

Spinning Scotland Conference Speaker Profiles

Anne Donovan

Anne Donovan is a prize-winning writer who has been published in various anthologies and broadcast on BBC radio. In 2001 Canongate published her collection *Hieroglyphics and Other Stories* which met with critical acclaim. She followed this with her debut novel *Buddha Da* in 2003, a strong narrative infused with the Scots language which tells of a working class Glaswegian painter who begins to explore Buddhism. *Buddha Da* was a huge success and was shortlisted for the Orange Prize in 2003. She has recently published a new novel, *Being Emily* in which a young girl relates to the novelist Emily Bronte and the novel explores teenagers negotiating the events of life.

Alasdair Gray

Alasdair Gray is not only one of Scotland's most famous writers, named by Anthony Burgess 'the greatest Scottish writer since Walter Scott', he is also a painter, illustrator and book designer. Born and brought up in Glasgow, he was a muralist and theatrical scene painter and designs his own books from dustjacket to illustration. He was a member of Philip Hobsbaum's writers' group alongside James Kelman, Liz Lohead and Tom Leonard. His novel *Lanark* published in 1981 has been acclaimed as one of the greatest Scottish novels of the Twentieth century and his 1992 novel *Poor Things* won the Whitbread Prize and the *Guardian Fiction Prize*. Other publications include a wide variety of fiction, poetry, plays and non-fiction including, *Unlikely Stories Mostly* (1983), *Janine* (1984), *Something Leather* (1984), *Why Scots Should Rule Scotland* (1992), *A History Maker* (1994), *Working Legs – A Play for those Without Them* (1997) and *A Short Survey of Classic Scottish Writing* (2001). His most recent novel, *Old Men in Love* was published by Bloomsbury in 2007.

Liz Lohead

Poet and dramatist Liz Lohead was born in Motherwell. After attending Glasgow School of Art, she lectured in fine art for eight years before becoming a professional writer. In the early 1970s she joined Philip Hobsbaum's writers' group, a crucible of creative activity – other members were Alasdair Gray, James Kelman and Tom Leonard. She is one of Scotland's most popular dramatists. Her plays include *Blood and Ice*, *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987), *Perfect Days* (2000) and a highly acclaimed adaptation into Scots of Molière's *Tartuffe* (1985). Her poetry includes *True Confessions and New Clichés* (1985), *Bagpipe Muzak* (1991) and *Dreaming Frankenstein: and Collected Poems* (1984). Liz is Writer in Residence in the Department of Scottish Literature at the University of Glasgow.

Carl McDougall

Many will recognise Carl MacDougall as the creator of 'Writing Scotland', an eight part tv series produced by Hopscotch films for BBC. The accompanying book, written by Carl and published by Polygon in 2004, provides an in-depth look at Scottish Literature, its different inspirations and preoccupations, from Burns to the 21st century.

Also written and presented by Carl, 'SCOTS – The Language of the people' was screened by BBC2 in 2004. The series tells the story of the Scots language, from its common roots with English to the present day. As part of this project he has also produced an anthology which features the work of 50 writers covering more than 800 years, from the Makars to Edwin Morgan.

Carl is an acclaimed creative writer who has produced numerous collections of short fiction, plays and novels including *Stone Over Water*, *The Lights Below* (1993), and *The Casanova Papers* (1996). He is also editor of the collection of Scottish short stories *The Devil and the Giro*, and *Into a Room, the Selected Poems of William Soutar* which he produced with Douglas Gifford.

Gerard Carruthers

Gerry Carruthers is the current Head of Department and Reader at the Department of Scottish Literature, University of Glasgow and the Director of the Centre for Robert Burns Studies. During this time he has published and edited a number of critical books including *English Romanticism and the Celtic World*, *Beyond Scotland : new contexts for twentieth-century Scottish literature* and *Robert Burns*, as well as editing editions of Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson and Robert Burns. He was previously lecturer in the Department of English Studies, University of Strathclyde (1995- 2000) and a Research Fellow at the Centre for Walter Scott Studies, University of Aberdeen (1993-5). Internationally, he held the W. Ormiston Roy Memorial Research Fellowship at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, USA.

This year he will be the editor of the Oxford University Press multi-volume edition of the Collected Works of Robert Burns. This is a 15 year project which will be undertaken by the Centre for Robert Burns Studies and will bring together world leaders in the field of Burns studies.

Alan Riach

Born in Lanarkshire, Scotland, in 1957, Alan Riach is a graduate of the Universities of Cambridge and Glasgow. He worked in New Zealand from 1986 to December 2000 before returning to Scotland in 2001. His poetry has been published in numerous journals in Scotland, New Zealand and internationally. It is collected in *This Folding Map*, *An Open Return*, *First and Last Songs* and *Clearances* (Hazard Press, NZ / Scottish Cultural Press, 2001).

Alan has occupied the Chair of Scottish Literature at the University of Glasgow since 2003 during which time he has published a number of critical books including *Representing Scotland in Literature, Popular Culture and Iconography: The Masks of the Modern Nation* and has contributed poems and essays to numerous recent volumes, including *Scotlands: Poets and the Nation* (co-edited with Professor Douglas Gifford, *Spirits of the Age: Scottish Self-Portraits* *The Wallace Muse* and *The Edinburgh Book of Twentieth-Century Scottish Poetry*.