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# The Bottle Imp

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**New Publications: Non-fiction & Criticism**

## **Artful**

*by Ali Smith*

*Hamish Hamilton, 2012*

Adapted from four lectures given at Oxford University by Ali Smith, *Artful* is a tidal wave of ideas in four thematically organised bursts of thought: 'On Time', 'On Form', 'On Edge' and 'On Offer and On Reflection'. Refusing to be tied down to either fiction or the essay form, *Artful* is narrated by a character who is haunted – literally – by a former lover, the writer of a series of lectures about art and literature. Full of both the poignancy and humour of fiction and all the sideways insights and jaunty angles you would expect from Ali Smith's criticism, it explores form, style, life, love, death, mortality, immortality and what art and writing can mean.

## **Republics of the Mind**

*by James Robertson*

*Black and White Publishing, 2012*

This brand new edition of short stories comprises the best of James Robertson's work, collected together here for the first time. They range in setting from a dysfunctional safari park to a dentist's surgery, from the poverty of hope of a reservation in South Dakota to the nightmare vision of a future Scotland riven by ethnic cleansing, from friendships strong in adversity to marriages heading for the rocks. Nothing is quite what it seems in these stories. Running through them is an undercurrent of optimism tinged with despair, as the personal meets the political and individual men and women make choices that will change their lives forever. Surreal, realistic, angry, philosophical, funny and humane, Robertson's shorter fiction explores the lives of his characters with the same deftness of touch that has brought critical acclaim for novels such as *And the Land Lay Still* and *The Testament of Gideon Mack*.

## **Best Scottish Poems 2012**

*edited by Louise Welsh and Zoë Strachan*

*Scottish Poetry Library, 2013*

This is the ninth issue of *Best Scottish Poems*, an online selection of twenty of the best poems by Scottish authors to appear in books, pamphlets and literary magazines during 2012. We began by publishing this annual selection on St Andrew's Day, to wave a poetry flag for Scotland, but moved publication to spring to allow editors to consider a whole calendar year. Bookshops and libraries &mdash; with honourable exceptions – often provide a very narrow range of poetry, and Scottish poetry in particular. *Best Scottish Poems* offers readers in Scotland and abroad a way of sampling the range and achievement of our poets, their languages, forms, concerns. It is in no sense a competition but a personal choice, and this year's editors, the novelists Louise Welsh and Zoë Strachan, checked and balanced each other's predilections. Their introduction demonstrates how widely they read, and how intensely. The preceding years' selections are still available on the website.

## **Selected Poems**

*by Don Paterson*

*Faber & Faber, 2012*

This selection, drawn from twenty years of work, is made by the author himself and includes not only those poems from his four single volumes, but his thrilling and original adaptations of the poems of Antonio Machado and Rainer Maria Rilke. For any readers unfamiliar with Don Paterson's work, this *Selected Poems* offers the perfect introduction to this most captivating of writers; and for fans, an essential gathering from a master craftsman.

## **Something Like Happy**

*by John Burnside*

*Jonathan Cape, 2013*

In these remarkable stories, John Burnside takes us into the lives of men and women trapped in marriage, ensnared by drink, diminished by disappointment; all kinds of women, all kinds of men – lonely, unfaithful, dying – driving empty roads at night. These are people for whom the idea of 'home' has become increasingly intangible, hard to believe – and happiness, or grace, or freedom, all now seem to belong in some kind of dream, or a fable they might have read in a children's picture book. As he says in one story, 'All a man has is his work and his sense of himself, all the secret life he holds inside that nobody else can

know.' But in each of these normal, damaged lives, we are shown something extraordinary: a dogged belief in some kind of hope or beauty that flies in the face of all reason and is, as a result, both transfiguring and heart-rending.

### **Reality, Reality**

*by Jackie Kay  
Picador, 2012*

This is a book about memories, love, sex and the power of the imagination to see us through the most difficult times. The women of Reality, Reality are mesmerizing, whether in love or in solitude. Grace and Rose, glowing with pride, are the first to marry on Shetland; Hadassah, named for the Morning Star, burns as brightly. Margaret, alone in her care home, places her hope in a cherry red cardigan; Elina Makropulos, whose voice is the toast of generations, is desperate to be allowed to grow old. Stef cooks for made-up judges on the TV show in her head. Pat diets for one hundred and forty-three days to find her 'Mini-me'. Dionne longs for a child; Mrs Vadnie Marlene Sevlon for her husband. And Elizabeth Ellen carries her new baby into a future she didn't know could be hers. Jackie Kay's newest and most luminous of collections is full of compassion, generosity, sorrow and joy. In fifteen extraordinary stories, she celebrates the richness and power of dream-life to inspire, to repair, and to make real.

### **The Same Life Twice**

*by Frank Kuppner  
Carcenet, 2012*

Comic, cosmic: for Kuppner the terms are inseparable. In the three plaited sections of The Same Life Twice, Frank Kuppner asks the essential, answerless questions about human existence: What are we doing here? Is it really here? And why here? 'Fortunately,' he writes, 'it is nearly always possible to take notes, even if these habitually contradict each other.' Here are Kuppner's fieldnotes from life in an unfathomable universe. A sardonic Virgil showing us a directionless Infinity, Kuppner guides us through a reality in which we are just 'one more of the ignorant infinite dots / rather than the vast central vortex we must feel ourselves to be'.

### **Deadman's Pedal**

*by Alan Warner  
Jonathan Cape, 2012*

It is the early 1970s in the Highlands of Scotland and for 16-year-old Simon Crimmons there's really not much to do. He can hang around

with his pals or his first-ever girlfriend, Nikki, he can dream about a first motorbike to get him out of the Port and among the hills, but in truth he's going nowhere. The only local drama and romance is provided by the rural railway, and Simon ends up working on the trains by chance, thrown into a community of jaded older men. But that summer he is introduced to a world far more glamorous and strange. He meets the louche, bohemian Alex, and his dark, gorgeous sister, Varie: all that remains of 'the doomed family' of the great house at Broken Moan, where their father, Andrew Bultitude, is Commander of the Pass. When Simon falls in love with the otherworldly Varie he is suddenly given a freedom and mobility that is both thrilling and vertiginous. With The Deadman's Pedal, Alan Warner returns to the landscapes of Morvern Callar and his early novels: a world where the real and the surreal, grim trade unionists and the crazed aristocracy, live under the shadows of the same great mountains, along the same railway line. A demented comedy, a wild romantic fling – The Deadman's Pedal is another thrillingly imagined adventure by one of our finest novelists.

### **Small World**

*by Richard Price  
Carcenet, 2012*

From the 'small world' of modern family life, evoked with humour and an acute ear for its intricate dynamics, Richard Price's Small World travels into the catastrophe of sudden, devastating illness. Price's poems explore how the world must be relearned – by the patient, by the poet. How far is it true that 'Only translations remain / of what we were'? A love letter, a record, Small World is an unforgettable testimony to love and courage.

### **Definite Articles**

*by Tom Leonard  
Word Power Books, 2013*

Tom Leonard's Definite Articles covers forty years of essays, articles, reviews, and journal entries. The material is political, literary, topical and personal, and includes in its scope: The 'news' and what it never says – language and power – Roger Quin, homeless poet – poetry and its place or otherwise in school – Charles Reznikoff, modern american master – Carlos Williams versus class diction in Britain – the public library and what democracy means – Robert Browning – R D Laing remembered – John Clare – What does 'culture' mean? – Chekhov's Uncle Vanya – On the Mass Bombing

of Iraq and Kuwait – ‘The City of Dreadful Night’ and its place in the life James Thomson – African and native poetry anthologies – sexuality, rape and ‘virgin martyrs’ in the Catholic Church – space and the poetry of breath from Pound to Paul Blackburn – demonising Muslims and Middle East policy – reclaiming local culture in Scotland – Boltanski’s Glasgow exhibition – a memoir of Tom Leonard’s father – Tom Raworth’s latest poetry – Robert Fergusson, heroic not tragic – the silence on the Tamils – Labour’s attacks on welfare – Walt Whitman on class – the ‘quality control’ business model in university cuts – the myth of the ‘peace process’ in the middle east – Brecht’s Mother Courage translated into Scottish speech – chancellor George Osborne and the BBC – why no spring in Bahrain – Edwin Morgan’s funeral – an impartial English judge not so impartial – Glasgow, slave-merchant city – the front line in our living rooms: pro-Nato journalism – Brian Haw and his stand against sanctions, and a valedictory poem on ‘the flag’.



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