

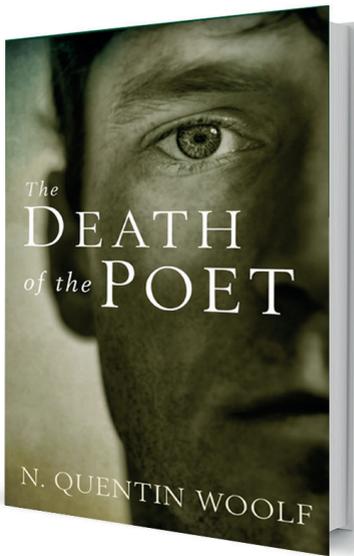
The Death of a Poet and Look Who's Back

This time of year is when we take a few moments to remember those who sacrificed their lives, whether through fatal injury or the traumatic and damaging after effects, in war. That's why this month I've reviewed two books, one looking at the consequences of each of the twentieth century's world wars.

The Death of a Poet by N Quentin Woolf is a powerful and immaculately written gut-wrenching story, and it tore through me. It follows two stories: the first of a DJ who suffers domestic abuse at the hands of his partner; the second is of a literary editor who survived World War One. Like life, a lot of the book seems incidental, but Woolf doesn't leave a single bit of string untied by the end – it truly is a story of life, not a mere snapshot. It's a fiction that

is told so raw that it could be the recounting of a life on an early deathbed.

The horrors of World War One are well known to all, but despite this we rarely get a real insight into the lives of those who were there. This immaculately researched novel may be as close as we can get to the human story of that dark time in our history.



Timur Vermes novel, which has recently been adapted to the silver screen, **Look Who's Back**, follows the life of Adolf Hitler who – through a fluke in the biological truths of the world – has emerged from his suicide many years later and finds himself struggling to navigate a modern Germany. It's essential that in times where the good face a real challenge from the bad – commonly in the form of fascism, racism, sexism and the like – that we do look back and start learning from history. This work of fiction explores an alternate reality, and considers how potentially a society can easily be swung in certain ways when the media create celebrities from nothingness. Vermes shows to us the importance of being on our guard and combating darkness when it threatens our horizon. If we don't then the consequences are, well

actually, very imaginable. There isn't a reader amongst us who would concede that they could be easily persuaded to follow a tyrant, though some of the world may argue with us on that following May's election, but in truth none of us know what we would do if a real dictator backed by brutal enforces came for us. In a

world where national media outlets show pictures of dead children on beaches one week, and then call for the army to be brought out to control immigration the next, I'm not convinced that Look Who's Back is as farcical as the premise first seems.

I learnt a lot about the human experience from these two novels, and I am sure that if you choose to read these novels you will consider yourself wiser and more entertained and educated for it.

