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
In a place like no other, on an island in the shape of a tear drop, two sisters are born into a family of the oracle. Kamikuu, with creamy skin and almond eyes, is admired far and wide; Namima, small but headstrong, learns to live in her sister’s shadow. On her sixth birthday, Kamikuu is chosen as the next Oracle, while Namima is shocked to discover she must serve the goddess of darkness. So begins an adventure that will take Namima from her first experience of love to the darkness of the underworld. But what happens when she returns to the island for revenge?

Natsuo Kirino, the queen of Japanese crime fiction, turns her hand to an exquisitely dark tale based on the Japanese myth of Izanami and Izanagi. A fantastical, fabulous tour-de-force, it is a tale as old as the earth about ferocious love and bitter revenge.

About the author

Natsuo Kirino, born in Japan in 1951, is the author of 21 novels, four short story collections and an essay collection. She is the recipient of seven of Japan’s premier literary awards including the Mystery Writers of Japan Award for Out and the Izumi Kyoka Prize for Literature for Grotesque. Her work has been published in 28 languages worldwide and several of her books have also been turned into movies. Out was the first of her novels to appear in English and was nominated for an Edgar Award. She lives in Tokyo.

About the translator

Rebecca Copeland is an academic and translator. As well as The Goddess Chronicle she also translated Natsuo Kirino’s novel Grotesque.

For discussion

1. The Goddess Chronicle is a reworking of Japan’s creation myth, the story of Izanami and Izanagi. Compare this myth with creation myths from your own country or community. Are there any points of similarity?

2. Natsuo Kirino is one of Japan’s bestselling crime novelists, known for her fierce and unsettling characters. How does she use her skills as a crime writer in this novel? Is it what you expected?

3. 'It's always the woman who dies.' Would you describe this novel as having a feminist perspective? What is Kirino saying about the role of women in the creation myth, in Japan, and in society in general?

4. Which characters do you most relate to in this novel, if any?

5. You’ve read this book in English translation, but how far would you say that Kirino’s novel itself is a ‘translation’ of the original myth?