



Contemporary Scottish Writing

This handout was originally made to provide added information on contemporary Scottish writing for the Area and Cultural Studies Scotland class at Konstanz University. In class we enjoyed a brief look at the great writers of the past, and their enduring influence on the present. As there is so much interesting contemporary Scottish writing we could only touch on the topic. (I picked out only a few names, and gave the class a set of first lines to read and think about.) This handout provides many more names.

For those not in the class I have added some information on contemporary poets and dramatists, and on the “classics”.

Please note that **all** the works listed here are available in the excellent library of Konstanz University.

- (1) What I mean by “Contemporary Scottish Writing“
- (2) A list of book titles with author and publication date, some poets and dramatists
- (3) Some names from older Scottish writing

(1) Scottish? What is Contemporary Scottish Writing?

All the books on this list have some kind of Scottish connection. The writers were born in Scotland or came to live and feel at home there e.g. Michel Faber, or their forefathers were Scots e.g. Alistair MacLeod. The setting may be Scotland or places scattered across the world – or fantasy. The themes, I think, are of interest all round the world, but they may also have a specifically Scottish perspective. Read them and see!

Most of the titles are fiction as most of the people interested in Contemporary Scottish Writing are students of English Literature. A few of the titles were originally published in the first half of the 20th century but are still read and enjoyed, or have been recently rediscovered and reprinted, or even filmed. One of the oldest included here was first published in 1936, and is stunningly relevant and modern.

If you would like to share opinions on these books please do so. (Which of these will become classics?)

(2) Titles

Some examples of non-fiction:

Cooper, Derek: Hebridean Connection. A view of the Highlands and Islands (1977)
fse 542/c66

Goring, Rosemary: Scotland: the Autobiography. 2,000 Years of Scottish History by Those Who Saw It Happen (2007)
gsa 751:q/g67

MacKinley, William: Karluk (2000)
erd 332.40:za40/m12

Miller, Christian: A Childhood in Scotland (1989)
eng 959:m650:h/t89

Steel, Tom: The Life and Death of St. Kilda (1975)
gsh 751/s92

Grant: Memoirs of a Highland Lady: (**1898**) 1988
gsn 451.50g76

Some examples of fiction:

Please note that the titles here are only examples, **all available in the library**, and unless otherwise indicated they can all be found under “eng 959”. Although this does some of the authors a major injustice I have given only one title for each. Most wrote or have written several books, some more recent than the titles given here.

Banks, Iain: The Bridge (1986)

Barker, Elspeth: O Caledonia (1991)

Boyd, William: The New Confessions (1987)

Brown, George D.: The House with the Green Shutters (**1901**) 1995

Brown, George Mackay: Greenvoe (1972)

Buchan, John: John Macnab (**1925**)

Burnside, John: The Locust Room (2001)

Clews, Alan: A Child of Air (1995)

Cowan, Alan: Pig (1995)

Cronin, A. J. : The Green Years (1965)

Crumey, Alan: Music in a Foreign Language (1994)

Davidson, Toni: My gun was as tall as me (2012)

Davie, Elspeth: Creating a Scene (1971)

Davis, Margaret: Daughters and Mothers (1989)

Donovan, Anne: Being Emily (2008)

Dorward, Peter: The Nightingale (2007)

Dunn, Douglas: Boyfriends and Girlfriends (1994)

Elphinstone, Margaret: An Apple from a Tree (1991)

Faber, Michel: The Crimson Petal and the White (2002)

Fitt, Matthew: But n Ben A-Go-Go (2000)

Frame, Ronald: The Lantern Bearers (2001)

Friel, George: A Glasgow Trilogy (1960s), 1999

Galbraith, Douglas: The Rising Sun (2000)

Galloway, Janice: The Trick is to Keep Breathing (1989)

Gibbon, Lewis Grassic: A Scots Quair (**1946**) 1984

Gray, Alasdair: Lanark (1981)

Greig, Andrew: Electric Brae (1992)

Gunn, Neil M.: The Silver Darlings (1941)

Henderson, M: Chasing Angels (2000)

Herdman, John: Three Novellas (1973) 1987

Jacob, Violet: Flemington (**1911**) 1994

Jauncey, James: The Witness (2007)

Jenkins, Robert: The Cone Gatherers (1955)

Kay, Jackie: Trumpet (1998)

Kelman, James: The Busconductor Hines (1984)

Kennaway, James: Tunes of Glory (1989)

Kennedy, A. L.: So I am Glad (1995)

Kesson, Jessie: Another Time, Another Place (1983)

Legge, Gordon: The Shoe (1989)

MacColla, Fionn: And the Cock Crew (1983)

MacDougall, Carl: The Lights Below (1993)

Mackay, Colin: The Sound of the Sea (1989)

MacKenzie, Compton: Whisky Galore (**1947**)

MacKenzie, David: The Truth of Stone (1991)

MacLeod, Alistair: No Great Mischief (1999)

Macpherson, Ian: Wild Harbour (**1936**) 1989

Massie, Alan: The Sins of the Father (1991)

McLean, Alan Campbell: The Hill of the Red Fox (1955)

McGinness, Ian: Inner City (1987)

McGrath, John: The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil (1974)

McIlvanney, William: The Papers of Tony Veitch (1983)

McWilliam, Candia: Wait till I tell you (1998)

Mail, Michael: Coralena (2002)

Mina, Denise: Exile (2000)

Mitchison, Naomi: The Big House (1950) (Children's)

Moon, Lorna: The Collected Works **(1926)**

O'Farrell, Maggie: After you'd gone (2000)

O'Hagan, Andrew: Our Fathers (1999)

Rankin, Ian: The Naming of the Dead (2006)

Robertson, James: The Fanatic (2000)

Sharp, Alan: The Wind Shifts

Smith, Ali: Hotel World (2001)

Smith, Iain Crichton: In the Middle of the Wood (1987)

Smith, Iain Crichton: The Dream (1990)

Spark, Muriel: The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie (1961)

Spence, Alan: Way to Go (1998)

Strachan, Zoe: Negative Space (2002)

Tait, Harry: The Ballad of Sawney Bain (1990)

Temperley, Alan: Murdo's War (1988) (Children's)

Tennant, Emma: Two Women of London (1989)

Thomson, Alice: Pharos (2002)

Torrington, Jeff: Swing Hammer Swing! (1993)

Trocchi, Alexander: Young Adam (1954) (was filmed in 2003)

Warner, Alan: Morvern Callar (1995)

Welsh, Irvine: Trainspotting (1993)

Welsh, Louise: The Cutting Room (2002)

Williams, Gordon: From Scenes Like These (1987)

Some poets:

Hugh MacDiarmid: e.g. Selected Poetry(1992)

Norman MacCaig e.g. Collected Poems (1988)

Iain Crichton Smith: e.g. Ends and Beginnings (1994)

Alasdair MacLean: e.g. Lochinvar Revisited in Waking the Dead (1976)

George Mackay Brown: e.g. Collected Poems (2005)

Andrew Greig: Western Swing (1994)

John Burnside: The Hoop (1988)

Liz Lochhead: The colour of black and white (2003)

Sydney Smith, Tom Leonard , Stewart McGavin, Alastair Mackie can be found in anthologies such as "Twelve More Modern Scottish Poets".

Please see also the Scotland Bibliography, which is the bibliography of the Area Studies class.

Some dramatists:

Robert McLellan: Collected plays

Liz Lochhead: e.g. Mary Queen of Scots got her head chopped off (1989)

John McGrath. The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil (1981)

Please see also the Scotland Bibliography, which is the bibliography of the Area Studies class.

(3) Older Scottish writing

One or two names from older literature, now considered as classics:

Tobias Smollett 1721 – 1771

Try his "Travels through France and Italy" (eng 919)

Robert Burns 1759 – 1796.

Poems and songs (eng 959). For a rapid insight into his life and times see: Robert Burns. An Illustrated Biography. eng 919:b967:ma/g74

There are also cassettes with readings of his poetry (6 eng 919) for anyone who still has a cassette recorder ...

Sir Walter Scott 1771 – 1832

Ballads e.g. “Lochinvar”, and historical novels e.g. “The Black Arrow” (eng 939)
James Hogg 1770 – 1835.

“The private memoirs and confessions of a justified sinner” (eng 939)

Thomas Carlyle 1795 – 1881

Essayist, historian (including the “History of Friedrich II of Prussia”), but try his letters, especially from Prussia (eng 939)

Robert L Stevenson 1850 – 1895

Novels and short stories e.g. “Treasure Island”, “The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde” (eng 939)

Add to these:

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle 1859 - 1830

Sherlock Holmes stories from 1893 onwards (eng 959)

J. M. Barrie 1860 – 1937

“Peter Pan or the boy who would not grow up” (1928) (eng 959)

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This collection of Scottish writers is of course a never ending story, and I am sure the Konstanz University library will continue to acquire wonderful Scottish books.

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