Sammy in *How Late It Was, How Late* never achieves omniscience but is constantly *shifting between registers*:

> Sammy is resisting arrest by resisting placement in any one normative neurosis [...] Like Kafka, Kelman takes on and temporarily occupies 'other' registers, rendering them strange and discordant [...] the need to get back to a perfect form or an abstract law is rejected in the endlessly contingent schizo stroll. Sammy votes with his feet.[152]

Kelman similarly to that writes: "language shifts and moves, it is not static and neither is it finite [...].[153]" Much alike, in *A Thousand Plateaus* the philosophers postulate that "there is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois,

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[147] Jeremy Scott, "Talking Back at the Centre: Demotic Language in Contemporary Scottish Fiction," *Literature Compass*, 2 (2005) 5.
[148] Scott, 5.
[149] McGlynn, 73.
[150] Michael Gardiner, *From Trocchi to Trainspotting: Scottish Critical Theory Since 1960*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006) 170.
[151] Gardiner, 159.
[152] Gardiner, 168.
[153] Kelman, *Attacks*, 10.

slangs, and specialized languages," and moreover that "there is no ideal speaker-listener, any more than there is a homogeneous linguistic community.[154]" Language is a fluid matter that forms its centres around the centres of power that historically change that one cannot hold onto language seems to be both Kelman's and Deleuze and Guattari's maxim. For Kelman the process of getting to know characters through ever-changing streams of language in art is also the chief emancipatory device – the device for discovery of individual persons; this is also what Cohn describes as "the coexistence of the different not only as *ends* but as *means*"[155]:

> more and more human beings start being 'discovered' as particulars, witnessed as individuals, specific folk, persons; [...] in the far-off future there won't be any racism, no sexism, no prejudice, no imperialism, no colonisation, no economic exploitation, and so on and so forth, a process of elimination.[156]

Anarchistic approach can be then according to Cohn defined as "the greatest contradiction, and as its means, the greatest multiplicity possible[157]" and, he adds in one breath, is "incompatible with the unquestioned supremacy of any fixed ideas [stereotypes], any 'absolute'[158]".

Therefore, in many cases the language spoken by the heroes is indeed the result interplay of various registers; much like the Glaswegian is constituted by more dialect due to immigration in the past, and cannot be conscribed to an enclosed code. Sammy in *How Late It Was, How Late,* for example, mimics other registers, therefore much like the reader who identifies them within the text about whom McGlynn says that "he or she must be someone capable of recognizing and understanding both standard and non-standard language[159]" the character has

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[154] Deleuze Guatarri, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 7.
[155] Cohn, 116.
[156] Kelman, *Attacks*, 16.
[157] Cohn, 119.
[158] Cohn, 119.
[159] McGlynn, 60.

to be able to do that, too. That above all challenges the presumptions about the mental capacity of some of Kelman's character, and invites Cohn's insight into the anarchic construction of a view on language:

> Rather than 'take a statistical average of speech events and abstract a structure from it,' Goodman argues for a conception of 'language as the tension between the inherited code and what needs to be said,' a *dynamic process* rather than a static structure: 'the power to speak and hear continually modifies the code[160].

On that principle characters are able to operate on different registers in fuck order to express nuanced concepts which would perhaps be to the surprise of some of the critics. This is what Kelman likes to note about *The Private Memoir and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* written by James Hogg:

> As well as being a famous poet [Hogg] had spent much of his life as a shepherd [...] and he spoke in the language of his own cultural background. [...] *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner* is written in the ordinary standard English literary form of the period. [...][When] he introduces himself into the story [...][he] has this shepherd 'self' speak in the phoneticized language of someone who, by English literary standards, is a certain social inferior. [161]

Hogg is able to write in standard highly prized English but renders himself in what would be perceived as inferior language. The accents that do not intersect with power are rendered subpar and need to be explained. That one can see in *How Late It Was, How Late*; they are explicated for the reader while Sammy at the same time is able to attack those of higher class status:

> Know what he felt like? A can of fucking superlager. Aye no danger. He had a drouth, a drouth. Know what that means it means he's fucking thirsty. Fuck yer coffee and

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[160] Cohn, 118. italics own.
[161] Kelman, *Judges*, 177.

fuck yer tea and fuck yer fucking milk if ye're fucking lucky enough to fucking have fucking any of the fucking stuff man know what I'm saying.[162]

and to the benefits office clerk as well notes the colloquial origin of the phrases Sammy uses; Kelman's frustration with bureaucracy is political here in the use of accents:

> What's entered here is the phrase 'they gave me a doing', and it's entered expressly as a quotation. But it's a colloquialism and not everyone who deals with yer claim will understand what it means. I felt that it was fair to use physical beating by way of an exposition but if you would prefer something else…is there anything else ye can think of?[163]

Notably, this highly demotic language is not always present. In *Mo Said She Was Quirky* the main heroine, Helen, who has moved to London in order to secure her and her daughter financially, speaks a very anglicized version of Glaswegian dialect precisely because it could to be viewed as of lesser status than Standard English. There are various forces that can modify the use of language, the characters Kelman conjures then glide through different options language affords them and with this he further challenges and tries to level the hierarchy of dialects and their use.

In the same encounter of Sammy with the doctor who examines him for his suitability to claim benefits (the ability to receive compensation and a job suitable for the blind) one can see how language is used in a situation, according to what outcome is aimed at. Not only that a medical opinion is refused to be given, even the use of the phrase "of course not" is ambiguous; the goal of this is to reducing liability of the state in order to secure its financial responsibility:

> Aye sorry for interrupting doctor but see when you say "alleged"?
> Yes?
> Are ye saying that you dont really think I'm blind?...

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[162] Kelman, *How Late*, 319.
[163] Kelman, *How Late*, 103.

> Of course not. ... In respect of the visual stimuli presented you appeared unable to respond.
> So ye're no saying I'm blind?
> It isnt for me to say.[164]

In accordance to this view, rather than representing definite meanings Cohn notes that "an important dimension of meaning is 'the situation' of an utterance rather than its content, i.e., the conditions of 'the existence of the speech as an act'[165]". This likewise refers back to the Chomsky essay by Kelman which was discussed. In it Kelman points to the various ways language can be bent to conceptualize whatever is needed to be conceptualized; in this way the actual experience is torn out of the real world and meaning becomes oblique. Experts again are brought to the foreground, they are "paid for their experience of every concept under the sun; from the concept of happiness to the concept of torture, from the concept of malnutrition of the concept of dampness in council housing [...] They exclude the actual experience from the terms of the argument, they "categorise in the absence of that which is being categorised"[166]" (cf. Kelman on Kafka's artistic method) Sammy's very experience of being blind is questioned in the same way the torture of a sixteen year old in Belfast in 1976 is questioned as torture (Was is torture? Rough treatment? Hard luck? Interrogation?[167]) The interpretation of these conditions stays in the hands of an outside authority much the same as with Sammy's blindness.

To conclude, Kelman's position on what language is suitable for writing works of literature that challenge established narrative hierarchies and by extension the social ones. He believes that to be necessary because "in the society that is English literature [that English literature conjures], some 80 to 85 percent of the population simply did not exist as human beings[168]" because they did not exist in language. The levelling of hierarchies that is spoken of is

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[164] Kelman, *How Late*, 225.
[165] Cohn, 121.
[166] Kelman, *Judges*, 167.
[167] Kelman, *Judges*, 168.
[168] Kelman, *Attacks*, 82.

achieved by deploying a simple idea that all modes of expression are valid for whatever usage; literature can be written in highly demotic speech specific for a relatively small locale or the standardized variety used by masses worldwide. This to Kelman holds a cultural significance, because noone should be allowed to judge whether his culture should or should not exist, or to give the novels an interpretative absolute readings; there is no arbiter that should have that power. He has freed his characters from the powers of third person narrator mirroring his moral imperative of freedom as the basic principle. The chief tool for him is questioning, much like Cohn presupposed to be the main anarchic device, quoting Voline and De Cleyre: "'we must discover and frame …everything that ought to be regarded as phoney, at odds with life's reality and in need of rejection … [and] everything that ought to be registered as just, wholesome, acceptable'" [169]

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[169] Cohn, 125.

4. Conclusion

Kelman's position in the literary world allows for his writing to be political in an immediate way. It is rooted in his sense of freedom of an individual which is the basic principle, on which he builds, and is conceived in a social manner, not as absolute individualism, traits that align him with anarchist position. Freedom is first and foremost not a right for Kelman but necessity which ensures that the position in the world will not be interpreted for a person; the ability to explore the world, with appropriate education and means for understanding it, should be unimpinged for Kelman because a solution of to a social problem is always a process of re-evaluating positions that might have seemed fixed before. He refuses essentialism that forces people into boxes effectively right at their birth; each person should be free to develop their potential, which is a central argument of the anarchists as well. In the light of the anarchic tendency for abstentionism which Kelman follows, it is unfeasible to have problems delegated and to rely on representatives to solve them – the society will not be saved by political representation by delegating problem and relying on outside forces to solve them; more often than not they serve different interests and these interests need to be questioned.

When translated into the world of literature, this stance allows him to engage the strained relationship England and Scotland as a colonial power and a colonized nation have had throughout the centuries. He vehemently argues against domination of literature on the British Isles by the English literary establishment which is exacted by English language. The class difference of Kelman and the English establishment often produced misunderstanding between him and the critics about what is culture and how it manifests – the stingy plots and seemingly unimaginative characters inspire reactions that produced word like 'non-culture' or 'pre-culture'. This is the first level of hierarchy that Kelman tries to obliterate: the notion that quality literature always concerns middle or higher class people who throughout the plot rich

on action evolve and are transformed towards the end needs. The second step Kelman takes is the transformation habits of language use: the demotic Glaswegian dialect is implemented in ways that subvert the hierarchy which assigns it an inferior position; on the other hand his characters use different registers, idiolects and even mimic the higher class varieties; within his novels and stories they are given freedom from the narrator to the limits of what is feasible in a work of literature: no longer are their demotic voices contained in quotation marks, no longer are they stereotyped. The resulting effect aligns with Kelman's vision which aims to give constituency to a voiceless part of the society, to render them human and to end the hegemony of English literature to define who is allowed to be read. To this his libertarian anarchism contributes richly.

Some of the starting points of the thesis have taken surprising turns. The class aspect was supposed to hold a prominent place for Kelman yet it was not that dramatic. The fact that he comes from Glasgow might have influenced him in his social engagement in issues connected to the specificity of the city, however, not by choice but because of the necessity to do so. His novels would hardly be likened to those of social realism with heroic worker characters who sometimes per chance more upward in the society to enjoy better life – Kelman writes from his experience and draws inspiration from immediate surroundings. On the other hand, those opposed to Kelman in many instances utter their criticism based on class distinctions, not at all based on the anarchist component of Kelman's politics but on the aversion to the depiction of the working class he supplies – those who chastise Kelman for wallowing in misery and material lack do not consider or recognise that the people Kelman writes about do not have the same resources as higher classes to enunciate their culture. What was thought originally as a hinge – authorial intention – ended up being the bulk of the thesis, accordingly to the anarchist literary point of view which ascribes immense importance to the personal views of the author and his connection to the social sphere and what influence he aims to exert. What is

more, there can be no talk about 'Scottish cringe' here: Kelman fully embraces the Scottish demotic varieties of language and together with his cultural vision boldly levels any preconceptions about inferiority of Scottish literature, at least in his own eyes. He, nevertheless, stays outside of the nationalist waters, and does not argue for state implemented nationalist values to be venerated.

There are numerous ways in which further research could be exacted with the help of Cohn's "What Is Anarchist Literary Theory?," be it if the case where one focuses on particular novels from Kelman or other Scottish novelists who have been writing from same position or even those who have succumbed to using English language in a way unfavourable to Kelman; what is their motivation to do so and from which class position they come from; what hierarchies do they rely on? Another potent direction could be the post-modern way of Deleuze and other anti-authoritarian writers; the valid link between Kelman and Deleuze suggests future possibilities of research connected to individualists like e.g. Max Stirner.

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