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
The Lady from Tel Aviv by Rabai al-Madhoun

In the economy class of a plane, the lives of two passengers intersect: Walid Dahman, a Palestinian writer, is returning to his family in Gaza for the first time in 38 years, and Dana Ahova, an Israeli actress, is on her way back to Tel Aviv. As the night sky hurtles past, what each confides and conceals will expose the chasm between them in the land they both call home.

The Lady from Tel Aviv is both a meditation on the nature of fiction and an incisive exploration of the effects of occupation on a people and what it is to be a Palestinian. Al-Madhoun’s precise, poetic language and sardonic humour bring home political realities and how people live them, on both sides of the checkpoints.

About the author
Born in al-Majdal, Palestine, in 1945, Rabai al-Madhoun is one of the Arab world’s rising literary stars. His other works include The Idiot of Khan Younis and The Taste of Separation. The Lady from Tel Aviv is a bestseller in the Arab world. Rabai Al-Madhoun is an editor at the leading Arabic daily, al-Sharq al-awsat.

About the translator
Elliott Colla is a prominent translator of modern Arabic fiction, including novels by Ibrahim al-Koni, Ibrahim Aslan and Idris Ali. He currently teaches Arabic literature at Georgetown University, Washington, DC.

For discussion
1. To what extent is The Lady from Tel Aviv a political novel?
2. Many reviews for The Lady from Tel Aviv commented that the book offers insights that the news, for example, can’t provide. Has the novel broadened your perspective on Palestine and Israel?
3. What is the effect of the switch from third- to first-person halfway through the novel? What do you think al-Madhoun was trying to achieve?
4. Do Walid and Dana change each other in any way or is their encounter with each other just that, an encounter?
5. The Lady from Tel Aviv could be seen as an examination of how two different people cohabit the same space: an Israeli and a Palestinian; a famous person and a normal person; a woman and a man. ‘One house that has two shadows,’ as al-Madhoun puts it. Discuss this theme in your own life.