

NOVEL APPROACH

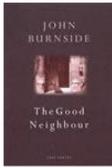
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“Novel Approach is a brilliant idea! We tend to think of novels and poems as quite separate things, but novelists always write with an ear for the music of language, and poetry is full of stories...”

Sarah Waters



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My one good neighbour sets himself aside,
And alters into someone I have known:
A passing stranger on the road to grief,
Husband and father; rich man; poor man; thief.

John Burnside, *The Good Neighbour*

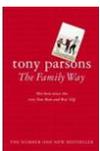
The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency by Alexander McCall Smith

Precious Ramotswe solves mysteries; small mysteries that do not involve master criminals or world domination, but are still profoundly important to the people who come to her for help.

The Good Neighbour by John Burnside

If you like the peace, the gentle pace and the wide scope of Mma Ramotswe's world, imagine it transferred to Scotland. John Burnside's poems often have a serene, domestic, setting at dusk or first light, but they make you pricklingly aware of the untamed world and the little shock of coming up against the boundary of the wood, the spaces where angels can be real, the glimpse of a wild animal at the roadside.

Or try... **Jeremy Hooker, Jacob Polley, U A Fanthorpe, Michael Symmonds Roberts**



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the feel of
his head on my neck, the skull
small as a cat's...

Kate Clanchy, *Newborn*

The Family Way by Tony Parsons

Jessica, Megan and Cat are sisters but hardly alike. The differences between them now comes down to babies – having them, not having them, and the realisation that they'll never want things to be the same again.

Newborn by Kate Clanchy

These extraordinary poems chart the early days of motherhood, capturing overwhelming exhaustion, love and astonishment.

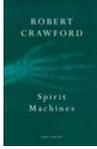
Or try... **Gillian Ferguson (particularly *Baby*)**



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Thank you for choosing Laughing Giftball.
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Robert Crawford, *Spirit Machines*

The Algebraist by Iain M Banks

Iain M Banks' science fiction has been described as 'space opera' for its sweeping scale and confident deployment of a vast cast of other worlds. Science fiction fans adore the coherence and authority of his writing, other readers relish the studies of human (and other) behaviour. And of course, the endless supply of inventive names for spaceships, planets, characters, as Banks's irrepressible enjoyment in his creations bubbles over into the more serious business of the universe.

Spirit Machines by Robert Crawford

Scottishness, treating language as a great new toy to be taken apart and investigated, the daft and magical jargon of technology, masculinity, what makes us human, and what takes us out of our usual worlds – all Robert Crawford's favourite topics. Good science fiction can also come in short bites.

Or try... Edwin Morgan, Richard Price



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I could half-read,
half-imagine my own scrawl.
'Wish you were here.'
My mark, my will, my need
printed across them all.

Imtiaz Dharker, *Postcards From God*

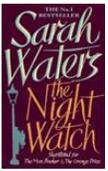
The God Of Small Things by Arundhati Roy

The author says 'When I read the book now I can't believe the amount of references there are to small things'. Although her themes – families, love, post-colonial India – are huge, it is the small snatches of experience gathered by the twins Esthappen and Rahel as they grow up in Kerala, and the way that big changes turn on tiny things, that shape the story.

Postcards From God by Imtiaz Dharker

Born in Pakistan, growing up in Glasgow and living in India, Imtiaz Dharker knows how powerfully poignant glimpses and short scenes can convey her vision. Her evocative black and white drawings illustrate the book. Just as postcards do, her poems are partly reaching out to talk to the reader, and partly 'proof that I was here'.





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We still haven't touched,
only lain side by side
the half stories of our half lives.

Vicki Feaver, *The Book of Blood*

The Night Watch by Sarah Waters

The lives of Kay, Helen, Viv and Duncan are peeled away layer by layer as the story goes backwards in time from 1947 to 1944. It's clear that they never lived as vividly as during the dangers of the Blitz, when buildings and people were blown open and Kay drove an ambulance through it all. It's not so clear if they will ever realise the ways their lives are linked, from coincidence to slow-burn love affairs.

The Book Of Blood by Vicki Feaver

From the darkness of the postwar period to the darkness of rural Lanarkshire, Vicki Feaver's poems make familiar subject matter resonate with mystery and sensuality.

Or try... Sharon Olds, Glyn Maxwell (particularly *The Sugar Mile*)



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A detective stumbles on the bank, the woman
sprawled out at his feet....

Tracey Herd, *Dead Redhead*

Fleshmarket Close by Ian Rankin

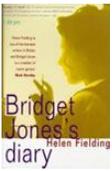
Edinburgh's own maverick cop, John Rebus, is getting older, but his colleague DS Siobhan Clarke is taking on the burden of Rebus's work, and some of his legend. The story of a murdered immigrant combines with the hunt for a missing girl, and then there's the question of the unearthed fake skeleton.

Dead Redhead by Tracey Herd

Tracey Herd's *Dead Redhead* detects murders, assassins, and all manner of lost girls. These poems have a forensic detachment and aren't afraid to go in with the knife to discover secrets – the small human hopes behind the iconic glamour of film noir, modelling or racehorses, and settings like Ekaterinaburg or Hollywood that in their own way are just as darkly famous.

Or try... Pascale Petit, Matthew Sweeney





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He has slept with the stupid and clever.
He has slept with the rich and the poor
But he sadly admits that he's never
Slept with a poet before

Sophie Hannah, *Leaving And Leaving You*

Bridget Jones's Diary by Helen Fielding

We love Bridget Jones and her pacy, funny diary style, much-imitated but never bettered. The perfect combination of endearing character, compelling read, and sharp observations of daft modern manners.

Leaving And Leaving You by Sophie Hannah

Sophie Hannah's poems are deliciously readable – fast, musical and witty. Heaven help the instantly familiar numpties at the wrong end of some of her rhymes; but although love is a grand old topic for poetry, she treats it with a freshness and subtlety that's irresistible. Do not read on public transport since your snorts of surprised laughter may disturb others.



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It's the shamle-lyk-a-shot-stirk, Randall and-ah Hopkirk
Bad Shaman Blues
Thi hokum-frichtenin, scrotum-tichtenin
Bad Shaman Blues

W N Herbert, *Bad Shaman Blues*

Quite Ugly One Morning by Christopher Brookmyre

Christopher Brookmyre's breezy novels, combine mystery corpses, homegrown villains and have-a-go heroes, with a good seasoning of explosions, car-chases, guns and smart comebacks. With snappy dialogue, sweeping plots and extended rants on topics from political reform to football, it's Brookmyre's Scotland. Sometimes we wish we lived in it.

Bad Shaman Blues by W N Herbert

W N Herbert's world, on the other hand, is not all Scotland, but it's pure genius – genuine genius, kind of alarming but totally irresistible. Probably there's no topic, no form, no style, no reference that he can't handle, in or out of Scots. Some poems beg to be performed, others hit the heart – and as groups of poems build up,



stories expand from them. You can follow the twisting, brilliant arguments about what poems can do, or you can enjoy being swept along with the torrent.



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I wish my whole battered
Heart were a property
Like this, with swallows
In every room...

Kathleen Jamie, *The Tree House*

The Shipping News by Annie Proulx

The gentle Quoyle, duped and widowed, decides to leave everything behind him and resettle in a family house in Newfoundland. The prose expresses reticence of place and people, and Quoyle's tentative first steps in a world where the elements change lives. An extraordinary story of happiness.

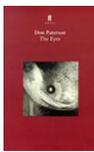
The Tree House by Kathleen Jamie

This writing is so pared-down and unlike what you might expect of Poetry with a capital P, it can be a shock. But the cleanness of this style voices the subjects that interest Kathleen Jamie more and more – the land, how we live in it, what really counts when you strip away the nonsense that creeps in around us. Try reading this along with her book of essays, *Findings*.

Or try... Ian Hamilton Finlay, Jen Hadfield, Don MacKay



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Down the windswept galleries
And bare arcades of the soul,
The shadows of the days
Slide like gunsmoke...

Antonio Machado, *The Eyes*, translated by Don Paterson

Shadow Of The Wind by Carlos Ruiz Zafon

Obsessions with novels, libraries, lovers, sidelong glances and a shadowy masked man in the streets of Barcelona – this book is full of haunting, evocative images and a labyrinth of plot.

The Eyes by Antonio Machado, translated by Don Paterson

The sustenance of books and the repeated glimpses of unknown eyes bring a haunting sense of order to this collection. It's tempting to think of Antonio Machado's own life – widowed young, a schoolteacher of French and Spanish, a fervent Republican finally dying after his escape from Franco's Spain – while reading these



poems. And yet, though they conjure a lucid, bare life and a clear vision, the collection is not a straight biography, nor a straight translation. For those who like a sense of mystery.

Or try... Translations by Edwin Morgan; translations of Thomas Tranströmer; George Szirtes



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I have not bummed across America
with only a dollar to spare, one pair
of busted Levi's and a bowie knife.
I have lived with thieves in Manchester.

Simon Armitage, *Zoom*

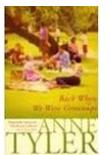
High Fidelity by Nick Hornby

'My desert-island, all-time, top five most memorable split-ups, in chronological order' – Rob has a record shop, a girlfriend and a passion for lists. Since the first two are not going too well, his list-making is a toe-curlingly funny way of bringing order to his life, now that youthful enthusiasms are suddenly meeting mid-life crisis head on.

Zoom! by Simon Armitage

Packed with chaotic characters, heartfelt stories and a slick of urban myth, *Zoom!* was the first book by this poet loved for his straight-talking. Clever, subtle writing has never sounded so easy.

Or try... Paul Farley



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I laid myself down as a woman
And woke as a child.
Sleep buried me up to my chin,
But my brain cut wild.

Anne Stevenson, *Granny Scarecrow*

Back When We Were Grownups by Anne Tyler

Anne Tyler's lucid, understated novels portray people caught unawares by their lives. Rebecca happily married Joe years ago, then took on his party-giving business and ready-made family after his death; but really, does she recognise this sociable party organiser she has become? A skilled, readable story of a woman calmly taking stock.



Granny Scarecrow by Anne Stevenson

This is the book of a poet looking back with tenderness and wry humour. Anne Stevenson loves the sound of language – she trained as a musician – she knows poetic form inside out, and her poems reveal a brilliance and imagination which serves the poems, not the poet. But over the years this Anglo-American writer has pared down her style, so that the compassion and experience of her observation make the little things in life unfold. The poems in *Granny Scarecrow* are now included in *Poems 1955-2005* (Bloodaxe 2005).

Or try... Elizabeth Bishop, Anna Crowe, Eavan Boland

... AND SOME INDIVIDUAL POEMS MATCHED WITH NOVELS

NOVEL	POEM
Atwood, <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	Anne Stevenson, 'The Mother'
Boyd, <i>Restless</i>	Ben Jonson, 'On Spies'
Dawkins, <i>The God Delusion</i>	Carol Ann Duffy, 'Prayer'
De Botton, <i>Status Anxiety</i>	Mary Oliver, 'Wild Geese'
Dickens, <i>Great Expectations</i>	James Fenton, 'The Ideal'
Dillon, <i>My Epileptic Lurcher</i>	Brown, 'Glen, A Sheepdog'
Faulks, <i>Birdsong</i>	Wilfred Owen, 'Strange Meeting'
Kay, <i>The Sound of Laughter</i>	John Hegley, 'Pop and Me'
Larsson, <i>The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo</i>	John Burnside, 'An Operating System'
Mantel, <i>Wolf Hall</i>	Sir Thomas Wyatt, 'Whoso List to Hunt'
Morrison, <i>And When Did You Last See Your Father?</i>	W S Graham, 'To Alexander Graham'
Penney, <i>The Tenderness of Wolves</i>	John Burnside, 'Tundra's Edge'
Pratchett, <i>The Wintersmith</i>	Kathleen Jamie, 'Meadowsweet'
Seierstad, <i>The Bookseller of Kabul</i>	Partaw Naderi, 'Relative'
Shaffer, <i>The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Society</i>	Wallace Stevens, 'The House Was Quiet and the World Was Calm'

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Novel Approach was supported by Glasgow Libraries, Edinburgh City Libraries and Dumfries and Galloway Libraries with Dumfries and Galloway Arts Association

"What a fantastic idea, marrying novels with poetry..."

Ian Rankin

