



The Vegetarian

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Before the nightmare, Yeong-hye and her husband lived an ordinary life. But when splintering, blood-soaked images start haunting her thoughts, Yeong-hye decides to purge her mind and renounce eating meat. In a country where societal mores are strictly obeyed, Yeong-hye's decision to embrace a more "plant-like" existence is a shocking act of subversion. And as her passive rebellion manifests in ever more extreme and frightening forms, scandal, abuse, and estrangement begin to send Yeong-hye spiraling deep into the spaces of her fantasy. In a complete metamorphosis of both mind and body, her now dangerous endeavor will take Yeong-hye—impossibly, ecstatically, tragically—far from her once-known self altogether.

The Vegetarian Details

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From Reader Review The Vegetarian for online ebook

Deniz Balc? says

Han Kang, Kore Edebiyat? dedi?imiz zaman, çok yeni olmas?na ra?men; sayg?yla ve övgüyle an?lan, yaz?lan bir isim. Uzakdo?u'da yo?unlukta olan, biçimsel olanaklar? kullanarak yeni bir ?eyler ortaya koymaya çal??an edebi ak?mlardan birinin üyesi. Bu yüzden t?pk? Kyung-sook Shin ya da Kaneo Minato gibi, dünyan?n çok yak?ndan takip etti?i genç romanc?lardan biri. O yüzden Man Booker ödülü almadan önce de Türkçe'ye bir an önce çevrilmesini bekliyordum, hatta Human Acts'? ?ngilizcesinden okuma giri?imim de olmu?tu. Sonunda tam manas?yla tan??abildik.

Çeviri Göksel Türközü'ne ait. Malum, kendisi Korecenin ülkemizdeki en yetkin vekili. Haliyle onun çevirmesi beklenirdi, ki iyi de bir çeviri örne?i ortaya koydu?unu dü?ünüyorum. Umar?m Human Acts'? da Türkçeye çevirir.

Kitaba gelirsem, kitap asl?nda içerisinde Vejetaryen, Mo?ol Lekesi ve Alev A?ac? isimli üç tane novella bar?nd?r?yor. Yazar?n kitab? yazma öyküsü de ilginç. Kang, 1997 senesinde "Kad?n?m?n Meyvesi" diye bir öykü yaz?yor. Zamanla yazd??? bu öykü akl?na dü?üyor ve bu öyküye bir benzer/karde? öykü yazmak istiyor ve 2002 - 2005 seneleri aras?nda bu üç öyküyü kaleme al?yor.

Roman?n sihri bu üç öyküde yat?yor. Çünkü öyküler birlikte okundu?unda bir roman? yarat?yorlar; resmi tamaml?yor, derinle?tiriyorlar. Ancak tek ba?lar?na okunduklar?nda da roman?n merkezinden uzakla??p, anlatmak istedikleri daha lokal merkezleri derinle?tiriyorlar. Bu tarz denemeler Kore ve Japon Edebiyat?nda son zamanlarda popüler. Çok a?dal? bir dil kullanmadan, sade bir anlat?mla; roman kurgusunun güvenini kullanarak çok katmanl? kitaplar yazmak amac? ta??yorlar. Umar?m yak?n zamanda di?er örnekleri de Türkçeye çevrilebilir. Neyse, Han Kang kesinlikle bu çabas?nda çok ba?ar?l? olmu?. Gayet sade bir dille, hatta kaba diyebilece?im bir biçimle ilerleyerek; uzaktan bak?ld???nda nokta, yak?ndan bak?ld???nda dünya, bir kitap ortaya ç?karm??.

Kang, tek bir çizgisel öykü üzerinde, üç ayr? karaktere ayr? bölümler vererek, bize bamba?ka aç?lardan ayn? dünyan?n içine girme f?rsat? veriyor. Anais Nin me?hur be?lemesinde benzer ?eyi denemi?tir ve tarihe ad?n? yazd?racak derecede ba?ar?l? bir sonuç elde etmi?tir. Ama oradaki kad?nlar çok fazla roman karakteridir. Buradaki roman karakterleri ise çok fazla gerçek insanlar. Han Kang?'n fark?n?n bu noktada ortaya ç?kt??n? dü?ünüyorum. Jun'ichiro Tanizaki'nin 'Nazl? Kar' isimli dev eserini okurken ç?u zaman anlat?c? de?i?se, herhangi bir karakter sahneden ayr?ld?ktan sonra onu izleme f?rsat? bulsak ne kadar muazzam olurdu diye dü?ünmü? tüm hep.. ??te Vejetaryen'de bu iste?im kar??l??n? bulmu?. Daha önce Kore Edebiyat?nda Kyung-sook Shin 'Lütften Anneme ?yi Bak' kitab?nda bunu uygulam??t? ve mükemmel bir sonuçla beni kendine hayran b?rakm??t?, özellikle karakterlerin duygular?n?n yans?t?lmalar? konusundaki kusursuzlu?u ile. Haliyle kitap bu özelli?iyle daha önce tan?k oldu?um bir ?eyi yeniden tecrübe ettirdi. Fakat Kang olay? daha ileriye ta??may? ba?arm??. Bir ad?m sonras?nda, karakterler üzerinden anlatt???, bölümlerde temalar? da de?i?tirmi?, yenilemi?. Üstelik kendinden önceki öyküde anlat?lan ana temay? bir sonraki bölüme katarak devam etmi?. San?r?m Kenzaburo Oe, Orhan Pamuk, Elena Ferrante gibi yazarlar?n kar??s?nda Man Booker ödülü almas?n?n da en büyük sebebi bu olmu?tur.

Bu üç ayr? novella ve birle?iminden olu?an roman hakk?nda çok ?ey söylenebilir. ?nsan? dü?ünmeye ve tekrar okuma iste?ine sevk ediyor. Ben çok be?endim. Tavsiye ederim!

Megan Johnson says

Han Kang's novel, 'The Vegetarian,' tells the story of Yeong-hye. Having recently had a dream that has convinced her to cease eating any meat whatsoever, and finds that such a decision is affect nearly all aspects of her life. Her family is trying to force her to eat meat, the relationships that once surrounded her are falling apart, and everyone is questioning whether she is insane. The thing is, she just might be losing her mind - and all because of a dream.

This book isn't super long. In fact, it reads like a novella, so it's easy to consume and fast paced enough that about the time you feel really into it, it's over. It's not a bad thing though because there is a LOT packed into this little story. Despite being a story that is explicitly about Yeong-hye, it is actually never told directly from her perspective. Instead, we are give about 60 pages a piece from her husband, her brother-in-law, and her sister. The oddest part about this formatting is, unlike many book of this type, the perspectives do not overlap. Some take place at the time of Yeong-hye's decision to become a vegetarian, and others take place years after the fact.

To be totally honest, this book is weird. It might actually be the weirdest book I've ever read. But there's still something beautiful about it. It's an honest look at mental illness and how it affects not only that individual, but also everyone that cares about them. For those who have dealt with abuse, it's not as cut and dry to understand why mental illness affects them. Instead, it's about learning how to cope and manage, but also when to let go of those who hold you back.

As I mentioned before, this book is a roller coaster ride, especially in the beginning. I sat down to read this expecting to read for maybe 20 minutes later but looked at the clock an hour later and realized that I was so involved in the story that I didn't want to stop reading. It's sad, depressing, at times fun, but most of all it's probably the most thought-provoking novel I have ever read.

My rating: I give it 3 stars not because I didn't like it or I don't think you should read it, but because I found the pacing of the book to be distracting. It starts off energetic, fast-paced, and almost manic. During the middle, it takes a turn and reads more as a desperate plea for approval or attention. And in the end, it's detailed, slower, and tired. I don't know whether this was an intentional decision, but for me as a reader it meant that every 60 pages or so I was forced to feel like I was adjusting to a new writing style.

Who should read it?: If you enjoy international novels, this is an excellent choice. I have been told that those who have been deeply affected by the decision to become a vegetarian have loved this story. Or anyone who wants to read something that is so unlike anything else out there, that there is no way they will forget this book.

I was provided with a free copy of this book in order to conduct this review.

Bookdragon Sean says

This book wasn't a casual read for me. This is deeply personal to my own beliefs. I'm a vegan. This book sung a song that I heard in my marrow; it made me realise so much.

As a vegan I've experienced some of the things that I witnessed here. I can relate to it. I've lived it. I've been called a heretic. I've lost friends over it, and experienced much social awkwardness just for my lifestyle choice. I'm not pushy with my beliefs. Sometimes all it takes is a mention of the word "vegetarian" to be received with utter hostility or blankness. This review isn't about the ethics involved with the diet. That's not important to this story. What's important is how people can react to someone different to themselves. The vegetarian in here acts as a metaphor for individual life choices.

"I was convinced that there was more going on here than a simple case of vegetarianism."

For "the vegetarian," being different to the world leads to social isolation and feelings of utter despair. Her husband is utterly useless in every regard. He is the sort of man who simply doesn't deserve a wife. This no equal partnership, but the wife living to serve the man's needs. It's all about finding the right people, the accepting people in society. And this comes far too late and in far too a meek form to have any lasting effect on her: it came when she was already lost. The self-destructive behaviour isn't testimony to a vegetarian diet. I speak from experience, these can be very healthy. It's an act of rebellion against a society that refused to be warm to someone who didn't conform.

"the sight of her lying there utterly without resistance, yet armored by the power of her own renunciation, was so intense as to bring tears to his eyes."

But, this is only the premise of the novel. It's also about sexual desire, the unwavering power of lust and sheer emotional enthralment. However, it's not about the body as an object of sexual desire; it's not about the attractiveness, or the unattractiveness, of the female or male form; that's just meat: it's about the power of the individual: it's about the power of an idealistic free spirit. And this is what drew me to the book. The lust in here is freedom. It is the ability to make one's own life choice and live in harmony with the rest of the world. Labels don't matter. Restrictions don't matter. What matters is the freedom to be who you are and what you are. Whether or not this is a vegetarian, homosexual, transgender, a Buddhist Monk or a Christian isn't overly important. What matters is choice. The vegetarian in here serves as a metaphor, a rallying cry, for a more accepting world. It's a brutal reminder of the narrowmindedness that infects this planet towards those that fall through the cracks of society.

Some readers may see the exploration of mental illness, though what I see is mental illness born of sheer social isolation and spiritual depravation. If a person belongs nowhere, and those that are supposed to be closest to her ignore her, then only maladaptive thinking can occur. Only detrimental cognitive functioning will be born. What "the Vegetarian" needed in here was someone to understand her individuality and to respect it. Instead the coldness she receives sends her own a downward spiral of delusional fantasy, very poetic fantasy.

This is a book like no other.

Maxwell says

The Vegetarian is a very cerebral novel. And yet, it's incredibly affecting. Han Kang is able to explore dark and twisted events--and characters--in a really engaging way. It's thrilling to see the story devolve, and I have to say I was never quite sure what was going to happen next. Overall it was such a fun reading experience (which if you've read this book definitely doesn't reflect the subject matter) mostly because the story felt so fresh and exciting. I really can't compare this to anything I've read in a while, and I can see why it recently won the Man Booker International Prize. Try this one if you're looking for something short, powerful and a bit sick. **4.5 stars**

Whitney Atkinson says

I gave myself 24 hours to think over this before rating it, but I still don't know... i'm left off very confused... This is a book about characters whose backstories and full character arcs aren't really explored, so it was jarring to read a character-heavy book whose main focus is on a woman that we never even see the perspective of. Maybe i'm missing something, and i'm horrified that I did because everyone else loves this book, but this just read very strangely to me. By the end I understood the characters' motives for doing everything they did but I was never invested into them, which makes me sad because this is a book highly centered around psychological issues and female autonomy and both of those things are usually fascinating to me. If anyone felt the same way I did, what did you think was missing? I'm just not quite sure how to put into words what about this felt not amazing

Fabian says

She's turned vegetarian... what a ridiculous bitch!

Riveting adult fiction. What do I mean by "adult"? In middle school you would not have understood it; in high school you would have hated it. But adults acting as children, having crises in front of their community at high noon? Yeah. I've been indoctrinated.

Kang has a taut, very animalistic tale of madness and marriage to share with us. Let's eat!

Lark Benobi says

This was a perfect, perfect book for me. The novel is simply told, and very short, but it touches on so many critical, cut-to-the-bone themes, including the most fundamental questions of identity, of gender, of responsibility toward others, and of what makes life worth living. In this novel the more outwardly stable and successful a character is, the less likely they are to have any perspective on their life choices. The more a given character becomes aware of their lived experience, the closer he or she comes to falling into the abyss. The story forces characters, and by extension readers, to think deeply about what "self" is, whether it be defined most simply as an organic body with organic desires and needs of its own, or as part of a social

structure, where one's value and even one's sanity is defined by others. This was a disturbing read in the best sense possible--I was disturbed from complacent thinking and stirred up with new thoughts.

Edward Lorn says

Update #2: I've gotten enough comments from dudes for me to update this review. Oddly enough, it's just dudes, too. No woman has commented about how I'm wrong about Kang saying the book is an allegory for South Korea. And I can only guess it's because women ACTUALLY READ THE FUCKIN DESCRIPTION. From the dust jacket AND the product description here on Goodreads:

"A disturbing, yet beautifully composed narrative told in three parts, The Vegetarian is an allegorical novel about modern day South Korea..."

Come on, guys. You can't be this fucking dense.

UPDATE: Since reading this book, I've seen numerous reviews from women who claim this book speaks to the hidden violence and hate women keep in their heart. I am, of course, not a woman and do not claim to know the struggles of the opposite sex, but I am willing to admit that I might have missed something a woman might easily find. As stated in my review, the author herself has said the book is an allegory for present-day South Korea. When discussing the book, Kang mentions nothing about any female metaphors, but if women are finding them, that's cool. That means Han Kang's art is affecting a large group of people in ways the author didn't intend. I find that fascinating and exceedingly cool. I, however, did not enjoy the book as a whole and stand by my review and rating. I've added this update to perhaps persuade you ladies who enjoy literary fiction to give this novel a try. I'm a dude and will only ever be a dude, and dudes are notoriously short-sighted when it comes to the ladies. So give it a go and see if it speaks to you as it has so many others. Now on to the review...

The Vegetarian is my first real disappointment of 2016. Too bad, too, because it was going so well.

Here we have a story that starts off creepy and interesting. Then, about 60 pages in, it slams face-first into a tree and, like Sonny Bono, never recovers. (Too soon?) The first third of the book (the novel is broken up into three 60-page sections) is told in first-person past tense. The second part switches to third-person past tense, and while still an interesting part of the story, caused the narrative to come to a grinding halt while we have to get to know a whole other person only to relive entire sections of the first sixty pages. And then, finally, in the third part, the author swings into third-person present tense and completely shits the bed. We're forced to get to know someone else that doesn't matter and relive certain aspects of both the first and second parts.

This is a novella stretched into a 188-page novel. Supposedly it is an allegorical study of present-day Korea, but I cannot comment on the accuracy of that statement. All I know is, I was onboard until the author started switching POVs and tenses and repeating shit ad nauseum, as if this were the novelization of *Vantage Point*. Anyone remember that movie? The non-crazy Quaid brother plays a secret service officer, or some shit? The entire story is only about 15 minutes long, but it's told from the perspectives of like eight motherfuckers? Oh well. It's an all right movie. Better than this book, at any rate.

Holy kitten nipples, where the fuck was I?

Oh yeah. Shit book. Well, that's not fair. It's not a completely shit book. The first 60 pages are rad. The next sixty pages are okay. The last 60 are pointless and boring. Overall, a very unbalanced read. Had I paid for this one instead of getting a review copy from Crown Publishing in exchange for the review you are currently reading, I probably would've been pissed.

In summation: Allegorical or not, this book failed on certain levels for me. The last time I saw something go this bad this quickly was when we found out Jared from Subway was forcing underage boys to eat his footlong. Not recommended.

Final Judgment: I wanna like you, but you're you, and I don't like you.

Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

MY BLOG: Melissa Martin's Reading List

I'm almost at a loss for words on how to review this book. I loved it, it was sad and bizarre, but when dealing with mental illness, not that much is bizarre. I have my own mental illnesses so I don't put too much into what people think because there are those that support you and those that don't. And to me, in my opinion, I think Yeong-hye might not have slipped into this world as far as she did if she had support from her family. One can never tell.

I wish we could have heard Yeong-hye's thoughts, there were snippets here and there, but this story is told through her husband's eyes, her brother-in-law's eyes and one of her sisters eyes.

I think her husband was a jerk. He married Yeong-hye because she was plain and wouldn't outshine him. She would be a decent woman to take care of him and she worked her own job without any fuss. But, one night he wakes up and finds her in the kitchen, she's just standing there. He's fussing at her and all she finally says is I had a dream. The whole story line where she is just standing there in the dark like a statue was very creepy to me!

The next thing her husband finds her throwing out all of the meat and saying she is a vegetarian now. She had a very disturbing dream of blood and death, it doesn't go too much into the dream, but it was enough to change how Yeong-hye saw the world. I really don't know if this was just a beginning of mental illness or something that was just a decision after a dream.

The sad part is that her husband never supported her, he abused her a few times, her family didn't support her and even abused her. I despised her father for the abuse of an animal and his own daughter. He should have been taken to the gallows, but I digress. I'm not sure, but I'm thinking if they would have supported her and not acting the way they did at a dinner that she might not have ended up in a psych ward for suicidal tendencies. Well, her sorry husband who didn't support her anyway, and was secretly in love with her sister, divorced her.

I think after Yeong-hye got out of the hospital and lived in her own little flat, that she was getting better. She stopped looking so emaciated because she got to eat all of the veggie food that she wanted. She seemed to be somewhat happy. I was beginning to feel like her luck might be turning around. THEN... her brother-in-law

starts coming around, he has a secret lust for her. What is with this family!!!

I felt like he used her to bring him into his world, to get what he wanted. He was an artist and all of that had to do with body painting. Even still, I'm not sure that Yeong-hye would have went to the extremes she did if her sister didn't walk in on them and have them both carted off to the mental ward because of her jealousy. From this point on, Yeong-hye went downhill... she wouldn't eat, she wanted to be a tree.

I'm really not sure if any of my thoughts on the book are right. I'm not sure if this was something else entirely, but I do know what I took away from the book is that people are cruel. Your own family can be cruel. Sometimes people just need a little help and acceptance, who knows what would have happened. This book is both sad, sensual and yes, a little crazy. But, I loved it. There is just something about it that I loved.

I would like to thank The Reading Room and Penguin Random House LLC for a free print copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

j e w e l s [Books Bejeweled] says

FOUR STARS

Call me crazy. I like to challenge myself with "intellectual" novels that win awards. **THE VEGETARIAN** was definitely demanding and it's another one to add to my *appreciate, but didn't exactly enjoy it* file.

This South Korean story of an "unremarkable" woman that wakes up from a nightmare and declares herself to be vegetarian is an odd story of rebellion. The woman absolutely infuriates her husband and parents with this assertive decision and somehow becomes a rebel, a subversive, an outcast. In the end, she simply wants to be. Without human violence or greediness. Why can't she be like the vegetation she consumes, NOT the carnivorous human society expects of her?

Some of the passages about murderous thoughts or bloody animals are not easy to read; but there are also many beautiful passages that are so visual, so visceral--- I felt my heart breaking a little.

I listened to the book and loved the production. Poetry should be listened to out loud and this book is perfect for that. Han Kang is a gorgeous writer and I noticed she had another book (**THE WHITE BOOK** with the same translator) nominated this year for the same award.

THE VEGETARIAN owes everything to Kafka and the idea of metamorphosis in life and in death. It's a haunting, complex novel that I'm glad I read.

The novel won the 2016 Man Booker International Prize and it is meant to be split between the author (Han Kang) and the translator (Deborah Smith). With good reason. When a novel like this one reads more like poetry, you can understand how translation is of absolute importance. Word choice is EVERYTHING. I googled some info about the translation of this novel and, oh my gosh! I had no idea what I was getting into. According to some Korean American lit critics, Smith took way too many liberties with the translation and the result is a completely different book than the South Koreans read. Apparently, the original is even more poetic and spare and I would imagine, much better. It is an interesting google rabbit hole to fall into if you

have a few hours to spare- Haaaaa!

Seemita says

[Originally appeared here (with edits): <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/books/reviews/haaaa-a-review-of-han-kangs-yeong-hye-180115.html>]

Many of us, if stretch a little, can recall the question that appeared in our science textbooks in primary schools: choose the living and non-living thing from the following options. While we conveniently tagged all humans, animals and plants to the ‘living’ side, everything else chugged to the ‘non living’ side. But did the divide stand the test of time?

Han Kang pushes this very divide to scintillating heights, reducing the line into a mere fissure, facilitating travel from one living form to another. So, we meet a young Yeong-hye in South Korea, a compliant wife in a patriarchal society, suddenly renouncing meat at the behest of a curious dream. A matter of grave concern, throwing not just her health into jeopardy but also her marital and filial relationships asunder, that must be assuaged before it’s too late. But a series of disturbing, echoing nightmares keep her stoic in her resolve, leaving only her sister and brother-in-law in the big, unforgiving world to extend their support, albeit not without curious pokes and starkly different motives.

What follows underline the haunting journey of a woman transformed, repealing everything conventional to assign meaning to her inner voice. Experiencing erotic exploitation and befriending helpless eyes, discarding worldly echoes and embracing floristic world, Yeong-hye moves from a home to a studio to a hospital with incredible equanimity and singular passion (view spoiler).

Intermingling three points of view in three different, well-etched parts with the eye of a shrewd player, Kang raises questions on human dichotomies and their constant collision against the inherent shackles of society. The strength of Kang’s voice is in her refusal to smoothen the rough edges of her characters – they bare their scars and innermost vulnerabilities and yet don’t appear drawing sympathy. In one of her interviews, Kang ascertains that the novel is an attempt to fight human violence and the possibility to refuse bearing it. A lingering trail formed by each part, almost akin to life that continues to throb long after it has stepped off the page, certainly adds gravitas to her objective.

This wasn’t an easy read for me, frequently veering on the bizarre and mystical, puncturing a perfect reading demeanor. But the lithe, supple body of the words came to rescue, lapping up my anxiety like an unexpected drizzle that keeps one’s soul hydrated on a trying road. The sentences, themselves, run like trimmed creepers, embracing the reader in a cocoon of adrenaline rush and propelling slowly towards the destination like an intoxication catching speed.

“Such uncanny serenity actually frightened him, making him think that perhaps this was a surface impression left behind after any amount of unspeakable viciousness had been digested, or else settled down inside her as a kind of sediment.”

The destination, of course, is occasionally a misnomer, for all it does is set us onto a new journey. This book fits to that assertion like a glove.

Mary ~Ravager of Tomes~ says

Nope.

This is the story of two sisters & their husbands & one woman's tendency toward violent, graphic dreams.

Honestly, I'm not sure what I was supposed to take from this book & I'm not going to pretend for the sake of sounding intelligent or profound that I "got it."

I absolutely did not enjoy reading this, and I'm thankful it was over quickly. The men in this book are repulsive & selfish, and I could not identify with either sister. The lack of straightforward communication between all of the characters was **consistently annoying**.

And maybe that was the point, I don't know.

Maybe I was supposed to feel irritated throughout the whole novel?

Maybe the outright objectification of both women by every single male they come into contact with was supposed to speak to societal expectations between men & women?

Maybe the lack of agency both women seem to have was supposed to encompass widespread lack of agency among women in general?

Maybe all the weird, sexually graphic imagery was a parallel for the mass produced & detached quality of the porn industry?

Maybe my lack of experience with the culture prevents me from understanding the higher meaning here?

Truly, I don't know.

Regardless of the intended message, or what others seem to have taken from this novel, reading this was frustrating. I don't think the method of delivery worked for me. You win some, you lose some, I guess.

Justin says

Honestly, in this case, I'm much more interested in reading other people's reviews of the book rather than writing my own. I just feel like there are so many layers here, so many things that need to be discussed, so many unique interpretations, so many questions.

The first third of The Vegetarian is very Kafka-esque. It has a very Metamorphosis vibe to it. Maybe a little bit of Bird Box to give you a more contemporary example. It was dark. It was weird. It was bleak. It felt like every sentence belonged there. There wasn't any filler or fluff to bulk up the length. I was all in, too. I was waiting to solve the mystery and figure out what the heck was going on.

Then, the second act hits and I realized this book is something completely different than what I expected. I was mildly annoyed at the kind of abrasive shift away from what I wanted the book to be, but once I got over

myself and continued to read, I loved the book for completely different reasons. I didn't even know why I liked it really. I kinda felt awkward at times, but then I got over myself again.

The third and final act doesn't answer a lot of questions. It actually leaves you with a lot of questions, but not about the story- more about deeper issues like what it is to be human, innocence, and violence. Nothing about not eating animals. Don't let the title fool you. The Vegetarian takes things to a much deeper level than if killing animals is wrong. I barely remember that being discussed.

Here's the best way I can break this down for you. Ever watched a good foreign film? You know how in a lot of foreign films there aren't millions of dollars invested into CGI and the actors and actresses look like real people? The movie is focused on the dialogue and the story rather than looking and sounding amazing. At the end, you feel something inside and you're thinking, man, I didn't know movies could be like this. I haven't seen anything like this before. That's how The Vegetarian is- translated into English from a South Korean author that doesn't look or feel like any book you've read before. You put it down and you're like, man, I didn't know books could be like this. I haven't read anything like this before.

Eat animals or don't. Whatever. But check this one out. It's under 200 pages. Spend a Sunday afternoon with it.

Matthew says

Well . . . um . . . yeah . . . so

I guess that was good . . . maybe . . .

Kinda weird . . . I think . . .

Definitely a bit much . . . oh, no doubt . . . but . . .

Poignant perhaps . . . certainly heart strings were tugged . . . however . . .

Confusion! Yes! That's it . . . or, maybe not . . .

100% sure I was 90% moved by being 80% lost while at the same time being 70% disturbed . . .

This book . . . yup . . . it's . . . sure, I guess?

Maxine (Booklover Catlady) says

Stunning. Sad. Disturbing. Powerful. Unique. Astonishing. Surprising. Profound. Painful. Distressing. Moving. Exceptional. Impacting.

This is straight into my Top Ten Reads of 2016! Skipping the long list and the short list.

Wow. Let me catch my breath. No wonder this book won The Man Booker Prize 2016. I've never read

anything like it. Finally translated into English for us to treasure and delve into its depths!

Expect nothing when you read this book. Have an open mind. No preconceived concepts. Just let it take you on its journey. You might not ever be the same again.

Tackling mental illness in the most harrowing of ways. **Oh God, this book just about broke me in parts.** The characters are crystal clear. Our troubled protagonist who becomes vegetarian to the incredibly strong distress of all her family felt like a piece of thin glass ready to break at any moment. Fragile. Flawed. I loved her, I knew her but then I didn't.

With erotic and unusual sexual moments the book does make you feel uncomfortable at times. Sometimes I didn't know what to feel. What was appropriate? Some scenes made me want to dive into the book and act out.

I'll never forget this book and am eager to read everything and anything this astonishing author writes. **The prose is incredible. The plot memorable, tinged with darkness, madness, human suffering. I can't praise this book enough.** I'm stunned at low reviews. What book were they reading? This isn't pulp fiction people - this is a literary modern classic. Read it. 5 huge stars. Absolutely astonishing.

The ending? Ripped my heart in pieces.

Elyse says

Update: Han Kang's book, "The Vegetarian", is the Man Booker international winner

Wow...****

****ZERO spoilers

I'm going to share my experience....and hope to find other readers to discuss this book with later.

I couldn't 'not' read this in anything less than one sitting.

If I keep thinking about this book, not only will I have a knot in my stomach as I do now...but I just might find myself crying my eyes out!

I haven't felt so many intense emotions from a book in a long time.

Zillions of thoughts flooded my mind from when our daughter was anorexic. At age 9, Katy came home from school one day and said, "I no longer eat meat".... which was just the beginning of her food eliminations.

This book goes beyond anything I've ever read on the topic of eating disorders...(there's more....exploring a range of themes)

The writing is MASTERFUL...with many gorgeous passages.

I'm not sure this book is for everyone....but if you think you can handle minimal disturbing abuse and horror images...there is enough 'meat' (pun), in this book to keep the cerebral brain doing somersaults for months....leaving behind many questions to think about.

*.....A tidbit which might be useful information for those who read this.

"A Mongolian mark is a bluish birthmark, very common among infants of color though uncommon among Caucasian infants, that typically disappears by the time a child is around five". Having this information would have 'helped' me feel less confused when I first started reading part II .
The Vegetarian", is a novel of three-linked novellas. POWERFUL!!

Thank You Crown Publishing, Netgalley, and Han Kang....(I think *Kang* is kinda a genius)

Nat says

Before the nightmare, Yeong-hye and her husband lived an ordinary life. But when splintering, blood-soaked images start haunting her thoughts, Yeong-hye decides to purge her mind and renounce eating meat.

In a country where societal mores are strictly obeyed, Yeong-hye's decision to embrace a more "plant-like" existence is a shocking act of subversion. And as her passive rebellion manifests in ever more extreme and frightening forms, scandal, abuse, and estrangement begin to send Yeong-hye spiraling deep into the spaces of her fantasy. In a complete metamorphosis of both mind and body, her now dangerous endeavor will take Yeong-hye—impossibly, ecstatically, tragically—far from her once-known self altogether.

The Vegetarian is told through three parts:

From here on this review will contain ***spoilers***.

Part One: Told through the eyes of the very abusive and unsupportive husband of Yeong-hye (aka Mr. Cheong).

People who utter bullshit like he did truly astonish me:

"What's wrong with your lips? Haven't you done your makeup?"

I took my shoes off again and dragged my flustered wife, who'd already put on her coat, into the front room.

"Were you really going to go out looking like this?" The two of us were reflected in the dressing table mirror. "Do your makeup again."

To say that I really, really disliked the husband would be an understatement.

It was also really disturbing to learn that almost everything seemed to put him into a state of sexual arousal. I mean, just listening to the voice of his sister-in-law managed to arouse him... why???

On top of that, trigger warnings for sexual assault because Yeong-hye's husband is a piece of shit.

Right in those moments, thinking about Mr. Cheong didn't cause me shock or confusion so much as an intense feeling of disgust. I really hope he'll die a painful death.

We then see that this abusive asshole calls her family to inform them of Yeong-hye's new eating habits. By

this point, they decide that the best way to help is to physically force her into eating meat again, which absolutely made my blood boil.

"That her father, the Vietnam War hero, had actually struck his rebellious daughter in the face and physically forced a lump of meat into her mouth, that was something else."

And the moment when she'd tried to take her own life in front of her family had been a turning point.

"Nobody can help me. Nobody can save me. Nobody can make me breathe."

Part 2: The narrative switches to In-hye's husband (set 2 years later).

This part was a little disturbing & overly sexual...

Seriously though, what's up with the men in this book??? We have abusive husband #1 (Mr. Cheong) fantasizing about one sister and abusive husband #2 fantasizing about the other sister... why....

The only part of me that was satisfied was when I read that Yeong-hye got her divorce from Mr. Cheong. Thank the stars for that silver lining.

But I truly felt sorry that In-hye ended up with such a fucker for a husband. And when she had to see him with her sister... it still hurts. But she handled the situation to the best of her abilities.

"She cut him off abruptly, raising her voice. "I've called the emergency services."

"What?" He took a step toward her, incomprehension furrowing his brow.

She backed away. "You and Yeong-hye are both clearly in need of medical treatment."

Several seconds passed before he grasped that she was in earnest. "What are you saying? That you're committing me to a mental hospital?"

Just then a rustling sound came from over by the mattress. Both he and his wife held their breath. Yeong-hye pushed the sheet aside and stood up, stark naked. He saw that tears were streaming from his wife's eyes.

"Bastard," she muttered, swallowing her sobs. "Just look at her...she clearly isn't well. In her mind. How could you?"

Part 2 ends with three paramedics rushing into the flat, concealing straitjackets and protective equipment. Again, a disturbingly dark ending...

Part 3: Told from the perspective of In-hye while visiting her sister in a psychiatric hospital.

As the story progresses, Yeong-hye became more and more taciturn. She refuses to eat, drink or take care of herself. And it was hard reading about her harming herself like that, especially watching it through In-hye's eyes.

"In-hye couldn't hold herself back any longer. "You!" she yelled. "I'm acting like this because I'm afraid you're going to die!"

Yeong-hye turned her head and stared blankly at In-hye, as though the latter were not her sister but a complete stranger. After a while, the question came.

"Why, is it such a bad thing to die?"

I'm still not entirely sure what ended up with her in those last few pages, but I'm too emotionally scarred to reread it.

The only silver lining in this part (for me) was reading how strong In-hye held herself to be and not cave in, especially when abusive husband #2 called her in desperation to see the family.

“She’d always known how sensitive he was. A man whose self-esteem was so easily wounded, who quickly became frustrated if the situation didn’t go his way. She knew that if she refused him this one more time, it would probably be a very long time before he contacted her again.

Even though she was aware of this, no, because she was aware of it, she hung up without answering.”

“I don’t know you,” she muttered, tightening her grip on the receiver, which she’d hung back in the cradle but was still clutching. “So there’s no need for us to forgive each other. Because I don’t know you.”

When the phone rang again she pulled out the cord. The next morning she connected it up again but, as she’d predicted, he didn’t call again.”

I felt such a surge of power at her actions. **YES.**

In-hye definitely didn't give herself enough credit in this part. She's a single mother with a hard-working business and still takes the time to visit and take care of her younger sister to the best of her abilities... that in itself is already a great deal of work. She shouldn't be so hard on herself.

Though this novel is short, it managed to feel like a lifetime packed into less than 200 pages - which I'm not sure whether I liked or not.

But I do know this: I left this novel feeling confused, tired and drained, which I don't find the best things to feel after finishing a story.

However, the one thing that continues to perplex me is the fact that everyone in this book refers to Yeong-hye as a vegetarian, yet she mentions multiple times that she won't be eating either eggs or dairy products...

“Just make me some fried eggs. I’m really tired today. I didn’t even get to have a proper lunch.”

“I threw the eggs out as well.”

“What?”

“And I’ve given up milk too.”

“This is unbelievable. You’re telling me not to eat meat?”

“I couldn’t let those things stay in the fridge. It wouldn’t be right.”

And she even doesn't wear leather, so why isn't she considered a vegan?

“The thing is, she’s stopped eating meat.”

“What did you say?”

“She’s stopped eating any kind of meat at all, even fish—all she lives on is vegetables. It’s been several months now.”

I cannot rest peacefully until I know the reason for this...

Note: I'm an Amazon Affiliate. If you're interested in buying **The Vegetarian, just click on the image below*

*to go through my link. I'll make a small commission!**

Support creators you love. Buy a Coffee for nat (bookspoils) with <http://Ko-fi.com/bookspoils>

Joseph says

The Vegetarian by Han Kang is a South Korean novel told in three parts. Kang is the daughter of novelist Han Seung-won. She has gone on to win the Yi Sang Literary Prize (2005), Today's Young Artist Award, and the Korean Literature Novel Award. As of summer 2013, Han teaches creative writing at the Seoul Institute of the Arts while writing stories and novels.

The Vegetarian starts with a simple premise. A woman, Yeong-hye, decides to become a vegetarian and her family reacts to her decision. The novel is much deeper than that, though. The first part of the book is told by her husband. He recalls there is nothing special with Yeong-hye. She is plain looking. Her hair is neither long or short. Her plain black shoes moved along neither fast nor slow. Her future husband felt no special attraction to her nor any drawbacks. She became a completely ordinary wife. The only odd thing about Yeong-hye was she did not like wearing a bra. She remained completely ordinary.

She had a dream that changes her life. A graphic and bloody dream that turns her away from meat and all animal products. It is an annoyance to her husband who sees it's not a plant based diet she is living, but a plant-like life. The rest of her family takes issue and things spiral out of control. The second part is told by her brother-in-law and takes the reader deeper into obsession. The final part is told by her sister. Each section reflects a movement into the future and a different look at Yeong-hye. Yeong-hye's role is the pivot point for the story although she tells very little of her own story. The book is written in the first person by her three relations.

As a vegetarian myself I thought it would be interesting to see how it would be taken in Korea. I expected it would not be an issue in a country with a quarter of the population Buddhist. I found myself mistaken and found it was much more socially acceptable to be a vegetarian in Texas than Korea. The novel, however, is not about vegetarianism as much as it is about obsession and acting on obsessions. There is a difference between being a little rebellious and going against societal norms. Yeong-hye perhaps is not the center point, but the microscope that allows us to see our own selves in detail.

It is a hard to categorize novel, but one plenty to think about. It is a bit disturbing at times but never turns the reader away. People have complained that Yeong-hye is flat and one-dimensional and perhaps that is the point. She does not get to tell her story. We have to rely on those around her to tell the story and wade through their personal issues, prejudices, and obsessions. A very well done story that stays with you long after you finish.

Navidad Thelamour says

“Though the ostensible reason for her not wanting Yeong-hye to be discharged, the reason that she gave the doctor, was this worry about a possible relapse, now she was able to admit to herself what had really been

going on. She was no longer able to cope with all that her sister reminded her of. She'd been unable to forgive her for soaring alone over a boundary she herself could never bring herself to cross, unable to forgive that magnificent irresponsibility that had enabled Yeong-hye to shuck off social constraints and leave her behind, still a prisoner. And before Yeong-hye had broken those bars, she'd never even known they were there..."

Wow, what can I say about this one except “wow?”

The Vegetarian by Han Kang was everything that we love about Korean and Japanese literature and art—and that's exactly what this work was: art. Here you will find what we have come to know, to love and to expect from authors in this genre who write in this vein: the vibrancy, the subtle magical realism, the commanding usage of words and the elusive, sinister nature that is unique to these works—all embedded within an established culture of history and mores that has survived and developed for millennia longer than most others.

The Vegetarian read with a delicious ominousness that was as subtle as a shadow, like a breath at your neck. It was that subtly that made the read so taunt and disquieting, and there was a strange, magical realism to it that almost read like Haruki Murakami's *1Q84* (no shock there, as they both seem to have been influenced by Kafka). As a work of short literary form (it's under 200 pages), it was unusual, among other reasons, in that it was told from three different perspectives with almost no perspective from the novel's subject, Yeong-hye. We see how her vegetarianism, which later leads into a kind of manic catatonia, affects first her callous and at times sexually abusive husband, then her brother-in-law who becomes completely enthralled with her sexually because of her Mongolian mark, and her sister who is the last one standing when Yeong-hye's psyche begins to peel away.

In addition to the serious topics that *The Vegetarian* brushed up against: the effect of cultural mores on women, body image, conformism, familial ties and abuse, and, of course, mental illness that ultimately culminated in a way that I could never reveal without spoiling it for you—this was also a tale of family dysfunction. It was a tale of familial ties that were severed painfully, of violent confrontations and realizations, of physical and emotional starvation, and a parable about the woman, the vegetarian, at the center of it all.

The Vegetarian was sensual, and it meandered toward its climax in a way that was both unsettling and prophetic. It was allegory elevated to the highest level of art, raised to the level of surrealism. Honestly, this may or may not work for everyone. You have to suspend your past experiences with reading (outside of this genre) in order to enjoy this one. That much is, honestly, a must. The change in tenses and POVs worked well. And even this technique, this simple process of sentence writing that we learn in grade school, was elevated: the tenses of sentences shifted noticeably, particularly the closer that it came to dénouement, a jolting but brilliant allusion to this descent into mental illness and personal violence, which added to the mystical element of this novel.

Han Kang produced a work, her first to be seen here in the U.S., that was so unhinged, so mystifying, that at times it would slither from your grasp. I had to sit and reflect on several of the passages for a few minutes—not because they were ill-written, but because they were both profound and often just outside of my immediate mental grasp, and that was a wonderful thing. It was an effect that I look for in modern-day writing—that disquietingly ungraspable moment.

Yeong-hye's voice, which came to her while she was suspended in that halfway state between sleep and wakefulness, was low and warm at first, then innocent like that of a young child, but the last part was

mangled, a distorted animal sound. Her eyes snapped open in fright, and she was stung by a waking hatred the likes of which she'd never felt before, before being thrown back into sleep. This time she was standing in front of the bathroom mirror. In the reflection, blood was trickling from her left eye. She quickly reached up to wipe the blood away, but somehow her reflection in the mirror didn't move an inch, only stood there, blood running from a staring eye.

The Vegetarian was unconventional. It broke away from the molds that we find ourselves encumbered in with typical fiction. Here you will not find the typical “rising action, climax, falling action” formula that we’ve become so accustomed to, that we’ve grown to expect and to lean into, though we know how it’ll all end in the end. There may or may not have been some issues with translation, but if there were, it wasn’t overtly noticeable to me. I found the translation obstacles, where applicable, to be mild at worst. I would recommend this read to anyone who’s ready to move away from the conventional, and to anyone already familiar or ready to become familiar with this genre of writing. Honestly, this read left me a little speechless, so you’ll have to excuse the less-than-customary word count here. Definitely, take that as a compliment in the highest sense. 5 stars. *****

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Adina says

“She was no longer able to cope with all that her sister reminded her of. She'd been unable to forgive her for soaring alone over a boundary she herself could never bring herself to cross, unable to forgive that magnificent irresponsibility that had enabled Yeong-hye to shuck off social constraints and leave her behind, still a prisoner. And before Yeong-hye had broken those bars, she'd never even known they were there.”

For a small book it took me a lot of time to finish. The reason is that I wanted to absorb every word while, in the same time, I had to stop periodically because the emotional loading that my heart accumulated became too much.

Korean people are close to my heart and with every year that I go there and meet my business partners I believe I understand them more. The experience I have there made me feel deeply about this novel. It is tough and not always pleasant to be Korean, the traditions and the society puts pressure on each individual, especially on women, to comply and be responsible.

During the conversation I had with various Koreans I understood there still is the expectation that the woman should follow the men’s orders and to put the well-being of the family above hers, a theme that was present in this novel

Another cultural shock that I had was about the education in Korea. A partner told me that he could not go on holiday with his family for the last 2-3 years because his child in high-school had to study for university, for an exam which will be only in another year. It seems that the competition there is so high and if the young Koreans want to get to a good university (a must if striving for a decent life) they need to study non-stop, without any fun in their life. Another partner was very preoccupied to register his child into a good kindergarten because if they missed that chance the child’s life could be a failure. They even have exams to be admitted to kindergarten. Can you imagine the pressure the children have to face from such an early

age... no wonder they feel trapped when they get older. I read an article in Economist about this problem which seems to be spread in many Asian countries.

I read reviews that the book is not realistic... it is wrong. It is very realistic and I can see it happen, including the craze with the vegetarianism.

"The feeling that she had never really lived in this world caught her by surprise. It was a fact. She had never lived. Even as a child, as far back as she could remember, she had done nothing but endure. She had believed in her own inherent goodness, her humanity, and lived accordingly, never causing anyone harm. Her devotion to doing things the right way had been unflagging, all her successes had depended on it, and she would have gone on like that indefinitely. She didn't understand why, but faced with those decaying buildings and straggling grasses, she was nothing but a child who had never lived."

What a better moment to read this than in Seoul while eating lots of Korean meat.
