From One Reader to Another

An invitation to read internationally

To celebrate the tenth anniversary of its Writers in Translation programme, English PEN is teaming up with The Reading Agency and Free Word to invite book groups to read and discuss titles from the World Bookshelf, a unique online showcase of the most exciting contemporary literature available in English translation.

There are over 100 books on the World Bookshelf but here is a suggested reading list to get you started:

- *The Yacoubian Building* by Alaa Al Aswany (Egypt, Arabic)
- *Dreams from the Endz* by Faïza Guène (France, French)
- *Arab Jazz* by Karim Miské (France, French)
- *Compartment No.6* by Rosa Liksom (Finland, Finnish)
- *The Lady from Tel Aviv* by Rabai al-Madhoun (Palestine, Arabic)
- *Vango: Between Sky and Earth* by Timothée de Fombelle (France, French)
- *The Devil’s Workshop* by Jachym Topol (Czech Republic, Czech)
- *In the Sea There Are Crocodiles* (for younger readers) by Fabio Geda (Italy, Italian)
- *Bronze and Sunflower* (for younger readers) by Cao Wenxuan (China, Mandarin)
- *How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone* by Saša Stanišić (Bosnia-Herzegovina, German)
- *The Lights of Pointe-Noire* by Alain Mabanckou (Congo, French)
- *The Goddess Chronicle* by Natsuo Kirino (Japan, Japanese)
- *Allah Is Not Obliged* by Ahmadou Kourouma (Ivory Coast, French)
- *The Iraqi Christ* by Hassan Blasim (Iraq, Arabic)
- *Morning Sea* by Margaret Mazzantini (Italy, Italian)
- *Sworn Virgin* by Elvira Dones (Albania, Italian)
- *A Perfect Crime* by A Yi (China, Mandarin)
- *The End of Days* by Jenny Erpenbeck (Germany, German)
- *The Sound of Things Falling* by Juan Gabriel Vásquez (Colombia, Spanish)
- *The Whispering City* by Sara Moliner (Spain, Spanish)

Share your thoughts about these books by leaving a comment on the website or by getting in touch on Twitter: @englishpen, @readingagency, @FreeWordCentre
Kosher sushi, kebabs, a second-hand bookshop and a bar: the 19th arrondissement in Paris is a cosmopolitan neighbourhood where multicultural citizens live, love and worship alongside one another – until the violent murder of Laura Vignole, and the pork joint placed next to her, set imaginations ablaze. Ahmed Taroudant finds himself the prime suspect, but detectives Rachel Kupferstein and Jean Hamelot are not short of leads. What is the connection between a disbanded hip-hop group and the fiery extremist preachers that jostle in the streets for attention? And what is the mysterious new pill that is taking the district by storm?

About the author
Born in 1964 in Abidjan to a Mauritanian father and a French mother, Karim Miské grew up in Paris before leaving to study journalism in Dakar. He now lives in France, and is making documentary films on a wide range of subjects including deafness, for which he learned sign language, and the common roots between the Jewish and Islamic religions. Arab Jazz is his first novel.

About the translator
Sam Gordon is a London-based freelance translator working from French and Spanish into English. He has translated work by writers as various as Pierre Reverdy, Marcel Schwob, Timothée de Fombelle, Nicolás di Candia and Juan Carlos Méndez Guédez, with translations appearing in the White Review, Asymptote and Palabras Errantes. Arab Jazz by Karim Miské is his first novel-length translation.

For discussion
1. The 19th arrondissement, where Arab Jazz is set, was also the site of the Charlie Hebdo and kosher supermarket sieges in January 2015. The novel critiques religious fundamentalism, but also highlights the absurdity of all extreme views, whether political, social or cultural. How does Miské interrogate socially constructed divisions between people – religion, race, class?

2. Miské has said, ‘For me, crime writing is the best way to put society – the world – in front of a mirror.’ Do you think crime fiction is a good vehicle for understanding society?

3. The detective ‘whodunnit’ thriller (the policier, or polar) is a classic of French literature and filmmaking. Karim Miské’s first occupation was as a documentary filmmaker, and the book is crammed with literary and film references. What did you think of Miské’s pulp style?

4. The characters in Arab Jazz are mostly second-generation immigrants, living in an urban metropolis and former imperial centre. How do they interact with their heritages? What differences are there between the lives of the female and the male characters?

5. Miské has hinted that he may develop Arab Jazz into a trilogy. Would you be keen to read the next books if he did so? What would you hope to see explored?