

# Scottish Universities International Summer School: 65 Years On

**By Julia Boll, Konstantina Georganta**

The Scottish Universities International Summer School (SUISS) is 65! Since its establishment in 1947, as a non-profit organization by Professor David Daiches, the School has had a continuous presence giving the opportunity to hundreds of students each year to visit Edinburgh and share their passion for literature and the arts. SUISS now represents seven Scottish Universities, namely, the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee, St Andrews, Strathclyde

pieces from Indian, German, Swedish, American, Greek, Chilean, New Zealand and South African students who stayed with SUISS for a minimum of three weeks working on their writing, experimenting with various genres and forms, and exchanging ideas with one another. It is telling that after the conclusion of this year's summer classes, a group of Creative Writing students created a network through which to discuss their work and offer/receive feedback.

The Text and Context Course of the Summer School offers consecutive 2-week modules on Modernism, Scottish Literature and British and Irish Literature from 1960-present. The Modernism module examines work by, among others, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Bowen and Jean Rhys and is designed to address the needs of students of all levels who wish to focus on Modernist aesthetics and explore in more detail the historical and cultural period that bred the particularities of this literature.

For the Scottish Literature module, the programme covers Scottish Modernism during the first week and moves on to examine Post-Modern to Contemporary Scottish Literature during the second. The reading list includes poetry by Hugh MacDiarmid and Edwin Morgan, plays by John McGrath, Gregory Burke and Liz Lochhead, and fiction by Lewis Grassie Gibbon, Muriel Spark and Alasdair Gray.

The Contemporary Literature course covers British and Irish Literature since 1960. In 2011, the lectures started with Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* and ended with a discussion on the role of multiculturalism in today's British poetry. Other texts included Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*, Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Sarah Kane's *Blasted* and Paul Muldoon's *Poems*. The programme for this module coincides with the School's Creative Writing course, the Edinburgh Art and International Festivals (including the quirky Edinburgh Festival Fringe) and the International Book Festival, which makes these two weeks a feast for art lovers.

The School's programme is intensive and flexible. It has much to offer to students of various degrees of academic experience as well as teachers and scholars. In particular those involved in further research have participated in the programme of study while also making use of Edinburgh's extensive library resources for their own work. The SUISS Creative Writing course is designed to cater for students with varying levels of writing experience. The School is happy to consider applications from undergraduates, postgraduates and teachers, as well

as writers keen to widen their skills. All SUISS modules can be combined or taken separately. Credit is available to, although not compulsory for, all students attending any of these modules. SUISS credit is affiliated to the University of Edinburgh degree credit scheme (SCOTCAT) and to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), both of which are recognised by universities throughout the world.

In addition to the formal academic programme, SUISS offers an extensive and

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In 2004, SUISS also established the Edwin Morgan Translation Fellowship with the generous support of the Scottish Arts Council, designed to offer a free place on the six-week Text and Context course to professional translators with an interest in twentieth-century and contemporary Scottish writing. Since then we have welcomed to Scotland translators from Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Croatia, Portugal, Italy and China. The fellowship bears the name of Edwin Morgan to honour his six decades of work in translation. In 2011, the Edwin Morgan Creative Writing Fellow was Ian Rankin's Chinese translator, Jenny Lu, who had a rich record of publications and left Scotland with a list of contacts and ideas for projects of translating Scottish fiction into Chinese. Jenny met with Ian Rankin and arranged to translate his *Exit Music*.

Each year, at the end of the summer, we invite our students to become ambassadors of SUISS, spreading the word about the School and keeping in touch with us. We are keen to cultivate a long-standing relationship with SUISS students and the response we receive is always gratifying. The feedback we get is filled with favourable comments on the insightful lectures and lively tutorials, the international and intercultural atmosphere of the School, the inspiring time spent at SUISS sharing ideas with other literature enthusiasts in a vibrant city. Carla Sassi, Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of Verona, attended SUISS in 1988. In her alumni tale she writes that her experience at SUISS was a springboard for her academic career, and she adds: I had an interest in Scottish literature and I was looking for guidance and confrontation. I found both: I remember those 6 weeks of lectures and informal debates with fellow students, sessions of work at the library, as immensely fruitful and stimulating. It was through SUISS that I met Scottish writers and colleagues that would then become friends and a source of inspiration throughout my professional life. It was then that I undertook the journey that eventually led to the writing of *Why Scottish Literature Matters*

administrator, at [suiss@ed.ac.uk](mailto:suiss@ed.ac.uk).

SUISS was established in the same year as the Edinburgh International Festival to extend a warm welcome to all the visitors to the city of Edinburgh, in the spirit of peace and reconciliation, with the aim of bringing people together across all cultures regardless of their countries often strained relations, united by a love for literature and culture. As we prepare the School's 65th anniversary programme, we would like to invite you to get involved in the celebrations and make 2012 a landmark year in the history of SUISS. The Scottish Universities International Summer School (SUISS) is 65! Since its establishment in 1947, as a non-profit organization by Professor David Daiches, the School has had a continuous presence giving the opportunity to hundreds of students each year to visit Edinburgh and share their passion for literature and the arts. SUISS now represents seven Scottish Universities, namely, the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee, St Andrews, Strathclyde and The Open University in Scotland, and since 2010 it also offers a unique two-week module in Scottish Literature, which combines the expertise of academics from these institutions.

Held every summer in Scotland's beautiful capital and UNESCO's first City of Literature, SUISS offers a series of lectures and seminars, designed to celebrate British and Irish Literature since 1900. The academic programme is combined with a rich social and cultural programme, which includes tours of the city, visits to art galleries, the Scottish Poetry Library and the Scottish Parliament, as well as readings by distinguished writers in the evenings. Since 2003, the School has also offered a Creative Writing Course in August, to coincide with the Edinburgh International Book Festival. The Creative Writing academic programme includes Masterclasses in selected genres by established writers, small-group seminars and individual one-hour tutorials each week with the tutor.

Each year, SUISS attracts students and scholars from all over the world, and in the last couple of years it was the host to students from 37 different countries. Bringing together students and academics who, irrespective of national, religious or cultural differences, share a love of literature and writing, the School welcomes such interculturality and tries to foster it. This is reflected in *Northern Light*, the School's biannual publication of poetry and prose from SUISS Creative Writing students. Published earlier this year, *Northern Light 2010-11* includes pieces from Indian, German, Swedish, American, Greek, Chilean, New Zealand and South African students who stayed with SUISS for a minimum of three weeks

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In addition to the formal academic programme, SUISS offers an extensive and varied programme of cultural and social activities, which always proves a hugely rewarding part of the friendly atmosphere of the School. Students from all courses have the opportunity to attend these events, which include talks on art, film screenings, a Fringe show and ceilidh dancing. A prominent feature of the programme is a series of readings from Scotland's leading contemporary writers. Guests at SUISS have included John Burnside, Janice Galloway, Alasdair Gray, A.L. Kennedy, Bernard MacLaverty, Edwin Morgan, Don Paterson, James Robertson, Liz Lochhead, Tom Leonard, Kei Miller, Louise Welsh and Christopher Brookmyre.

Thanks to its sponsors SUISS is able to offer a number of special scholarships for applicants from specific countries or specializing in certain subjects. The School also offers a number of scholarships for exceptional literature students who would not be able to attend the Summer School without some financial help with the course fee. In 2012 SUISS will offer 6 Anniversary Scholarships, in celebration of its 65th anniversary, covering the full course fee of a single module of the Text and Context course.

In recent years, a number of scholarships have been established to run in addition to the School's longstanding co-operation with institutes such as The Charles Wallace India Trust or The Scottish Czech and Slovak Summer Scholarship Fund. In 2010, SUISS welcomed the first Saltire scholars from abroad, who either run courses in Scottish Literature, or who have permission from their departments to set up such a course, or doctoral candidates in the late stages of a PhD on an aspect of Scottish Literature. The Saltire scholarship for Scottish Literature covered the course and accommodation fee for the Scottish Literature course, as well as an additional study week for research. In 2007, SUISS introduced the David Daiches scholarship, supported by friends of SUISS to commemorate the life and vision of the School's founder, while previously, in 2002, the John McGrath scholarship for Theatre Studies was established, to celebrate the life and work of John McGrath, playwright, theatre director, and good friend of the School for many years.

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