

Writing and History: Scotland and Empire **ENG9WH**

Is 'History' just another text? To what extent is 'Literature' history? How do the stories we tell about ourselves alter the material facts of our lives? This core module sets out to explore these questions by studying aspects of Scottish literature, history, and identity since the defining moment of the Union of the English and the Scottish Parliaments in 1707. The Union could be said to mark the start of the British Imperial project, and Scots were to fare well as explorers, missionaries, engineers, administrators, and businessmen in the furthest reaches of the British Empire for the next 250 years. At the same time, the loss of parliamentary sovereignty sparked a revival of Scottish cultural consciousness and an anxiety about national identity that produced poetry in Scots from Ramsay, Fergusson, and Burns, and the great novels of Sir Walter Scott and James Hogg. Scott's work in particular was to reinvent Scotland in the eyes of its own population, not to mention the thousands of readers in England, Europe, and North America whose vision of Scotland as a romantic 'land of mountain and flood' persists to this day. But this vision is not without its contradictions, not least of which was the rise of Central Scotland as a major industrial force at the very moment when the Highlands were being constructed in literature as the home of an older and more organic society; or the development of a proudly 'Scottish' education system which disenfranchised every Gaelic speaker in the land. The module sets out to explore these issues, to examine the myths and contradictions, and the political, cultural, and economic pressures that produced some of Scotland's finest writing in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, partly opposed to and partly in step with the concept of 'Great Britain'.

Set Texts (Students are advised to read the longer texts before the module begins.)

- John McGrath, *The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black Black Oil* (Methuen)
- Walter Scott, *Waverley*, ed. C. Lamont (Oxford U.P.)
- James Hogg, *The Three Perils of Woman* (Stirling/South Carolina edition, Edinburgh U.P.)
- John Buchan, *Prester John* (House of Stratus)
- Lewis Grassic Gibbon, *Sunset Song*, ed. T. Crawford (Canongate)
- James Kelman, *Not not while the giro* (1983; Edinburgh: Polygon/Birlinn, 2007)
- T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation: 1700-2000* (Penguin)
- Module Reader (English Office)

Recommended Further Reading

- Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford U.P., 1992; EUP, 2000)
- Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (Vintage)
- T. M. Devine, *Scotland's Empire 1600-1815* (Penguin)
- Michael Fry, *The Scottish Empire* (Birlinn)
- Douglas Mack, *Scottish Fiction and the British Empire* (Edinburgh U.P.)
- Eric Richards, *The Highland Clearances* (Birlinn)

Module organisation and assessment

The class will meet for two hours per week: a one-hour lecture plus a one-hour seminar. Assessment will be based on coursework, two essays each worth 50%.

Module convenor: Dr Suzanne Gilbert