

# As I Sit Quietly, I Begin to Smell Burning – Colin McGuire

## The Sewing Machine – Natalie Fergie

I spent my summer roaming around Edinburgh, taking in the sights and sounds of the Fringe Festival, and the Edinburgh International Book Festival. Throughout my time there I had the great privilege of seeing Lisa McNemey, Naomi Alderman, Greg Garrett, Charlie Boorman, and the misfortune to have to spend an hour in the company of Will Self.

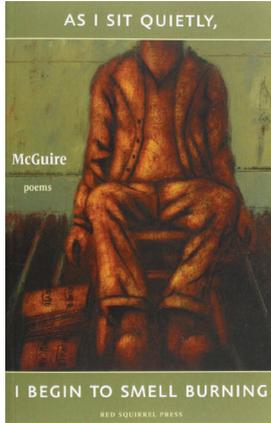
One of the most exciting things I did while roaming though, was hosting a live literature event where some of Scotland's finest literary talents were invited to the stage to share their words, stories, and poems.

Meeting Colin McGuire is whirlwind of an experience. His talent on the stage and the page is overpowering, and he ensures that the edge of the seat of even the most ardent 'poetry isn't for me' reader is not just soothingly warm – but instead, roasting hot.

*As I Sit Quietly, I Begin to Smell Burning* is his debut poetry collection, and though challenging, is compulsive reading. McGuire's poetry often centres around the theme of sexuality and masculinity, as well as his observations of life in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and more broadly he discusses mental health. McGuire makes big noises that people can relate to, while staying fresh throughout his collection. The writing is inspiring, never tiresome, and his huge talent will mean that you see his name over and over in the years to come.

### The Sewing Machine by Natalie Fergie

Fergie weaves together multiple storylines, that cross over many generations, to create a novel that is full of intrigue to keep it exciting, and familiarity to keep it warm.



This debut from Fergie has been longlisted for the NotThe Booker Prize 2017 and it's not difficult to see why. Debut novels that are so welcomed by the public are rare, and seeing her read from the novel at a live event was a real thrill and something that I would recommend that others do.

This novel begins with the story of Jean, who we are introduced to as she joins in a strike at the Singer sewing machine factory. We then meet the generations who come after Jean, and who's stories span across the last century or so, and are all connected by one thing – a Singer Sewing Machine.

Skip forward 100 years, and Fred, who is having life challenges of his own, starts to discover his family story through the wonderment of his grandmother's sewing machine. It is laid out before him in a patchwork of ancient handwriting and colourful seams, and Fred starts to unpick the secrets of four generations, one stitch at a time.

Despite the seeming complexity of the narrative, the book is seamless in how it moves the story onward – with each chapter bringing greater rewards than the last.

This book is rightly gaining plaudits, and it's one that I've seen on increasing numbers of bookshelves on my travels. It's a relatable story without pretension that moves through the ages, that takes you through the ages. The best description I have read of this book is that it is 'a warm blanket on a nippy night' – and it's hard to disagree. Once you've read it you'll want to read it again and again until the book, like a hundred-year-old sewing machine, will take pride of place on a shelf for visitors to admire your good taste.

