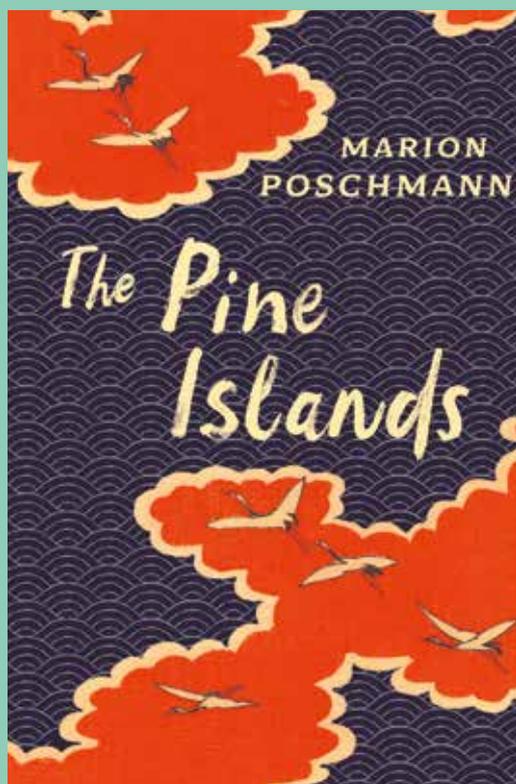




# Reader's Guide



## The Pine Islands Marion Poschmann

Translated by Jen Calleja

Profile Books, Serpent's Tail

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About the author	Marion Poschmann was born in Essen, Germany, in December 1969. A prize-winning poet and novelist, she has won both of Germany's premier poetry prizes, has been longlisted once and shortlisted twice for the German Book Prize and won, amongst others, the 2013 Wilhelm Raabe Literature Prize, the first German Prize for Nature Writing 2017 and the 2018 Berlin Literature Prize for her prose. She is a member of the German Academy for Language and Literature and the German PEN Center. She lives in Berlin.
About the translator	Jen Calleja was born in Shoreham-by-Sea, UK, in December 1986. She is a writer, musician and literary translator from German. She has translated works by authors including Wim Wenders, Michelle Steinbeck, Kerstin Hensel and Gregor Hens, and her translations have been featured in <i>The New Yorker</i> and <i>The White Review</i> . She was the inaugural Translator in Residence at the British Library and writes a column on literature in translation for the <i>Brixton Review of Books</i> . Her debut poetry collection <i>Serious Justice</i> (2016) is published by Test Centre. She lives in London.
About the book	When Gilbert Silvester, a journeyman lecturer on beard fashions in film, awakes one day from a dream that his wife has cheated on him, he flees - immediately, irrationally, inexplicably - for Japan. In Tokyo he discovers the travel writings of the great Japanese poet Basho. Suddenly, from Gilbert's directionless crisis there emerges a purpose: a pilgrimage in the footsteps of the poet to see the moon rise over the pine islands of Matsushima. Falling into step with another pilgrim - a young Japanese student called Yosa, clutching a copy of <i>The Complete Manual of Suicide</i> - Gilbert travels across Basho's disappearing Japan with Yosa, one in search of his perfect ending and the other the new beginning that will give his life meaning. <i>The Pine Islands</i> is a serene, playful, profoundly moving story of the transformations we seek and the ones we find along the way.
What the judges thought	'A quirky, unpredictable and darkly comic confrontation with mortality.'
Discussion points	<p>Gilbert leaves his wife and goes to Japan because he has a dream that she is cheating on him. Why do you think he responds so extremely to this dream, and do you think his wife was really cheating?</p> <p>How is humour used in the book to discuss serious issues?</p> <p>What is it about Yosa that appeals so much to Gilbert and how does their friendship develop?</p> <p>How you think 'having a sense of purpose' comes into play in the novel?</p>
Themed reading	<p><i>The Complete Haiku</i> by Matsuo Basho The greatest master of haiku, Basho's poetry is internationally renowned. His poems were influenced by his first-hand experience of the world around him, often encapsulating the feeling of a scene in a few simple elements. For the first time, his full body of work has been translated into English.</p> <p><i>The Tale of Genji</i> by Murasaki Shikubu A classic of Japanese literature, accepted as the world's first novel and one of the greatest works of literature of all time. Genji is the son of an emperor. He is a passionate character who tempestuous nature, family circumstances, love affairs, alliances, and shifting political fortunes form the core of this magnificent epic.</p> <p><i>The Pillow Book</i> by Sei Shonagon A fascinating exploration of life among the nobility at the height of the Heian period, describing the exquisite pleasures of a confined world in which poetry, love, fashion, and whim dominated, while harsh reality was kept firmly at a distance.</p>
Useful links	<p>About <i>The Pine Islands</i> by Marion Poschmann on the Serpent's Tail website</p> <p>Die Kieferninseln by Marion Poschmann</p> <p>Deutscher Buchpreis 2017, Portrait Marion Poschmann- videonn</p>