



BOOKS

—This season's holiday in-list features office quangos and exploding mangoes

A Case of Exploding Mangoes

Mohammed Hanif

A graduate of the same University of East Anglia creative writing school that produced arch-stylist Ian McEwan, Mohammed Hanif proves himself a worthy alum with his first novel. Set in the month preceding Pakistani military dictator General Zia ul-Haq's death

Bookish escape

FLIP, Brazil

The sixth edition of FLIP (Festa Literária Internacional de Parati) will again mix the bookish with the caipirinhas and fishing boats in one of Brazil's most picturesque colonial towns, on 2-6 July. This year David Sedaris, Neil Gaiman and Pierre Bayard have been lured to the seaside to honour the highly influential and outlandishly bearded Brazilian writer Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, 100 years after his death.

Monographic

Hassla Books

David Schoerner's New York-based fledgling art and photography publisher is the anti-Taschen: paperback, matt and inclined towards a simple aesthetic. All books feature original work. Bernard Fuchs' recent *Streets and Trails* is a thoughtful exercise in wondering where we're all going. Hassla's summer pressing is a collection of new work by Brazilian photographer Marcelo Gomes.

The Suicide Shop

Jean Teulé

Set in a future France beset by environmental catastrophe, the Tuvache family's suicide shop does a roaring trade to help people shift off the increasingly unhappy mortal coil. This super *noir* comedy from London's boutique

francophile publisher Gallie is bizarrely life-affirming.

The Lighted Rooms

Richard Mason

The third novel from the young British-based author goes back to his South African roots in an account that spans one century, two continents and four generations. The discovery of a grandmother's diary, written in a concentration camp during the Boer War, awakens buried history and triggers hallucinations. With both anti-apartheid political activism and bipolar disorder in his family, Mason's tale is as deeply personal as it is powerful.

Translating Hollywood

Sam Sarowitz

More wonderful work from Mark Batty Publishers: a beautifully presented inspection of how films are represented by their posters around the world. The most direct comparison's can be drawn between American and East European visual identity: Hitchcock's *Vertigo* is an action film with a stylised trippy edge in the US, but presented as a psychological horror-show on its Polish poster.

Personal Days

Ed Park

US writer Ed Park's debut novel resembles Joshua Ferris' in its dysfunctional workplace setting, Park's attempt to understand office life is a return to an earlier

malaise, thematically paying homage to Orwell. That's not to say it lacks a wicked humour: a keen observer of human nature, Park's book contains a plot development that will bring a smile to the lips of anyone who's ever worked for a living.

Netherland

Joseph O'Neill

The death of an old friend sets alight the memory of New York-dwelling Dutch banker Hans van den Broek. After his English wife moves back to London in the super-paranoid post-9/11 atmosphere, van den Broek recalls the unlikely, unknown world of New York cricket, the home of Caribbean petty criminals and their sometime salvation. Sweeping themes of love, race and family are dealt with deftly in the only definitive 9/11 novel.

Palestine Inside Out

Saree Makdisi

A detailed account of Palestinians' lives of roadblocks, arbitrary arrests, raids, curfews, economic stagnation, *Palestine Inside Out* explains in factual language how Zionism has turned the persecuted into the persecutors. Ending on an upbeat note, with no judgements, Makdisi argues for a one-state solution to the ongoing conflict where all citizens, Israeli and non-Israeli, have the same rights and opportunities.

in 1988 in a mysterious plane crash, *Mangoes* uses real-life events to explore the conflict between personal relationships and national loyalty.

Hanif weaves an intricate, well-plotted tale that reflects the teeming humanity of a chaotic and dangerous nation. A perceptive storyteller, he often deploys a delicate brand of humour that turns

a simple statement into a grand satirical (and genuinely funny) point. In the end, though, Hanif's story is a warning on marriages of political convenience, and is reflective about the pragmatism borne of mixing politics with religion. As one skydiving character sagely notes: "Life is in Allah's hands, but I pack my own parachute." — (M)

