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The Bottle Imp

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New Publications: Fiction & Poetry

Black Cat Bone

by John Burnside
Jonathan Cape, 2011

John Burnside's remarkable new book is full of strange, unnerving poems that hang in the memory like a myth or a song. These are poems of thwarted love and disappointment, of raw desire, of the stalking beast, 'eye-teeth/and muzzle/coated with blood'; poems that recognise 'we have too much to gain from the gods, and this is why/they fail to love us'; poems that tell of an obsessive lover coming to grief in a sequence that echoes the old murder ballads, or of a hunter losing himself in the woods while pursuing an unknown and possibly unknowable quarry. Drawing on sources as various as the paintings of Pieter Brueghel and the lyrics of Delta blues, *Black Cat Bone* examines varieties of love, faith, hope and illusion, to suggest an unusual possibility: that when the search for what we expected to find—in the forest or in our own hearts—ends in failure, we can now begin the hard and disciplined quest for what is actually there. Full of risk and wonder, *Black Cat Bone* shows the range of Burnside's abilities, but also strikes out for new territories. He remains consistently, though, one of our finest living lyric poets and each of these astonishing poems is as clear and memorable as 'a silver bracelet/falling for days/through an inch and a half/of ice'. John Burnside won the Forward poetry prize for *Black Cat Bone* in October 2011.

An Cuilithionn 1939 / The Cuillin 1939 & Unpublished Poems

by Somhairle MacGill-Eain / Sorley MacLean
edited by Christopher Whyte
ASLS, 2011

The work of Somhairle MacGill-Eain (Sorley MacLean), the greatest Gaelic poet of the 20th century, has a significance which echoes far beyond the confines of his time, his country and his language. His extended political poem 'An Cuilithionn' ('The Cuillin'), taking the celebrated mountain range in Skye as a symbol for the international revolutionary movement, has hitherto been known only in an abridgement, made fifty years after its initial conception in 1939 on the eve of World War II. Christopher Whyte's new edition of the original manuscript includes 400 lines never before published, along with MacLean's own English translation from the time of writing, and an extended commentary. Forty-five other previously unpublished poems by Sorley MacLean also appear here for the first time, with facing English translations.

Fiere

by Jackie Kay
Picador, 2011

Jackie Kay's new collection is a lyric counterpart to her memoir, *Red Dust Road*, the extraordinary story of the search for her Nigerian and Highland birth-parents; but it is also a moving book in its own right, and a deep enquiry into all forms of human friendship. *Fiere*—Scots for 'companion, friend, equal'—is a vivid description of the many paths our lives take, and of how those journeys are made meaningful by our companions on the road: lovers, friends, parents, children, mentors—as well as all the remarkable and chance acquaintances we would not otherwise have made. Written with Kay's trademark wit and flair, and infused with both Scots and Igbo speech, it is also a fascinating account of the formation of a self-identity—and the discovery of a tongue that best honours it. Musical and moving, funny and profound, *Fiere* is Jackie Kay's most accomplished, assured and ambitious collection of poems to date.

Waverley

by Sir Walter Scott
eds. Lamont, Garside, and Duncan
Penguin, 2011

Set against the backdrop of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, *Waverley* (1814) tells the story of an idealistic young English officer whose loyalty to his regiment is threatened when he becomes involved with the Jacobite cause in the Scottish Highlands. Scott's first novel was a huge success on publication and marked the start of his extraordinary literary success, while also helping to forge the enduring myth of the wild and romantic Scottish Highlands. This edition is a reprint of Peter Garside's Edinburgh Edition text of the novel, with a new critical introduction by Ian Duncan.

The Blue Book

by AL Kennedy
Jonathan Cape, 2011

Elizabeth Barber is crossing the Atlantic by liner with her perfectly adequate boyfriend, Derek, who might be planning to propose. In fleeing the UK—temporarily—Elizabeth may also be in flight from her past and the charismatic Arthur, once her partner in what she came to see as a series of crimes. Together they acted as fake mediums, perfecting the arcane skills practised by effective frauds. Elizabeth finally rejected what once seemed an intoxicating game. Arthur continued his search for the right way to do wrong. He now subsidises free closure for the traumatised and dispossessed by preying on the super-rich. The pair still meet occasionally, for weekends of sexual oblivion, but their affection lacerates as much as it consoles. She hadn't, though, expected the other man on the boat. As her voyage progresses, Elizabeth's past is revealed, codes slowly form and break as communication deepens. It's time for her to discover who are the true deceivers and who are the truly deceived. What's more, is the book itself—a fiction which may not always be lying—deceiving the reader? Offering illusions and false trails, magical numbers and redemptive humour, this is a novel about what happens when we are misled and when we are true: an extraordinarily intricate and intimate journey into our minds and hearts undertaken by a writer of great gifts—a maker of wonders.

Caoir Gheal Leumraich/A White Leaping Flame: Sorley MacLean Collected Poems

By Sorley MacLean
Polygon, 2011

This Collected Works of Sorley MacLean brings together published poetry from MacLean's own edited volumes of poetry, poetry previously published in various magazines, literary journals and anthologies, and poetry which has never been published before. The poems will be given in their original Gaelic with English translations. The volume opens with a biographical summary of MacLean's childhood on Raasay, his life at university and war experiences, and examines MacLean's effect on Gaelic and Scottish literature, and his literary, political and philosophical influences, which included Gaelic traditional song, Romanticism and Modernism, as well as Communism and Fascism.

The Echo Chamber

by Luke Williams
Hamish Hamilton, 2011

There was once a stranger, formerly a watchmaker, now a murderer, who would become a grandfather. He spent his days in second-class compartments, evading the law, and in one of these compartments, on the London and North Eastern line, he met a student with a scar on his chin who carried a pocket watch in his left-breast pocket. It began with a chance encounter between a murderer and a student on the Flying Scotsman. A second journey would take the student to Nigeria, where his daughter—Evie Steppman—would be conceived. This is Evie's story. Born into the dying days of the British Empire, she must now write her story while she still can: her time in the womb, a feral childhood in Lagos, travels across America with her lover ... Evie's is a strange and unusual story, which she recalls now with the help of objects that surround her—a pocket watch, a pile of maps, an encyclopaedia ...

These Islands We Sing

ed. Kevin MacNeill

Polygon, 2011

Many of Scotland's most important poets grew up or chose to live on Scottish islands. This anthology pays tribute to the islands' creative output by bringing together a huge array of poetic talent, from the internationally-renowned—Sorley Maclean, Iain Crichton Smith, George Mackay Brown, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Hugh MacDairmid—to those fantastic poets deserving of more attention—Jim Mainland, Aonghas MacNeacail, Meg Bateman, Alex Clunness, Jen Hadfield, and many more—in one wonderful collection. With poems exploring the themes of love, language, landscape, identity and belonging, *These Islands, We Sing* is a significant and heartfelt celebration of poetry and place.

A Choosing: The Selected Poems of Liz Lochhead

by Liz Lochhead

Polygon, 2011

A stunning new collection of selected works from one of Scotland's most loved writers. During her career Liz Lochhead has been described variously as a poet, feminist playwright, translator and broadcaster but has said that 'when somebody asks me what I do I usually say writer. The most precious thing to me is to be a poet. If I were a playwright, I'd like to be a poet in the theatre.' Liz Lochhead has a large and devoted audience and delights audiences where she goes. Liz Lochhead was appointed Scotland's Makar (Poet Laureate) in January 2011.

Ever Fallen in Love

by Zoë Strachan

Sandstone Press, 2011

Richard fell for Luke at university. Luke was handsome, dissolute, dangerous; together they did things that Richard has spent the last decade trying to forget. Now his career is on the brink of success, but his younger sister Stephanie's life is in pieces. Her invasion of Richard's remote west coast sanctuary forces Richard to confront the tragedy and betrayal of his past, and face up to his own role in what happened back then. In this compelling, visceral tale of how not to fit in, Zoë Strachan takes us on a journey through hedonistic student days to the lives we didn't expect to end up living, and the hopes and fears that never quite leave us.

As Though We Were Flying

by Andrew Greig

Bloodaxe Books, 2011

This is a book of awakenings—to loss and renewal, to present and past and place. To dailiness, mortality and marriage. Playful or serious, colloquial or formal, they speak directly of life lived. Celebratory or elegiac, whether set in Orkney, Spain, coastal Fife or Edinburgh, Andrew Greig's poems are acts of attention, when the mind wakes up and the world snaps into focus. They invite the same pleasure in the reader.



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