**New Publications: Fiction & Poetry**

*Lyrics Alley*  
by Leila Aboulela  
W & N, 2010  
Set in 1950s Sudan, *Lyrics Alley* is the story of the powerful and sprawling Abuzied dynasty. With Mahmood Bey at its helm, the family can do no wrong. But when Mahmood’s son, Nur—the brilliant, charming heir to his business empire—suffers a near-fatal accident, his hopes of university and a glittering future are dashed. Subsequently, his betrothal to his cousin and sweetheart, Soraya is broken off, another tragedy that he is almost unable to bear. As British rule is coming to an end, and the country is torn between modernising influences and the call of traditions past, the family is divided. Mahmood’s second wife, Nabilah, longs to return to Egypt and leave behind her the dust of ‘backward-looking’ Sudan. His first wife, Waheeba, lives traditionally behind veils and closed doors and resents Nabilah’s influence on Mahmood. Meanwhile, Nur must find a way to live again in the world and find peace. Moving from the villages of Sudan to cosmopolitan Cairo and a decimated post-colonial Britain, this is a sweeping tale of loss, faith and reconciliation.

*Selected Poems*  
by Mick Imlah  
Faber and Faber, 2010  
Mick Imlah’s second and long-awaited collection *The Lost Leader* was published to acclaim in 2008, shortly before his early death in January 2009. It revealed a poet of dazzling virtuosity, eloquence and subtlety—breaking through, as Imlah said of Edwin Muir (whose poems he edited in his last year) ‘to a field of unforced imaginative fluency and an unexpected common cause’. Behind its accomplishment lay the multifarious atmospheres, nefarious personae and mordant storytelling of Imlah’s earlier poetry. Edited by Mark Ford and with an essay by Alan Hollinghurst, *Selected Poems* connects the work of three decades, drawing upon Imlah’s earlier full-length collection, *Birthmarks* (1988), as well as including uncollected poems and previously unpublished work.
**There but for the**
by Ali Smith
Penguin, forthcoming June 2011
Imagine you give a dinner party and a friend of a friend brings a stranger to your house as his guest. He seems pleasant enough. Imagine that this stranger goes upstairs halfway through the dinner party and locks himself in one of your bedrooms and won’t come out. Imagine you can’t move him for days, weeks, months. If ever. This is what Miles does, in a chichi house in the historic borough of Greenwich, in the year 2009–10, in *There but for the*. Who is Miles, then? And what does it mean, exactly, to live with other people? Sharply satirical and sharply compassionate, with an eye to the meanings of the smallest of words and the slightest of resonances, *There but for the* fuses disparate perspectives in a crucially communal expression of identity and explores our very human attempts to navigate between despair and hope, enormity and intimacy, cliché and grace. Ali Smith’s dazzling new novel is a funny, moving book about time, memory, thought, presence, quietness in a noisy time, and the importance of hearing ourselves think.

**Where the Bodies are Buried**
by Christopher Brookmyre
Little, Brown, 2011
Detective Catherine McLeod was always taught that in Glasgow, they don’t do whodunit. They do score-settling. They do vendettas. They do petty revenge. They do can’t-miss-whodunit. It’s a lesson that has served her well, but Glasgow is also a dangerous place to make assumptions. Either way she looks at it, she recognises that the discovery of a dead drug-dealer in a back alley is merely a portent of further deaths to come. Elsewhere in the city, aspiring actress Jasmine Sharp is reluctantly—and incompetently—earning a crust working for her uncle Jim’s private investigation business. When Jim goes missing, Jasmine has to take on the investigator mantle for real, and her only lead points to Glen Fallan, a gangland enforcer and professional assassin whose reputation is rendered only slightly less terrifying by having been dead for twenty years. Cautiously tracing an accomplished killer’s footsteps, Jasmine stumbles into a web of corruption and decades-hidden secrets that could tear apart an entire police force—if she can stay alive long enough to tell the tale.
**The Wrecking Light**
by Robin Robertson
Picador, 2010
These poems are written with the authority of classical myth, yet sound utterly contemporary: the poet’s gaze—whether on the natural world or the details of his own life—is unflinching and clear, its utter seriousness leavened by a wry, dry and disarming humour. Alongside fine translations from Neruda and Montale and dynamic (and at times horrific) retellings of stories from Ovid, the poems in *The Wrecking Light* pitch the power and wonder of nature against the frailty and failure of the human. Ghosts sift through these poems—certainties become volatile, the simplest situations thicken with strangeness and threat—all of them haunted by the pressure and presence of the primitive world against our own, and the kind of dream-like intensity of description that has become Robertson’s trademark.

**The Stars in the Bright Sky**
by Alan Warner
Jonathan Cape, 2010
“Alan Warner’s third novel, *The Sopranos*, published in 1998, followed the adventures of a group of horny, hard-drinking schoolgirls from a small town on the west coast of Scotland who go on a trip to Edinburgh for a singing competition. In *The Stars in the Bright Sky*, the girls from Our Lady of Perpetual Succour are back, older if not much wiser, though they were always a lot wiser than either they or anyone around them seemed to realise. [...] The young women have met up at Gatwick airport, ready to fly out on holiday the next day. They don’t know where they’re going yet: Kay’s brought her laptop and the plan is to book the cheapest last-minute package they can find. Warner has long been interested in the excitement, the virtue even, of acting on impulse and living in the present moment. First things first, though: before booking their holiday the women head down to the bar at their down-at-heel airport hotel for the first of the weekend’s many dauntingly heavy drinking sessions. You don’t have to have read *The Sopranos* to make sense of *The Stars in the Bright Sky*, or to be instantly hooked by it.” (excerpted from the review linked above)
The Gathering Night
by Margaret Elphinstone
Canongate, 2010

Between Grandmother Mountain and the cold sea, Alaia and the rest of the Auk people live off the land. But when her brother goes hunting and never returns, the fragile balance of life is upset. Half starved and maddened with grief, Alaia’s mother follows her visions and goes in search of her lost son. Then strangers from a distant tribe appear seeking shelter. Are their stories of a great wave and a people perished really to be believed? The incomers precipitate suspicion and intrigue as their hosts use intuition and ritual to discover the truth. On successive nights in their gathering camp the Auk People hear the story from the lips of the participants. In a society at one with the animals it hunts, the story culminates with the hunter hunted and a ritual death in the western mountains. A tale of conflict, love, loss and natural disaster, this drama brings to life our Mesolithic past. A celebration of wildness, The Gathering Night also resonates as an ecological parable for our planet 8000 years on.

The Life and Opinions of Maf the Dog, and of his His Friend Marilyn Monroe
by Andrew O’Hagan
Faber and Faber, 2010

In November 1960, Frank Sinatra gave Marilyn Monroe a dog. His name was Maf. He had an instinct for the twentieth century. For politics. For psychoanalysis. For literature. For interior decoration. This is his story. Maf the dog was with Marilyn for the last two years of her life. Not only a picaresque hero himself, he was also a scholar of the adventuring rogue in literature and art, witnessing the rise of America’s new liberalism, civil rights, the space race, the New York critics, and was Marilyn Monroe’s constant companion. The story of Maf the dog is a hilarious and highly original peek into the life of a complex canine hero—he was very much a real historical figure, with his license and photographs sold at auction along with Marilyn’s other person affects. Through the eyes of Maf we’re provided with an insight into the life of Monroe herself, and a fascinating take on one of the most extraordinary periods of the twentieth century.
The Many Days: Selected Poems of Norman MacCaig
eds. Ewen MacCaig and Roderick Watson
Polygon (Birlinn), 2010
On the centenary of his birth one hundred of Norman MacCaig’s best poems are brought together, chosen by his son Ewen and edited by Roderick Watson. MacCaig’s fresh eye saw remarkable newness even in the everyday so each poem, although grouped in related subjects, is a tiny revelation, a new look at an old friend. Celebrate, renew, discover Norman MacCaig on the one hundredth anniversary of his birth. By the time of his death in January 1996, Norman MacCaig was known widely as the grand old man of Scottish poetry, honoured by an OBE and the Queen’s Medal for Poetry.

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