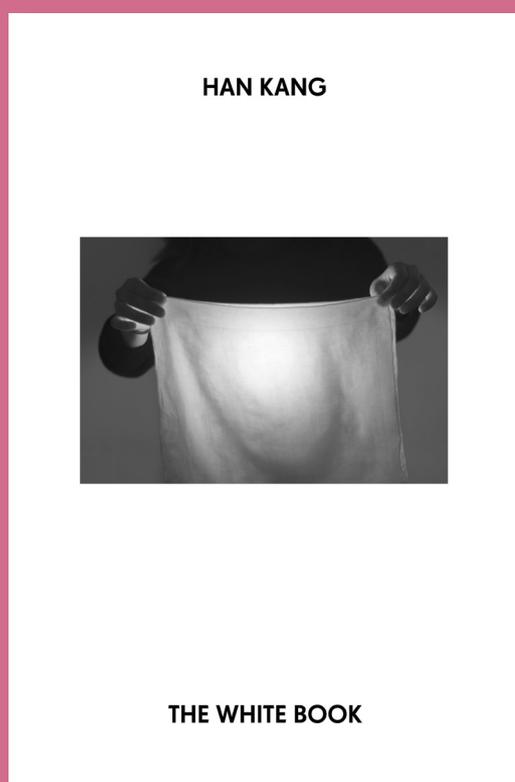




# Reader's Guide



Other novels by Han Kang  
*The Vegetarian* (2015)  
*Human Acts* (2016)

## The White Book Han Kang

Translated by Deborah Smith

Portobello Books

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<b>About the author</b>	Han Kang was born in Gwangju, South Korea, in November 1970, and moved to Seoul at the age of 10. 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. <i>The Vegetarian</i> , her first novel to be translated into English, was published by Portobello Books in 2015 and won the 2016 Man Booker International Prize. She is also the author of <i>Human Acts</i> (Portobello, 2016). She is based in Seoul.
<b>About the translator</b>	Deborah Smith was born in Doncaster, UK, in December 1987. Her translations from the Korean include two earlier novels by Han Kang, <i>The Vegetarian</i> and <i>Human Acts</i> , and two by Bae Suah, <i>A Greater Music</i> and <i>Recitation</i> . In 2015 Deborah completed a PhD at SOAS on contemporary Korean literature and founded Tilted Axis Press. In 2016 she won the Arts Foundation Award for Literary Translation.
<b>About the book</b>	An unnamed narrator moves to a European city where she is haunted by the story of her older sister, who died a mere two hours after birth. As she contemplates the child's short life she focuses on the whiteness and all it symbolises. <i>The White Book</i> is a meditation on colour, beginning with a list of white things. It is a book about mourning, rebirth and the tenacity of the human spirit. It investigates the fragility, beauty and strangeness of life.
<b>Discussion points</b>	<p>In traditional Korean culture, white represents both death and innocence. How is that expressed through the many white items featured?</p> <p>The book is deeply personal – did you feel engaged, or uncomfortable, with the intimacy?</p> <p>Han explores the concept of her own existence – if her sister had lived, she would not have been born. What sort of conflict do you think this caused?</p> <p>The book is interspersed with black and white photos – did these add to the experience for you?</p> <p>This book has a more experimental style than Han's previous novels, did you enjoy the way the book was written?</p>
<b>Themed reading</b>	<p>Maggie Nelson <i>Bluets</i></p> <p>Max Porter <i>Grief is the Thing with Feathers</i></p> <p>Eown Ivey <i>The Snow Child</i></p> <p>Kyung-Sook Shin <i>Please Look After Mother</i></p>
<b>Useful links</b>	<p><a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/nov/02/the-white-book-by-han-kang-review">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/nov/02/the-white-book-by-han-kang-review</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.ft.com/content/d60c6ffa-c2e3-11e7-b30e-a7c1c7c13aab">https://www.ft.com/content/d60c6ffa-c2e3-11e7-b30e-a7c1c7c13aab</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.spectator.co.uk/2017/12/sisters-under-the-skin-han-kangs-the-white-book-reviewed/">https://www.spectator.co.uk/2017/12/sisters-under-the-skin-han-kangs-the-white-book-reviewed/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.worldliteraturetoday.org/2016/may/violence-and-being-human-conversation-han-kang-krys-lee">https://www.worldliteraturetoday.org/2016/may/violence-and-being-human-conversation-han-kang-krys-lee</a></p>