

Seminar Series 2014-15 Semester 1

Stateless Literatures

22 September

Prof. Rick Fawn, School of International Relations, Univ. of St Andrews
'Introduction to the Nation, the State, the Nation State'

29 September

Prof. Kathryn Cramer, School of Modern Languages and Cultures, Glasgow University
'If Not Life, Then Literature: Reflections on Catalan Writing Through the Work of Najat El Hachmi'

6 October

Prof. Derek Duncan & Dr Emma Bond, School of Modern Languages Univ. of St Andrews
'Voicing the Stateless within a National Language'

13 October

Dr Richard Glyn Roberts, Department of Welsh, Aberystwyth University School of Irish, Celtic Studies, Irish Folklore and Linguistics, University College Dublin
'Saunders Lewis and Roparz Hemon: two stateless literatures in a State context'

20 October

Dr Pilar Rodríguez, Universidad de Deusto
'Creating the Basque nation on screen'

27 October

Prof. Alan Riach, School of Critical Studies, Glasgow University
'Gaelic to English: Translation, Ecology and Violence in Duncan Ban MacIntyre's "Praise of Ben Dorain"'

10 November

Prof. Christine Allison, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies University of Exeter
'In Search of a Kurdish National Literature: The Politics of Literary Production in Kurdistan and beyond'

17 November

Dr Peter Mackay, School of English, Univ. of St Andrews
'"a knowledge of stumbling": contemporary Scottish Gaelic Poetry'

24 November

Dr Cécile Kovacszy, Université de Limoges
'Romani / Gypsy literatures: national, transnational, global or stateless?'

1 December

Catherine Barbour, School of Modern Languages, Univ. of St Andrews
'The Literary Language "Choice": Dialectics of Identity in Galician and Spanish-Language Writing'

Abstracts

Prof. Kathryn Cramer, School of Modern Languages and Cultures, Glasgow University

‘If Not Life, Then Literature Reflections on Catalan Writing Through the Work of Najat El Hachmi

Najat El Hachmi was born in Morocco but moved to Catalonia at the age of eight. In 2008 she won the prestigious Ramon Llull prize for Catalan literature with her first novel, *L'últim patriarca* (The Last Patriarch). This tells the story of a young Tamazight-speaking immigrant whose struggles to escape her cruel and authoritarian father run parallel with her quest to find an identity within a new Catalan environment. In this paper, I will explore the role of the Catalan language and literature in this quest, particularly the way they allow her to explore freedoms and emotional states denied to her by her controlling father, and to develop a ‘narrative sense of self’ (Goldie), of which the novel itself is the evidence.

**Dr Richard Glyn Roberts, Department of Welsh, Aberystwyth University
School of Irish, Celtic Studies, Irish Folklore and Linguistics, University College Dublin
‘Saunders Lewis and Roparz Hemon: two stateless literatures in a state context’**

Saunders Lewis and Roparz Hemon are central figures in the twentieth century literary history of their respective language groups. Rejecting any preconceived, nebulous notion of shared celticity, a comparative study of both authors in context serves to highlight a number of similarities, often realized in the form of divergences, that stem from a conflictual relationship with English or French cultural hegemony. Expanding the field of comparison to encompass the writings of detractors and advocates of the two authors in question sheds further light on the manipulation of cultural history both from the perspective of a banal state nationalism and its aspiring regional variant.

**Dr Pilar Rodríguez, Universidad de Deusto.
‘Creating the Basque nation on screen’**

This seminar explores the extent and complexity of Basque cinema, a rich cultural practice set in a particular community. *Euskal Herria* (the Basque Country) comprises the Autonomous Communities of the Basque Country and Navarre in Spain and the Northern Basque Country in France. *Euskadi* or the *Comunidad Autónoma de Euskadi* (the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country) only alludes to three Basque provinces in Spain. In such context, citizenship is fractured between languages (Basque, Castilian and French), locations and definitions that are also complicated by the Basque diaspora and a history of Basque migrations that add to the challenge of defining its cinema according to a limited or chartered geographical zone. The seminar will provide a brief account of the most representative films in the history of Basque cinema, with special attention to those that attempt to build an image of the Basque nation.

Dr Peter Mackay, School of English, Univ. of St Andrews
“a knowledge of stumbling“: contemporary Scottish Gaelic Poetry’

Drawing in part on poetry that has responded – however obliquely – to this year’s referendum campaign, this paper will discuss ways in which Scottish Gaelic poets have approached the notions of nation and rootedness in their work. The relationship between the Gaelic language and Scotland as a whole has never been simple or singular, and its status as a Scottish ‘national’ language – though now recognised in law – is one that is still culturally fraught. This paper will trace some of the faultlines of that relationship in the poetry, including: Aonghas MacNeacail’s support for Scottish independence, which tentatively unpicks Gaelic’s historical place in Scotland; Meg Bateman’s refusal of any easy meaningful relationship with land or community; and, almost unique in the history of Gaelic literature, a growing body of ‘emigrant’ poetry written by learners of the language.

Dr Cécile Kovacsazy, Université de Limoges
‘Romani / Gypsy literatures: national, transnational, global or stateless?’

While Roma/Gypsies form the largest minority in number in Europe (estimated at 10 to 15 million persons), literatures written by Roma are still nearly unknown. Even though literary texts written by Roma have existed for centuries, the current state of research, which is limited in this domain, dates the first Roma texts back to the late nineteenth century. But what are the similarities / differences between those works written by Roma persons living in France, in Hungary, or elsewhere? This question raises other preliminary questions, the first of which is: What do we understand the term *Roma* to mean? The analysis of specific literary texts will allow us to sketch answers to the question that will guide my presentation: Are Romani literatures national, transnational, global or stateless literatures?

Prof. Christine Allison, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter
'In Search of a Kurdish National Literature: The Politics of Literary Production in Kurdistan and beyond'

Often described as ‘the world’s largest stateless nation’ the Kurds number over 30 million and their homeland lies across four nation-states – Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. Although literature is considered across the Kurdish community to be an important national asset, modern Kurdish literature is a response not only to Kurdishness but also to the very different dynamics prevailing in the different nation-states. In an environment where diversity is often seen to be threatening, the existence of various Kurdish dialects and of literature by Kurds in Turkish, Arabic and Persian poses fundamental questions of what Kurdish literature actually is. However, as the Kurdish national discourse becomes ever more coherent and previously lost works are discovered and published, a ‘national literature’ is taking shape and a canon is forming.

Catherine Barbour, School of Modern Languages, Univ. of St Andrews
‘The Literary Language “Choice”’: Dialectics of Identity in Galician and Spanish-Language Writing’

This paper will examine the contentious issue of the literary language “choice” negotiated by bilingual writers in Galicia. Due to the language-defined boundaries of both the Spanish and Galician canons, writers are typically excluded from one and subsumed into the other according to their linguistic affiliation. Commercial and editorial pressures, political interests and linguistic competence are among the factors which contribute to the language decision, with writers opting either exclusively for Galician or Spanish, self-translating to the second language, or varying language according to genre. Drawing on theories of language ideology and the postnational, as well as interviews with a number of contemporary Galician authors, the conflation of language, genre and identity will be explored as a means to engage with the broader context of identity politics in diglossic communities today.