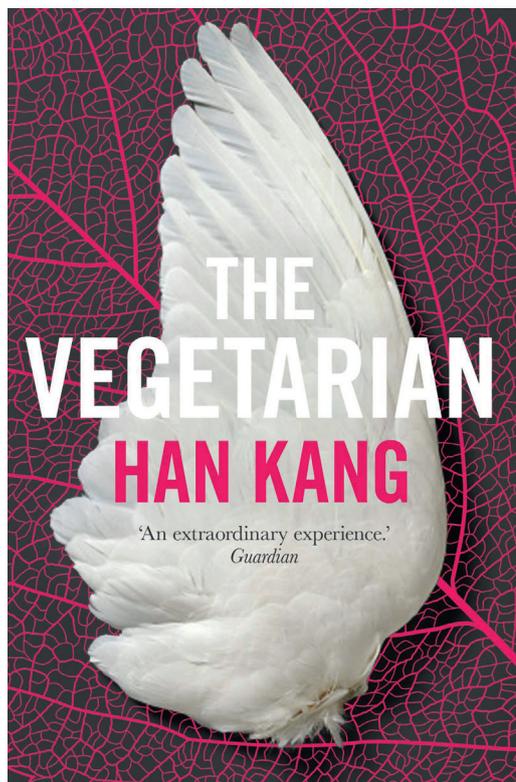


The  
Man  
Booker  
International  
Prize  
2016



# Reader's Guide



Other novels by Han Kang  
*Convalescence* (2013)  
*Human Acts* (2016)

## The Vegetarian Han Kang

Translated by Deborah Smith

Portobello Books

[www.themanbookerprize.com](http://www.themanbookerprize.com)  
#FinestFiction #MBI2016



The  
Booker  
Prize  
Foundation

### About the author

Han Kang was born in Gwangju, South Korea, and moved to Seoul at the age of ten. She studied Korean literature at Yonsei University. Her writing has won the Yi Sang Literary Prize, the Today's Young Artist Award, and the Korean Literature Novel Award. *The Vegetarian*, her first novel to be translated into English, was published by Portobello Books in 2015. *Human Acts* was published by Portobello books in 2016. She currently teaches creative writing at the Seoul Institute of the Arts.

### About the translator

Deborah Smith was monolingual until the age of 21. Deciding to become a translator upon finishing her degree in English Literature, with no previous experience in this field, she chose to pursue Korean due to a lack of English-Korean translators and moved to Korea to realise this dream. Her translations from Korean include Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* and *Human Acts*, and Bae Suah's *The Essayist's Desk* and *The Low Hills of Seoul*. She recently founded Tilted Axis Press, a not-for-profit publishing house focusing on translations from Asia and Africa. She tweets as @londonkoreanist

### About the book

Yeong-hye and her husband are ordinary people. He is an office worker with moderate ambitions and mild manners; she is an uninspired but dutiful wife. The acceptable flatline of their marriage is interrupted when Yeong-hye, seeking a more 'plant-like' existence, commits a shocking act of subversion. As her rebellion manifests in ever more bizarre and frightening forms, Yeong-hye spirals further and further into her fantasies of abandoning her fleshly prison and becoming – impossibly, ecstatically – a tree. Fraught, disturbing, and beautiful, *The Vegetarian* is a novel about modern day South Korea, but also a novel about shame, desire, and our faltering attempts to understand others, from one imprisoned body to another.

### Discussion points

What does the book make you think about the relationship between power and food?

How is imprisonment represented throughout the novel?

### Themed reading

Han Kang *The Fruit of My Woman*  
Kyung-sook Shin *The Girl Who Wrote Loneliness*  
Hwang Sok-yong *The Old Garden*

### Useful links

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jan/24/the-vegetarian-by-han-kang-review-family-fallout>

<https://www.englishpen.org/pen-atlas/how-korean-it-is/>

<http://granta.com/the-fruit-of-my-woman/>

<http://www.wordswithoutborders.org/book-review/han-kangs-the-vegetarian>

<http://themanbookerprize.com/interview/vegetarian-interview>