

# SAMPLE SCOTTISH LITERATURE SYLLABUS

[Senior seminar taught from 2005-8 at the University of Stirling]

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## COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON SCOTTISH WRITING

### Module Description and Rationale

The 'new renaissance' in Scottish literary culture of the 1980-90s was not a journalistic myth. But how significant, from a literary perspective, is the 'Scottishness' of this writing?

The approach of this course does not deny the persistence of questions concerning cultural identity in the works of recent Scottish writers. But it does take seriously Alan Warner's complaint that 'nationalistic canons just set up non-existent barriers to development'. While the *content* of the national self-image has been (abundantly, productively) open to revision in Scottish writing of the past 25 years, the nation's stable position as the *organising principle* through which Scottish writers' (hugely diverse) bodies of work are read and criticised has seldom been questioned. In their recent collection of essays *Scotland in Theory*, Gavin Miller and Eleanor Bell point to 'a lingering parochialism in Scottish literary studies, where, for example, literature from Scotland must firstly be explained in terms of its Scottishness, rather than in terms of its literary or aesthetic qualities'.

This is the critical misemphasis this course seeks to counteract: the emplacement, without argument, of the 'nation' as the primary category of literary reception. One consequence of this approach has been Scottish criticism's deep preoccupation with issues of *cultural representation*, often at the expense of other, equally interesting political and philosophical dimensions of recent Scottish writing. This course attempts to attend to these dimensions, by exploring alternative intellectual contexts and literary traditions in which to read contemporary Scottish literature.

Our concern, to be sure, is not to disprove the 'Scottishness' of the writers at issue, but to explore their work in stimulating 'non-Scottish' contexts. The burden of cultural representativeness, and the dilemmas of canonical nation-building, will be a critical preoccupation throughout the course.

### Set Texts

Irvine Welsh, <i>Trainspotting</i> , Vintage	(1993)
Hubert Selby Jr., <i>Last Exit to Brooklyn</i> , Boyars	(1964)
A.L. Kennedy, <i>Night Geometry and the Garscadden Trains</i> , Vintage	(1990)
Katherine Mansfield, <i>Selected Stories</i> , Oxford World's Classics	(2002)
James Kelman, <i>The Busconductor Hines</i> , Polygon	(1984)
Knut Hamsun, <i>Hunger</i> (trans. by Sverre Lyngstad), Canongate	(1890)
Albert Camus, <i>The Outsider</i> (trans. by Joseph Laredo), Penguin	(1942)
Alan Warner, <i>Morvern Callar</i> , Vintage	(1996)

A Module Reader will also be available for purchase, with selected poetry (including work by Kathleen Jamie, Edwin Morgan and Don Paterson) and essential secondary material, including author interviews.

### Assessment

Two essays of 2500 words, weighted equally.

## Seminar Timetable

2-hour seminars will take place on X from Y to Z.

**NB** detailed listings of set and recommended reading, and weekly seminar tasks, are included in the Module Reader.

**[See below for readings and bibliographies.]**

The timetable below is only an outline guide, and does **not** list all weekly reading.

19 Feb Introductory: 'The New Renaissance'

### Heteroglossia and the City

26 Feb *Trainspotting*

Film Screening: *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996)

4 Mar *Last Exit to Brooklyn*

Film Screening: *Last Exit to Brooklyn* (Uli Edel, 1989)

### Secret and Public Selves

11 Mar *Night Geometry and the Garscadden Trains*

18 Mar Mansfield, *Selected Stories*

25 Mar Internationalism in Modern Scottish Poetry

***Essay 1 due Friday 28 March***

### Subjective Adventures

8 Apr *Hunger*

15 Apr *The Busconductor Hines*

### Existential Voices

22 Apr *The Outsider*

29 Apr *Morvern Callar*

Film Screening: *Morvern Callar* (Lynne Ramsay, 2002)

***Essay 2 due Friday 9 May***

# Weekly Readings and Tasks

Each weekly listing of set and recommended reading also includes a number of questions to be considered in advance of that week's seminar. These questions will guide class discussion, and it is essential that you give them some thought in advance of class. All set secondary reading is included in the Module Reader.

## **Week 1: Introductory: 'The New Renaissance'**

### **19 Feb**

#### Set Reading:

Duncan, Ian 2003. 'On the Study of Scottish Literature', *ScotLit*, 28, Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies

Sassi, Carla 2005. 'Approaches and Intersections: A View from Without' in *Why Scottish Literature Matters*, Edinburgh: Saltire Society, 1-18

Schoene, Berthold 2007. 'Going Cosmopolitan: Reconstituting Scottishness in Post-Devolution Criticism' in *Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. by Berthold Schoene, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 7-17

Whyte, Christopher 2004. 'Scottishness and Scottish Poetry' in *Modern Scottish Poetry*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 5-17

#### Tasks:

1. Generally, is the nationality of a writer an important consideration when studying his/her work? Why or why not?
2. What are your own initial impressions of the 'Scottishness' of Scottish literature? Does it matter? Does the category 'Scottish literature' disappear if we 'set aside' Scottishness?
3. How appropriate are 'postcolonial' critical approaches to Scottish literature, in your opinion?
4. Christopher Whyte draws our attention to 'Proust's paradox', concerning the necessity of both nationalizing *and* denationalizing literary works. Which is *more* necessary, in your view, and does it depend on the nation in question?

#### Recommended Further Reading – for the Module Overall:

Bell, Eleanor and Miller, Gavin, eds. 2003. *Scotland in Theory: Reflections on Culture and Literature*, Amsterdam: Rodopi

Bell, Eleanor 2004. *Questioning Scotland: Literature, Nationalism, Postmodernism*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan\*

Carruthers, Gerard, et al, eds. 2004. *Beyond Scotland: New Contexts for Twentieth-Century Scottish Literature*, Amsterdam: Rodopi

Craig, Cairns 1999. *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press\*

Craig, Cairns 2007. 'The Criticism of Scottish Literature: Tradition, Decline and Renovation' in *Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature*, Vol. 3, ed. by Ian Brown et al, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 42-53\*

Crawford, Robert 1997. 'Dedefining Scotland' in *Studying British Cultures*, ed. by Susan Bassnett, London: Routledge, 87-101

- Crawford, Robert 2000. *Devolving English Literature*, 2nd edn., Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press\*
- Fazzini, Marco ed. 2005. *Alba Literaria: A History of Scottish Literature*, Venezia Mestre: Amos
- Gardiner, Michael 2006. *From Trocchi to Trainspotting: Scottish Critical Theory Since 1960*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press\*
- Gifford, Douglas 1990. 'At Last – the Real Scottish Literary Renaissance?' and 'Killing the Dreams of Tradition and Modernity', *Books in Scotland*, 34
- Kravitz, Peter, ed. 1997. *Picador Book of Contemporary Scottish Fiction*, London: Picador\*
- McCulloch, Margery Palmer 1994. 'What crisis in Scottish fiction? Creative courage and cultural continuity in novels by Friel, Jenkins and Kelman', *Cencrastus*, 48, 15-18
- McIlvanney, Liam 2002. 'The Politics of Narrative in the Post-war Scottish Novel' in *On Modern British Fiction*, ed. by Zachary Leader, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 181-208
- March, Cristie L. 2002. *Rewriting Scotland: Welsh, McLean, Warner, Banks, Galloway and Kennedy*, Manchester: Manchester University Press\*
- Sassi, Carla 2005. *Why Scottish Literature Matters*, Edinburgh: Saltire Society
- Schoene, Berthold ed. 2007. *Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press [on order]\*
- Talib, Ismail S. 2002. *The Language of Postcolonial Literatures: An Introduction*, London: Routledge\*
- Wallace, Gavin and Stevenson, Randall Stevenson, eds., 1993. *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press\*
- Watson, Roderick 2006. *The Literature of Scotland*, 2nd edn., 2 vols., Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Whyte, Christopher 2004. *Modern Scottish Poetry*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

*International Journal of Scottish Literature*, ed. by Eleanor Bell and Scott Hames, [www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk](http://www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk)

## **Weeks 2-3: Heteroglossia and the City**

**26 Feb**

### Set Reading:

- Welsh, Irvine 1993. *Trainspotting*, London: Vintage
- Vice, Sue 1997. From 'Heteroglossia: "I hear voices everywhere..."' in *Introducing Bakhtin*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 18-28
- Crowley, Tony 2003. 'Introduction: Language, Knowledge, Power' in *Standard English and the Politics of Language*, 2nd edn., Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1-11
- Notes on the City – Extracts from Engels, Williams, Bauman and Mumford

### Interviews:

- Berman, Jenifer 1996. 'An interview with Irvine Welsh' *Bomb*, 56
- Kelly, Aaron 2004. 'In Conversation with Irvine Welsh', *Edinburgh Review*, 113, 7-18

### Film Screening:

*Trainspotting*, dir. by Danny Boyle (1996) – Feb 25, 4.30 pm, Pathfoot B2

### Tasks

1. Margaret Thatcher famously claimed that 'there is no such thing as society ... there are individual men and women, and there are families'. Does *Trainspotting* prove her point, or argue against it?
2. For Bakhtin, the ideology of 'monologic' language aspires to 'the victory of one reigning language (dialect) over the others, the supplanting of languages, their enslavement, the process of illuminating them with the "True Word", the incorporation of barbarians and lower social strata into a unitary language of culture and truth, the canonization of ideological systems'.

How do you see *Trainspotting* in relation to this process, and this ideology?

3. What kinds of 'knowable communities' are in this book? Are they specifically Scottish? British? 'Western'? Consumerist? Something else?

#### 4 Mar

##### Set Reading:

Selby, Hubert, Jr., 1968. *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, London: Boyars

Demotic Language and Narration: short extracts from William McIlvanney, *Docherty* (1975) and Lewis Grassie Gibbon, *Sunset Song* (1932)

##### Interview:

O'Brien, John 1981. 'An Interview with Hubert Selby', *Review of Contemporary Literature* [full interview at <http://dalkeyarchive.com/interviews/620/hubert-selby-2>]

##### Film Screening:

*Last Exit to Brooklyn*, dir. by Uli Edel, (1989) – Mar 3, 4.30pm, Pathfoot B2

##### Tasks

1. In 1831 Thomas Carlyle wrote of the London populace: 'There in their little cells, divided by partitions of brick or board, they sit strangers ... It is a huge aggregate of little systems, each of which is again a small anarchy, the members of which do not *work* together, but *scramble* against each other.' Is this a fair description of the urban world depicted in *Last Exit*?
2. Does the novel encourage us to judge, and even condemn, these characters? If so, how? By what/whose standards?
3. How does using a non-standard language as the voice of the authorial *narrative* (as in the Grassie Gibbon extract) differ from reserving it for characters' dialogue (as in the McIlvanney extract)? How does Selby's technique compare to these examples?
4. Compare the use of vernacular language in *Last Exit* with Welsh's techniques in *Trainspotting*. What similarities do you see? What differences? What is the overall effect?

##### Recommended Further Reading – Weeks 2-3:

Bell, Ian 1993. 'Last exit to Leith', *Observer* (15 August 1993), 47 [use Lexis-Nexis, via elec. resources page]

Crowley, Tony 2003. *Standard English and the Politics of Language*, 2nd edn., Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan\*

Findlay, Elspeth 2002. 'The bourgeois values of Irvine Welsh', *Cencrastus*, 71, 5-6

Freeman, Alan 1996. 'Ghosts in Sunny Leith: Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*', in *Studies in Scottish Fiction: 1945 to Present*, ed. by Suzanne Hagemasdn, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 251-62

Innes, Kirstin 2007. 'Renton's Bairns: Identity and Language in the post-*Trainspotting* novel' in *Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. by Berthold Schoene, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 301-310\*

Jamieson, Gill 1997. 'Fixing the city: arterial and other spaces in Irvine Welsh's fiction', in *Space and Place: the Geographies of Literature*, ed. by Glenda No rquay and Gerry Smyth, Liverpool: John Moores University Press, 217-26

Kelly, Aaron 2005. *Irvine Welsh*, Manchester: Manchester University Press\*

- Maley, Willy 2000. 'Denizens, citizens, tourists, and others: marginality and mobility in the writings of James Kelman and Irvine Welsh' in *City Visions*, ed. by David Bell and Azzedine Haddour, Harlow: Longman, 60-72
- Milne, Drew 2003. 'The Fiction of James Kelman and Irvine Welsh' in *Contemporary British Fiction*, ed. by Richard J. Lane, Rod Mengham and Philip Tew, London: Polity, 158-174
- Morace, Robert 2006. 'Irvine Welsh: Parochialism, Pornography and Globalisation' in *Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. by Berthold Schoene, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 27-236\*
- Morris, Pam, ed. 1994. *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, and Voloshinov*, London: Arnold
- Renfrew, Alastair 1997. 'Them and Us? Representation of Speech in Contemporary Scottish Fiction', in *Exploiting Bakhtin*, ed. by Alastair Renfrew, Glasgow: Strathclyde Modern Language Studies, 15-28\*
- Renfrew, Alastair 2006. 'Brief Encounters, Long Farewells: Bakhtin and Scottish Literature', *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, 1 [www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk]
- Squires, Claire 1999. 'Trainspotting and Publishing, or Converting the Smack into Hard Cash', *Edinburgh Review*, 101, 50-56
- Strachan, Zoe 2004. 'Queerspotting', *Spike* [www.spikemagazine.com/0599queerspotting.php]
- Vice, Sue 1997. *Introducing Bakhtin*, Manchester: Manchester University Press\*
- Watson, Roderick 1995. 'Alien Voices from the Street: Demotic Modernism in Modern Scots Writing' in *The Yearbook of English Studies*, ed. by Andrew Gurr, London: Maney & Sons, 141-155
- Watson, Roderick 1997. 'Speaking in Tongues: Reflections after Bakhtin on the Scots Literary Tradition and Contemporary Writing', in *Exploiting Bakhtin*, ed. by Alastair Renfrew, Glasgow: Strathclyde Modern Language Studies, 1-14

## **Weeks 4-5: Secret and Public Selves**

### **11 Mar**

#### Set Reading:

Kennedy, A.L. 1990. *Night Geometry and the Garscadden Trains*, London: Vintage

#### *Interview:*

March, Cristie L. 1999. 'Interview with A.L. Kennedy', *Edinburgh Review*, 101, 99-119

#### Tasks:

1. 'And there's no point in being Scottish if you can't make up your past as you go along.' Is cultural memory a preoccupation of these stories? As opposed to (or in tension with) personal memory?
2. 'Why should I write about people when most of the people can never be written about because they have completely disappeared? Not a National Insurance number, not hairs caught in a comb. They're gone.' Kennedy's work seems constantly aware of the fragility of meaning. How do her stories answer the question she poses above?
3. Public transport plays a small, suggestive role in many of these stories. What might it symbolise? Think of specific examples.
4. What brings people together in these stories? What separates them?

### **18 Mar**

#### Set Reading:

Mansfield, Katherine 2002. *Selected Stories*, ed. by Angela Smith, Oxford: Oxford University Press  
[Stories to be discussed: ‘Something Childish but Very Natural’, ‘An Indiscreet Journey’, ‘Prelude’, ‘A Dill Pickle’, ‘*Je ne parle pas français*’, ‘Bliss’, ‘The Man Without a Temperament’, ‘At the Bay’, ‘A Married Man’s Story’, ‘The Garden Party’, ‘The Doll’s House’, ‘The Fly’]

Tasks:

1. Mansfield is sometimes accused of authorial cruelty. Is this your impression?
2. ‘Scene’ seems as important as ‘action’ in many of these stories – do you agree? What is the significance of *place* in Mansfield?
3. How would you describe Mansfield’s treatment of social class? How does it compare with Kennedy’s? How do the two writers approach sexual relationships (recognising the historical distance between them)?
4. If Kennedy narrative voice is remote and precise, always in control of the story (however mysterious), how would you compare Mansfield’s narrative style? What are its strengths?

Recommended Further Reading – Weeks 4-5:

- Bell, Eleanor 1999. ‘Scotland and Ethics in the Work of A.L. Kennedy’, *Scotlands*, 5.1, 105-113
- Borthwick, David 2006 ‘A.L. Kennedy’s Dysphoric Fictions’ in *Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. by Berthold Schoene, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 264-275\*
- Dunbar, Pamela 1997. *Radical Mansfield: Double Discourse in Katherine Mansfield’s Short Stories*, Basingstoke: Macmillan\*
- March, Cristie L. 2002. ‘A.L. Kennedy’s Introspections’ in *Rewriting Scotland*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 134-161\*
- Michel, Paulette and Dupuis, Michel, eds. 1989. *The Fine Instrument: Essays on Katherine Mansfield*, Coventry: Dangaroo Press
- Palditch, Jan 1996. *The Critical Response to Katherine Mansfield*, London: Greenwood Press\*
- Smith, Angela 2000. *Katherine Mansfield: A Literary Life*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan\*
- Tew, Philip 2003. ‘The Fiction of A.L. Kennedy’ in *Contemporary British Fiction*, ed. by Richard J. Lane, Rod Mengham and Philip Tew, London: Polity, 120-141\*[on order]

**Week 6: Internationalism in Contemporary Scottish Poetry**

**25 Mar**

Set Reading:

**Hugh MacDiarmid**

‘I Am with the New Writers’ (1943), ‘Glasgow, 1960’ (1935)

**Tom Leonard**

from *Situations Theoretical and Contemporary* (1986)

**Edwin Morgan**

‘The Flowers of Scotland’ (1969)

‘Aberdeen Train’ (1968)

*Glasgow Sonnets* (1972)

from *Sovpoems* (1961) [translations]  
Introduction, 'Sevastopol 1905', 'To a Friend', 'Spring' (Pasternak); 'O tears in the world's eyes!' (Tsvetayeva); 'Ay, but can ye?', 'Whit mair?' (Mayakovsky)

### **Kathleen Jamie**

from *The Queen of Sheba* (1994)  
'The Queen of Sheba', 'Mr and Mrs Scotland are Dead'

from *Jizzen* (1999)  
'The Graduates', 'Forget It', 'Rhododendrons'

from *The Tree House* (2004)  
'For When the Grape-vine's Sap', 'Hame' (after Rilke)

### **Don Paterson**

from *Nil Nil* (1993)  
'Morning Prayer', 'An Elliptical Stylus', 'The Alexandrian Library', 'Nil Nil'

from *God's Gift to Women* (1997)  
'A Private Bottling'

from *Landing Light* (2003)  
'The Rat', 'Form', 'Twinflooer'  
'Palm', 'Archaic Torso of Apollo' (after Rilke)

from *The Eyes: Versions after Antonio Machado* (1999)  
'Dream', 'The Eyes', 'Three Lyrics', 'Marginal Notes', 'Meditation',  
'from New Songs', Afterword

### Tasks:

1. Are these *poems* Scottish, or do they just happen to have been made by Scottish people? Does it matter?
2. How do Scottish language-forms (including Gaelic, Scots, and the representation of Scottish accents) 'locate' these poems culturally? Does it make them seem 'parochial'? How about the translations into Scots?
3. What relationship between the local and the global – the particular and the international, as MacDiarmid has it in 'I Am with the New Writers' – do these poems suggest to you?
4. Is it contradictory to honour Edwin Morgan – a great polyglot, modernist internationalist – with the rather old-fashioned sounding title of Scots Makar?

### Recommended Further Reading – Week 6:

#### Criticism

Bell, Eleanor 2007. 'Old Country, New Dreams: Scottish Poetry since the 1970s' in *Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature*, Vol. 3, ed. by Ian Brown et al, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 185-98\*

Crawford, Robert 1993. *Identifying Poets: Self and Territory in Twentieth-Century Poetry*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Gairn, Louisa 2006. 'Kathleen Jamie and Ecology' in *Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. by Berthold Schoene, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 236-45\*

Hames, Scott 2006. 'Don Paterson and Poetic Autonomy', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. by Berthold Schoene, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 245-55\*

- Hubbard, Tom 2006. 'Doing Something Uncustomary: Edwin Morgan and Attila József', *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, 1 [[www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk](http://www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk)]
- Morgan, Edwin 1990. *Nothing Not Giving Messages: Reflections on Work and Life*, ed. by Hamish Whyte, Edinburgh: Polygon\*
- Nicholson, Colin 2002. *Edwin Morgan: Inventions of Modernity*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press\*
- Purves, Robin 1999. 'Celtic Twiglet: Against Robert Crawford's Scotland', *Angel Exhaust*, 16 [available online at <http://www.poetrymagazines.org.uk/magazine/record.asp?id=13918>]
- Watson, Roderick 1987. 'Internationalising Scottish Poetry', in *History of Scottish Literature: Vol. 4, Twentieth Century*, ed. by Cairns Craig, Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 311-331\*
- Whyte, Christopher 2004. *Modern Scottish Poetry*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press\*
- Whyte, Christopher 2006. 'Twenty-one Collections for the Twenty-First Century' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. by Berthold Schoene, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 78-88\*

### Poetry

- Jamie, Kathleen 1994. *The Queen of Sheba*, Newcastle: Bloodaxe
- Jamie, Kathleen 1999. *Jizzen*, London: Picador
- Jamie, Kathleen 2004. *The Tree House*, London: Picador
- Morgan, Edwin 1990. *Collected Poems*, Manchester: Carcanet
- Morgan, Edwin 1996. *Collected Translations*, Manchester: Carcanet
- O'Rourke, Daniel 2002. *Dream State: New Scottish Poets*, 2nd edn., Edinburgh: Polygon [on order]
- Paterson, Don 1999. *The Eyes: Versions of Antonio Machado*, London: Faber
- Paterson, Don 2003. *Landing Light*, London: Faber
- Paterson, Don 2006. *Orpheus*, London: Faber [on order]
- Watson, Roderick ed. 1995. *The Poetry of Scotland*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

### Scots Dictionary

Dictionary of the Scots Language Online [<http://www.dsl.ac.uk/>]

## **Weeks 7-8: Subjective Adventures**

**8 Apr**

### Set Reading:

- Hamsun, Knut 2006. *Hunger*, trans. by Sverre Lyngstad, Edinburgh: Canongate
- Wood, James 2004. 'Knut Hamsun's Irresponsible Selves' in *The Irresponsible Self: On Laughter and the Novel*, London: Jonathan Cape, 96-112

Kelman, James 2007. 'Not not while the giro' in *Not note while the giro*, Edinburgh: Polygon, 197-225

Tasks:

1. How do you relate to Hamsun's rather unpredictable protagonist? Do you want him to cease suffering?
2. What is the significance of the hero's elaborate fantasy life? Does James Wood have any answers here?
3. Does the conclusion of the novel strike you as a hopeful one?
4. What links can you see between Hamsun's novel and the Kelman story?

**15 Apr**

Set Reading:

Kelman, James 2007. *The Busconductor Hines*, Edinburgh: Polygon

Kelman, James 1995. 'The same is here again' and 'Where I was' from *Lean Tales*, London: Vintage

*Interviews:*

McLean, Duncan 1985. 'James Kelman Interviewed', *Edinburgh Review*, 71, 64-80

McNeill, Kirsty 1989. 'Interview with James Kelman', *Chapman*, 57, 1-9

Tasks:

1. This is probably the most influential novel written in Scotland since the 1960s. Why should this be? (Have another look at the Kelman interviews, for a sense of context.)
2. How would you characterize the portrayal of Hines' inner life? What is Kelman's technique for showing us this subjective world, and what are its effects? Can you see any similarities / contrasts with Hamsun?
3. If *Hunger* is 'the classic novel of humiliation' (George Steiner), what is Kelman's novel? Classic or otherwise, what are the emotional realities the book most intensely evokes?
4. What do you make of Hines' decision at the novel's climax? How do you read it in the light of Kelman's socialism?
5. On the evidence of this week's reading, is Kelman more effective at novel length, or in a short-story?

Recommended Further Reading – Weeks 7-8:

Craig, Cairns 1993. 'Resisting Arrest: James Kelman' in *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies*, ed. by Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 99-114

Gardiner, Michael 2004. 'James Kelman Interviewed', *Scottish Studies Review*, 5.1, 101-15

Hames, Scott 2007. 'Dogged Masculinities: Male Subjectivity and Socialist Despair in Kelman and McIlvanney', *Scottish Studies Review* 8.1, 67-87

Jackson, Ellen-Raïssa Maley, Willy, eds. 2001. *Kelman and Commitment*, *Edinburgh Review*, 108 [special issue on Kelman]\*

Kelman, James 1992. *Some Recent Attacks: Essays Cultural and Political*, Stirling: AK Press

Kelman, James 2002. "AND THE JUDGES SAID...": *Essays*, London: Secker & Warburg\*

Klaus, H. Gustav 2004. *James Kelman*, Tavistock, Devon: Northcote House\*

Klaus, H. Gustav 1994. 'Kelman for Beginners', *Journal of the Short Story in English*, 22, 127-135

- Kovesi, Simon 2007. *James Kelman*, Manchester: Manchester University Press\*
- Maley, Willy 2000. 'Denizens, citizens, tourists, and others: marginality and mobility in the writings of James Kelman and Irvine Welsh' in *City Visions*, ed. by David Bell and Azzedine Haddour, Harlow: Longman, 60-72
- Maley, Willy 1996. 'Swearing Blind: Kelman and the Curse of the Working Classes', *Edinburgh Review*, 95, 105-112
- Milne, Drew 1992. 'James Kelman: dialects of urbanity', in *Writing Region and Nation*, ed. by James A. Davies and Glyn Pursglove, *Swansea Review*, 1994 (Conference proceedings, Fourth International Conference on the Literature of Region and Nation, Swansea, 1992), 393-407
- Milne Drew 2003. 'The Fiction of James Kelman and Irvine Welsh' in *Contemporary British Fiction*, ed. by Richard J. Lane, Rod Mengham and Philip Tew, London: Polity, 158-174
- Nicoll, Laurence 2000. '“This is not a nationalist position”: James Kelman’s existential voice', *Edinburgh Review*, 103, 79-85
- Watson, Roderick 1995. 'Alien Voices from the Street: Demotic Modernism in Modern Scots Writing' in *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 25, 141-155
- Wood, James 1994. 'In Defence of Kelman', *The Guardian*, 25 October 1994, T9

### **Weeks 9-10: Existential Voices**

**22 Apr**

Set Reading:

Camus, Albert 2000. *The Outsider*, trans by Joseph Laredo, London: Penguin  
 Extracts from Camus, *The Rebel* and *The Myth of Sisyphus*

Tasks:

1. What does the term 'existentialism' mean or suggest to you?
2. 'That hopeless encounter between human questioning and the silence of the universe' (Camus). Is this a fair summary of Meursault's predicament?
3. How is the oddness of Meursault's state of mind established? Find specific examples.
4. 'They were looking at us in silence, but in their own special way, as if we were nothing more than blocks of stone or dead trees.' How does *The Outsider* treat perception as morally charged?
5. Is this novel about a philosophy, or about a person? Either way, are there any heroes in it?

**29 Apr**

Set Reading:

Warner, Alan 1996. *Morvern Callar*, London: Vintage  
 Extract from J.P. Sartre, *Nausea*

Interview:

Dale, Sophy 2000. 'An Interview with Alan Warner', *Edinburgh Review*, 103, 121-33

Film Screening:

*Morvern Callar*, dir. by Lynne Ramsay (2002) – 28 Apr, 4.30pm, Pathfoot B2

Tasks:

1. 'You just dont know what youre thinking Morvern, she says. I nodded.' What does this nodding mean? Is Morvern emotionally numb and intellectually vacant, or does she simply withhold her inner life from others (including the reader)? How do you respond to her reticence?
2. 'Men adopting female personae are ... writing women out of their heads, male interpretations of women. Male visions. How could they be anything else? Alan Warner's women for example. Never done fiddling with their stockings. Doesn't invalidate what else he's saying – of course not – but it does remind you Alan's doing the observing.' (Janice Galloway) What do you make of Warner's representation of female subjectivity? Can this question be related to the existential *ethical* ideas the novel is 'really' about, according to Warner?
3. What is the significance of the religious symbolism in the novel? How does it relate to the super-vivid nature imagery? Can you draw any comparisons with *The Outsider*?

Recommended Further Reading – Weeks 9-10:

March, Cristie L. 2002. 'The Islands of Alan Warner' in *Rewriting Scotland*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 62-81\*

Murdoch, Iris 1976. *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist*, Glasgow: Fontana/Collins\*

Schoene, Berthold 2007. 'Alan Warner, Post-feminism and the Emasculated Nation' in *Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. by Berthold Schoene, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 255-264\*

Strachan, Zoe 2004. 'Existential Ecstasy: Interview with Alan Warner', *Spike*  
[<http://www.spikemagazine.com/0300alanwarner.php>]