

Great New Poetry Books Recommended for You

A National Poetry Day selection

NATIONAL
POETRY 
DAY 2020

See It Like a Poet

[Antiemetic for Homesickness](#)

Romalyn Ante, Chatto & Windus, £10.00

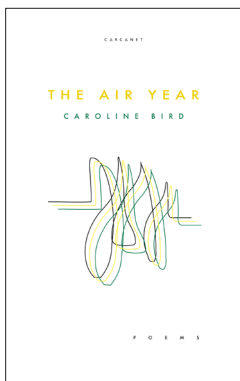


The poems in Romalyn Ante's luminous debut build a bridge between two worlds: journeying from the country 'na nagluwal sa 'yo' – that gave birth to you – to a new life in the United Kingdom.

Steeped in Filipino folklore, and studded with Tagalog, these poems speak of the ache of assimilation and the complexities of belonging, telling the stories of generations of migrants who find exile through employment – through the voices of the mothers who leave and the children who are left behind. With dazzling formal dexterity and emotional resonance, this debut offers a unique perspective on family, colonialism, homeland and heritage: from countries we carry with us, to the places we call home.

[The Air Year](#)

Caroline Bird, Carcanet, £9.99

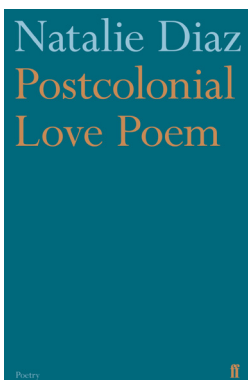


The Air Year, shortlisted for the 2020 Forward Prize for Best Collection, is Caroline Bird's name for "the anniversary prior to paper / for which ephemeral gifts are traditional". This is love at break-neck pace: the speakers of her poems are funny, reckless, exuberant even when examining the damage.

Bird, an accomplished playwright and performer with five highly praised Carcanet poetry collections, pulls off what *The Guardian* calls an "unusual combination of dark subject matter and an unrelentingly upbeat, even fizzy demeanour... It's a wild ride, but an exhilarating one."

[Postcolonial Love Poem](#)

Natalie Diaz, Faber & Faber, £10.99

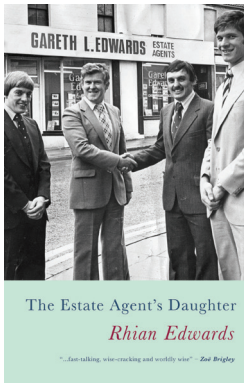


The UK publication of Natalie Diaz's new collection has been heralded in *The Guardian* as an event as revolutionary for British poetry as the arrival of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*.

Reading *Postcolonial Love Poem*, shortlisted for the 2020 Forward Prize for Best Collection, feels "like a radical political act," writes critic Sandeep Parmar. Diaz, a member of the Gila River Indian Community and a champion of the Mojave language, writes of inherited wounds, the intimacy of loved bodies, the places created by phrases, in a way that opens the world wider, and changes it.

[The Estate Agent's Daughter](#)

Rhian Edwards, *Seren Books*, £9.99



The Estate Agent's Daughter is the follow-up to Rhian Edwards' prize-winning debut collection, *Clueless Dogs*. With characteristic brio, the poet describes herself as a surrealist house 'on the market', 'semi-detached' with 'all mod cons', a witty take on her return to the family business as the eponymous daughter, and on her father's desire to marry her off.

The poems featured are beautifully observed, close-to-the-bone and frequently very funny. Edwards' special gift is bringing these everyday moments to life in language that sings.

[The Actual](#)

Inua Ellams, *Penned in the Margins*, £9.99

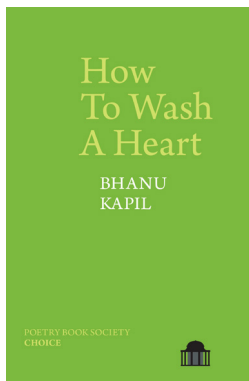


The award-winning poet and playwright Inua Ellams brings together contemporary culture, classical myth, vernacular dialect and flashes of dark humour in *The Actual* – his first full collection of poetry.

Written on the author's phone, in transit, between meetings, before falling asleep and just after waking, these are poems of personal and political fury, sometimes probing delicately, sometimes burning with raw energy.

[How to Wash a Heart](#)

Bhanu Kapil, *Liverpool University Press*, £9.99



...like nothing else I've read...a novelistic tale about charity and hypocrisy, the story of an immigrant welcomed as a "guest" into the home of a woman who grows resentful of this new arrival's friendship with her adopted daughter.

— **Tristram Fane Saunders, *Daily Telegraph***

How To Wash A Heart started as a collaborative performance at London's ICA, by Bhanu Kapil, a British-Indian writer based in the USA. Kapil asks urgent questions about the limits of hospitality, using poetry as a mode that is rigorous, painful, tender and comic.

[My Darling from the Lions](#)

Rachel Long, *Picador*, £10.99



The poems in *My Darling from the Lions* form a beautiful and expansive archive of growing up in London as a young mixed heritage woman. A narrative collection in three parts, it threads experiences of the learning and unlearning of shame, the body, sex, faith, Blackness, lineage, prophecy and healing. Rachel Long's strong, soulful, wise and weary voice sings through the collection, with striking confidence for a debut collection. These are poems for now, and poems you will be desperate to press into the hands of others.

Rachel Long is an essential and dazzling new voice.

Zonal

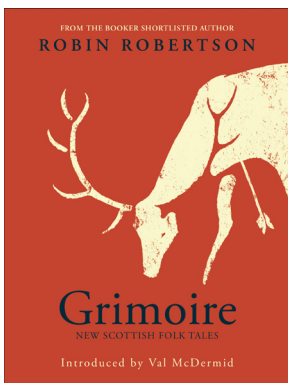
Don Paterson, *Faber & Faber*, £14.99



Don Paterson's new collection starts from the premise that the crisis of mid-life may be a permanent state of mind. *Zonal* is an experiment in science-fictional and fantastic autobiography, with all of its poems taking their imaginative cue from the first season of *The Twilight Zone* (1959–60), playing fast and loose with both their source material and the author's own life. Narrative and dramatic in approach, genre-hopping from horror to *Black Mirror*-style sci-fi, these poems change voices constantly in an attempt to find the truth by alternate means. Occupying the shadowlands between confession and invention, *Zonal* takes us to places that feel endlessly surprising, uncanny and limitless.

Grimoire

Robin Robertson, *Picador*, £14.99



Grimoire is a dark collection of 'New Scottish Folktales': tales of murder and madness, obsession and possession, and most of all, of magical transformation and mutability. Written in the spirit and cadence of Celtic folklore, *Grimoire* is all the more haunting for being so beautifully rendered into Robertson's trademark lyric – regardless of the fatal paths, strange events and horrors it describes. *Grimoire* collects and substantially adds to the poet's growing body of 'weird tales' – and imaginatively extends an existing tradition into a Celtic noir for the 21st century. Beautifully illustrated throughout and introduced by the writer Val McDermid.

Cannibal

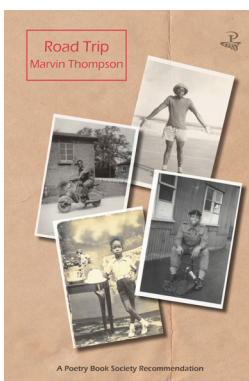
Safiya Sinclair, *Picador*, £10.99



Colliding with and confronting *The Tempest* and postcolonial identity, the poems in Safiya Sinclair's *Cannibal* beautifully evoke the poet's Jamaican childhood and reach beyond to explore history, race relations in America, womanhood, otherness and exile. She summons up a home no longer accessible and a body at times uninhabitable, often mirrored by a hybrid Eve/Caliban figure. Here the female body is a dark landscape; the female body is cannibal. Sinclair shocks and delights her readers with her willingness to disorient and provoke. *Cannibal* marks the arrival of a thrilling and essential new lyrical voice.

Road Trip

Marvin Thompson, *Peepal Tree Press*, £9.99



Road Trip is a striking first collection by a poet with illuminating and entertaining stories, accomplished in both traditional and contemporary forms. As a poet of Jamaican heritage, born and raised in north London, living in south Wales, Marvin Thompson brings these passages of place and time together in fresh and revealing ways. The poet explores the underbelly of race and empire through stories of his father's time in the British Army and writes with feeling of the post-industrial landscape of Wales and whether this is a place he can bring up his Mixed race children – though one should never assume that his poems are factually true.