

**Traumatic Memory and Fragmented Subjectivity: Psychological Suppression
in Han Kang's The Vegetarian**

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Abstract:

This paper examines that how the traumatic memory, psychological suppression and fragmented subjectivity are expressed in *The Vegetarian* (2007) by Han Kang. Using the lenses of psychoanalytical theory and trauma studies, the study examines how Yeong-hye's transformation from an ordinary woman to a more and more silent and self-destructive woman is a way of coping with unsolvable trauma and psychological repression. The novel explores traumatic memory as an enduring psychological force more like an identity/body that is not recovered but rather affects a person's identity and bodily autonomy. The fact that Yeong-hye refuses to eat meat, distancing herself from the social world and wanting to become a plant, are symbolic elements of the memories and emotional pain she has been suppressing. Based on the theories of Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan and Cathy Caruth, this paper shows that traumatic experiences are not suppressed but rather are part of the fragmentation of subjectivity. Silence, physical reaction and self-erasure are all modes of Yeong-hye's challenge to social norms and her unveiling of the destructive power of unaddressed trauma. The study proves that the novel by Han Kang shows the trauma as an interaction of the individual trauma and social violence, while it shows how fragments of subjectivity arise from the individual's incapacity to correlate with the traumatic memory with lived experience.

Key words : Trauma Studies, Psychological Suppression, Fragmented Subjectivity, Han Kang, *The Vegetarian*, Trauma, Memory, Psychoanalysis, Identity Crisis and Silence.

Introduction

The Vegetarian is one of the important works of modern Korean literature by Han Kang. The novel was published in 2007, and tells the story of Yeong-hye, a seemingly ordinary woman who, after a series of disturbing dreams, decides to stop eating meat, triggering an incredible transformation of her identity, relationships and sense of self. Her vegetarianism seems at first glance to be only a dietary decision, but it slowly turns into an extremely revolutionary stance against human violence, social norms and the reality of the

body itself. The novel is divided into a series of chapters, each of which focuses on a different aspect of the story. Some of the chapters are narrated by Yeong-hye, while others are narrated by other characters. The narrative arc of the novel is structured to highlight the trauma, memory, repression, violence, and psychological fragmentation of Yeong-hye, the novel's central character, as he is told the story by a variety of other characters.

Trauma is so much a part of contemporary literary criticism due to its ability to affect identity and memory. Trauma theorists believe that trauma experiences cannot be completely comprehended when they happen. Rather, they keep coming back in the memory, dreams, silence and psychological symptom. This experiential learning is often difficult to represent and the individual's ability to formulate a sense of self is challenged. Trauma often leads to disruptions in such subjectivity, to unstable, dissociated, and conflicting forms of subjectivity.

The Vegetarian is a book of traumatic memory as it shows in our dreams, our bodies and in our silence. When Yeong-hye has repetitive nightmares, it is clear that there are unaddressed emotional scars that can't be expressed in normal speech. Her vegetarianism is a gesture of rejection of the killing and domination of animals, but a gesture of a more intimate nature, related to a more personal and culturally rooted traumatic memory. Her psychology steadily deteriorates and her self becomes more and more divided, finally to the point where she wishes to give up on being a human being.

The psychoanalytic theory is a useful lens with which to view this process. Freud's psychoanalysis theory holds that unpleasant experiences can be pushed out of the conscious mind, but still affect behavior in the unconscious mind. The Lacanian theory also portrays subjectivity as a fractured entity and identity as something that is not stable. These viewpoints provide a glimpse into Yeong-hye's alienation from the realities of society, and the process of her gradual shift towards becoming a subject who is more isolated and psychologically divided.

This paper maintains that Yeong-hye's psychological repression of traumatic memory is a factor that is a direct cause of the subjectivity fragmentation of Yeong-hye. Her silence, resistance to her body, and self erasure are symptoms of un-resolved trauma which remains outside the conscious mind. The study aims to highlight the complex relationship among trauma, repression and identity in Han Kang's novel, and to show how it defies the traditional notion of selfhood and reveals the sinister effect of psychological repression.

Literature Review

The Vegetarian has been the subject of much research due to its multifaceted understanding of violence, gender, trauma, identity, and bodily change. The novel has been the subject of various theoretical approaches by existing scholarship, such as ecofeminism, posthumanism, trauma studies, psychoanalytical studies, ethical criticism, and translation

studies. All of these studies show that it is impossible to just look at Yeong-hye's transformation as a psychological problem; it is necessary to place it in the social, ethical, and cultural context.

Carrie E. Stobie, in "The Good Wife? Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* (2017) is understood in terms of ecofeminism, posthumanism and vegan studies in the article entitled "Sibling Species. Stobie writes that Yeong-hye's decision to not eat meat constitutes an ethical stance against anthropocentric violence and a hierarchy of human-animal relationships. Her transformation calls into question normalizing structures of dominant culture that justifies violence towards women and violence towards non-human life. In focus on ecological ethics and posthuman identity, Stobie extends the reading of the novel beyond the traditional feminist perspective.

The conversation turns to the narrative, to translation, and to world literary circulation in Dominic O'Key's "Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* and the International Booker Prize: Reading With and Against World Literary Prestige" (2022). According to O'Key, the novel's disjointed storyline and its various narrators leave readers unsure of Yeong-hye's psychological state, making it impossible to come to any one conclusion. His research reveals the significance of the novel's reception in other countries in the development of its critical landscape and also identifies the literary potential of story fragmentation.

Antara Datta's "Ethics of Witnessing: Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*" (2025) presents a discussion on the connection between violence and ethical responsibility. Datta reads the novel in the light of the idea of 'ethical witnessing' and maintains that Yeong-hye's agony unveils the ubiquitous violence of patriarchal family systems and social institutions. The article focuses on the importance of silence, physical pain and isolation as alternative means of communication when trauma can't be expressed with words.

Likewise, the book "The Ethics of Refusal: Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* and the Challenge of Animal and Gender Justice" by Rakshita Sanan (2025) examines the novel from the perspectives of feminist ethics and animal studies. Sanan's usage of the theory of the "absent referent" of Carol J. Adams draws on the idea that oppression of women mirrors the oppression of animals and that they are both forms of patriarchal violence. Yeong-hye's vegetarianism is therefore seen as a moral rejection of domination and symbolic gesture of resistance to gender oppression

The following studies come closest to the present research: Dr. Roopali Gupta's "Trauma, Silence, and Psychological Fragmentation in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*" (2025) and Gauri Tuli's "Multigenerational Trauma in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*" (2025). Gupta believes that the reoccurrence of Yeong-hye's dreams, the lack of her voice, and her physical isolation are not signs of just being crazy, but instead some unresolved psychological trauma.

The study illustrates how the novel's disjointed story arc reflects the main character's weak and unstable psyche and how her motivation to become a plant represents a refusal to be victimized by patriarchy and a yearning for freedom from human suffering. It is important to understand the concept of trauma and psychological fragmentation developed in the novel, with the work of Gupta serving as a basis.

Cathy Caruth's work, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), adds to the theoretical framework of the present study. For Caruth, trauma is an event that is not fully understood in the moment, but comes back to him later in his dreams, repeated in memories, in repetition, and in fragments. Her theory offers a useful explanation for Yeong-hye's recurring dreams and the lingering of traumatic memory.

Dominick LaCapra's *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001) further developed the trauma theory by separating out the concept of "acting out" from "working through" trauma. Unresolved trauma can push people to re-experience traumatic events in a repetitive way, explains LaCapra. This is especially salient to Yeong-hye, who often withdraws out of her body and into silence, a failure to process traumatic memory.

Michael Billig's *Freudian Repression: Conversation Creating the Unconscious* (1999), reframes repression as a process that is very much related to language and social interaction. Billig proposes repression to be not only an unconscious psychological process but also a linguistic and communicative process. His theory helps to answer the question of why the silence of Yeong-hye is a sign of repression and a different way of expressing psychological suffering when language fails.

Combined, these studies reveal the examination of *The Vegetarian* in multiple critical lenses such as ecofeminism, posthumanism, trauma studies, ethical criticism, psychoanalysis, translation studies. The study of violence, gender, physical resistance and complexity of the novel has been enriched considerably by the existing scholarship. However, a collection of a more integrated trauma-psychoanalytic model offers the possibility of a more detailed investigation of the dynamic interaction between traumatic memory, psychological suppression and fractured subjectivity.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative and interpretative research methodology to examine the relationship between traumatic memory, psychological suppression, and fragmented subjectivity in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* (2007). The research is based on close textual analysis and comparative engagement with relevant theoretical frameworks from trauma studies, psychoanalysis, and feminist literary criticism. Through an interdisciplinary approach, the study investigates how unresolved trauma manifests through dreams, silence, bodily transformation, and self-erasure in the protagonist Yeong-hye.

The study adopts a textual and thematic analysis of *The Vegetarian*. As a work of contemporary Korean literature, the novel provides a complex representation of trauma, repression, gendered violence, and identity fragmentation. The analysis focuses on the ways in which Yeong-hye's recurring dreams, withdrawal from social life, refusal of food, and identification with plant life function as manifestations of psychological suppression and traumatic memory.

Theoretical Framework

The study utilizes Cathy Caruth's concept of trauma as an experience that cannot be fully assimilated at the moment of its occurrence and therefore returns through memory, dreams, and repetition. Dominick LaCapra's distinction between "acting out" and "working through" trauma is also employed to analyze Yeong-hye's inability to process traumatic experiences.

Analysis and Discussion

In *The Vegetarian*, Han Kang shows that trauma is not a one-time psychological trauma, nor just a personal illness. Instead, in the novel trauma is described as a continuous psychological state that chronically affects memory, language, identity and corporeal life. The significance of Yeong-hye's nightmares, her silence, her inability to eat and her eventual incorporation into plant life layers the multiple facets of traumatic memory, psychological repression, and disintegrating subjectivity. As these experiences intertwine, Han Kang shows how untraced trauma affects and undermines one's sense of self and how norms of sanity, identity, and humanity are challenged and disrupted.

The opening sentence of the narrative, "I had a dream" (Kang, *The Vegetarian*, p. 9), is a seemingly trivial one that begins her psychological change. The dream is neither a standard nightmare, but the return of an experience which is beyond conscious understanding. Trauma is not available until it repeats itself in the "nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 4), Cathy Caruth writes; it is late and repetitive. Trauma, Caruth goes on to say, is "the story of a wound that cries out" as it can "never stop asking for attention" after the traumatic event (4). Exhortations to blood, slaughter and violence are then not irrational hallucinations, but rather Yeong-hye's nightmares of a traumatic memory. The refusal to eat meat is a direct consequence of these recurring visions, which seems to be a trauma reshaping perception before it can be consciously articulated.

The reason for Yeong-hye's silence also becomes clearer as she is a victim of traumatic memory. She does not tell others about her pain; she slowly moves away from the use of language. In his book *Freudian Repression*, Michael Billig states that repression isn't just a psychological process, it's also an expression of language and language is repressive as well. This is especially true of Yeong-hye, for whom silence is a way of showing that the ordinary language can't convey the unimaginable mental anguish. An individual's body is the main way in which trauma is manifested, rather than through speech. Dr. Roopali Gupta

also posits that Yeong-hye's silence is not submission but the trauma's or the psychological suffering's language, suggesting that what she does is not madness, but rather the language of trauma (p. 110).

Patriarchal violence is a catalyst for psychological suppression of Yeong-hye. Her husband sees her mostly as his "little woman" who must do his bidding; her father tries to bring her into line with the stick. She is seen mostly as her husband's "little woman" who must do his bidding, and her father tries to bring her to heel with the stick. Her refusal to submit to patriarchal authority is demonstrated by her steadfast refusal to eat meat when she is violently and intimidatingly asked not to, calm and firmly saying "Father, I don't eat meat". (Kang, p. 48) In every family interaction, Gupta notes, Yeong-hye's family "consistently reads her behavior as a sign of her being insane" (p. 52). They just do not feel the pain, and this is the way the psychological suppression works; it doesn't only happen in the individual mind, but it happens also through the oppressive structures of the society which negate the emotional experience.

The disjointed series of events accentuates yet further this psychological Imbalance. Yeong-hye's narration of her experiences is very few and far between, readers instead hearing about her from her husband, brother-in-law, and sister. As a result her identity is always incomplete and is being continually reconstructed by others' voices. As a narrative technique this ambiguity and a refusal to a single explanation of Yeong-hye's change are highlighted, with the novel being in many ways a complex depiction of subjectivity, according to Dominic O'Key (p. 6). The disjointed story also reflects Yeong-hye's ailing mind, as Gupta says (p. 55). Fragmentation is thus not only a feature of her behaviour, but of the novel's structure in which it is the medium by which the novel tells her story.

Caruth has developed a way of thinking about trauma that can help us to understand why Yeong-hye can't simply get over these things. Trauma, in Caruth's words, "is too soon, too unexpectedly, too not yet known" (p. 4), and will come back to haunt the trauma survivor. Yeong-hye's reminder dreams, her distancing from corporeality, and a rejection of social life are all examples of this "delayed return of traumatic memory. She does not recall the past but rather symbolically repeats it.

Dominick LaCapra builds on this and describes the difference between repetition and the difficult process of "working through" trauma. In writing history, he says, writing trauma can be recalled back and forth in intrusive repetition and anxiety until it can be confrontatively questioned (Writing History, Writing Trauma, p. 70). In Yeong-hye's case, the process of working out doesn't reach this stage. Instead, she continues to suffer in mental ways endlessly without being able to make a cohesive sense of her experience of the trauma. She is therefore become more and more part of the plant world, rather than liberated, but rather the result of unhealed trauma.

The last turn towards a vegetated way of being in the novel is another example of the fall of subjectivity. Yeong-hye's words: "I become a different person, a different person rises up inside me" (Kang, p. 61) captures the process of identity breaking as a result of trauma. She wants to be a tree because she wants to escape a world of violence, domination and suffering. Stobie reads the metamorphosis as an ethico-political stance of posthumanism and an ethical resistance to patriarchy and species-violence (Stobie, p. 12); while Sanan reads the transformation as an assertion of resistance against the violence of patriarchy and species (Sanan, p. 8). The following study builds on these observations and claims the process of bodily transformation can also be seen as the psychological result of unprocessed traumatic memory and continued repression.

Finally, *The Vegetarian* shows that trauma can't just be put off to the side. Rather, it comes to us in dreams, in silence, in the changes of body, in the dissolution of identity. The novel applies and extends Caruth's idea of traumatic memory, Billig's idea of repression, and LaCapra's distinction between acting out and working through to show how psychological suppression does not eradicate trauma but is, rather, a continual re-production. Instead, Han Kang offers a sense of fractured subjectivity as much a result of "unresolved violence, emotional repression and the absence of language or society to recognize psychological suffering.

Results and Findings

From the study of Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*, it is undeniable that there are strong ties between traumatic memory, psychology suppression and fragmented subjectivity. Results show that Yeong-hye's metamorphosis is not only due to her mental sickness. Instead, it's a product of traumatic experiences that haven't been addressed, ongoing psychological oppression, and repeated abuse by men. The subjectivity of Yeong-hye is further disrupted in the silence, the resistance of the body, and the erasure of the self, and at the end of the day, even the very notion of the human is denied.

Traumatic Memory and the Return of the Repressed

Traumatic memory proves to be one of the most important observations in this research: It is the main agent for Yeong-hye's change. The novel starts off with a lot of blood, slaughter, violence and death in the form of dreams. Her dreams keep coming to her over and over, intruding into her life. Trauma is not an event that can be easily defined and identified, but rather a psychological force that appears as fragments of image and perpetual nightmares, according to Han Kang.

Traumatic events tend to stay unresolved and reoccur in the form of memories, dreams and over-the-loop thinking, according to trauma theory. In just the same way, Yeong-hye's nightmares work. In the dreams, she confronts violence as a part of her own and the society's life. These disturbing visions lead to her rejection of meat eating, which she now no longer wants to do, and are the first step towards her psychological change.

The analysis shows that Yeong-hye's dreams are the reappearance of repressed experiences which are not so easily communicated in words. Trauma is thus not a memory of specific events but an experience of a person's psychopathology, which always influences the way that they see their world.

The psychological suppression and silence of the oppression:

The results also demonstrated that psychological suppression is a key mechanism in Yeong-hye's coping strategy to trauma. As the novel progresses, she more and more resorts to eschewing oral speech and social engagement. The lack of voice in her is a symptom of psychological distress and resistance to oppressive social systems.

Yeong-hye doesn't actually verbalize her suffering, but rather through her actions. Her anti-violence choice of abstaining from meat becomes symbolic of her refusal to violence, and her inability to articulate the trauma experience is denoted by her silence. According to psychoanalytical theory, there are ways to deal with the hidden experiences indirectly, such as behavior and symbolic actions. Yeong-hye's departure is an example of this, in which memories are manifested through the body, rather than words. Analysis suggests suppressing trauma does not get rid of trauma. Rather, psychological conflict is exacerbated by repression, because it does not allow traumatic experiences to become part of consciousness. This isolates Yeong-hye from her family and herself, making her more isolated.

A study of patriarchal violence as a cause of psychological fragmentation of women. A study of the psychological fragmentation of women as a result of patriarchal violence. The other key finding has to do with the part played by patriarchy violence in the process of psychological suppression. The novel is rife with the idea of control through people of the male gender, such as her husband, father and sister's brother. Her husband reads her silence and passivity as being a good girl, rather than a stand-up woman. Her father too tries to make her behave as per the norms of the society by resorting to physical violence. One of Yeong-hye's scenes of psychological trauma is when she is pulled down and forced to eat meat. The event illustrates the attempt of the patriarchy to control the female body and one's freedom.

Recent critics have taken note that through Yeong-hye's metamorphosis, the violence of family systems and gender relations are exposed. These experiences help to shape her feeling of alienation and fragmentation. The social environment does not help her to deal with emotional needs, but rather increases her emotional tension and heightens her sense of isolation from other people.

The results indicated that the patriarchy violence is not only a social problem, but also a psychological phenomenon that affects the subjectivity and self-construction of people.

One of the most significant results of this study has been the identification of a fractured kind of subjectivity as the result of trauma and repression slowly developing over time. Initially, Yeong-hye is the typical wife, daughter and sister. These identities get ever more fluid as the story goes along.

Her rejection of social norms, her refusal to eat and her increasingly non-human modes of being come to the fore as a result of the fragmentation of subjectivity. Yeong-hye doesn't see herself anymore in terms of normal human beings. Rather she starts to visualize herself as a plant-like entity, free from the pain, lust and human conflict.

In the Lacanian theory identity is always unstable and fragmentary. This instability is reflected in Yeong-hye's transformation – her sense of self is slowly fading. Her denial of being human is an attempt to avoid trauma as well as a sign of a breakdown in her psyche. The results indicate that a ruptured subjectivity will result from trauma if it goes unresolved and fails to be committed to the larger story of self.

Body resistance and self erasure

The analysis also shows how through Yeong-hye's body, the expression of trauma and resistance emerges as the primary location. But she can't tell anyone how she feels, so she uses her body as a way of protesting.

Initially, her abstinence from meat is a moral repulsion to violent action. This resistance slowly grows towards rejecting food. Yeong-hye starts to think that she doesn't need to be fed anymore by humans and one day she imagines herself as a tree which receives nourishment only from sunlight. This change is an example of the connection of psychological repression and physical manifestation. The body is a language to communicate traumatic memory. In parallel, the process is also an attempt to wipe oneself out and flee from humanity. The results show an emancipatory and a destructive aspect of the bodily resistance. It attacks systems of oppression, it also helps elicits the loss of personal identity.

Comparative Findings

The findings show that there are some patterns that are connected:

Dreams and symbolic images are the way traumatic memories come to light.

Psychological suppression is manifested by silence, withdrawal and body movements.

3. Patriarchy's violence exacerbates trauma and/or repression.

4. Body is a place of resistance and psychological expression.

5. Fracturing of subjectivity occurs as a result of unresolved trauma.

6. Yeong-hye's change is a resistance to violence and a loss of unity.

Summary of Findings

The results show trauma as a continual psychological reality that affects memory, identity and experience of bodies in *The Vegetarian*. Psychological suppression doesn't solve traumatic anguish, but rather adds to subjectivity disintegration. Han Kang shows us the way unresolved trauma disturbs an ability to live in a stable and coherent self through a series of dreams, silences, bodily resistance and self-erasure. Overall, the novel implies that trauma is

a social phenomenon and that there is a close relationship between trauma and social violence, patriarchal power, and cultural expectations. Thus, fractured subjectivity is a psychological state, and a response to the oppressive structures. There is potential for further research into the topic.

In the present research, the connection between traumatic memory, psychological repression, and a fragmenting (disintegrating) subjectivity in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* is explored. The paper has shown how the concept of trauma through the lenses of trauma theory, psychoanalysis and feminist criticism has and can help to illuminate the fragmentation of identity and bodily self-erasure. But there are some issues that have not been explored thoroughly in the past to which scholars might now wish to contribute.

First, going forward, it would be interesting to do a comparative analysis of *The Vegetarian*, and other modern-day trauma narratives, with each other. Breadth of traumas, memory and identity formation in other cultural and historical contexts can be provided by the texts: Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman*, Han Kang's *Human Acts*.

Secondly, scholars can take further interdisciplinary studies to explore the link between trauma and the body from a psychological, psychiatric and neurological perspective. Such studies may further our understanding about the representation of psychological distress in literary works, such as its physical symptoms and eating disorders, and self-destructive behaviors.

Third, future research can explore the trauma and eco-critical thinking/consciousness. By wanting to become a plant, Yeong-hye questions anthropocentric notions, and questions the link between man, nature and non-human forms of life. A consideration of the novel in the context of eco-critical or post humanism studies may consequently provide helpful reference for analyzing the novel's discussion of identity and embodiment.

Other potential avenues are the study of silence as resistance and as communication. The silence studied in the present work is seen as a symptom of repression but further research on the political, ethical and feminist aspects of silence could be undertaken. Moreover, comparative studies can be used to examine the portrayal of patriarchy violence in the literature of the present day in Asia. This study might be extended to examine a variety of cultural expectations, gender norms and family systems and the psychological trauma and identity fragmentation associated with these in varying social settings.

Last but not least, future studies can study how collective trauma and transgenerational trauma are manifested in Han Kang's works. There's a number of Kang's novels that deal with violence and the history of trauma, so continued research on inherited trauma and collective suffering would be a very useful addition to the current studies on

trauma. The wide range of topics covered in trauma studies will continue to provide ample opportunities for further research on memory, repression, identity, gender and embodiment in *The Vegetarian*.

Conclusion

The aim of this study is to examine the correlation between traumatic memory, psychological repression and fractured subjectivity as found in Han Kang's novel *The Vegetarian*. Using trauma theory, psychoanalytical criticism and feminist approaches, the analysis shows that Yeong-hye's change is not just a sign of psychological imbalance, but a multifaceted reaction to the trauma and systemic violence in her life.

This results shows that the traumatic memory is the main force to influence Yeong-hye's psychological state. These dreams of blood, violence and death are not uncommon, as they are a sign of repressed experiences and feelings that cannot be expressed in words. These traumatic experiences continue to affect her way of thinking, and begin the process of distancing herself from societal norms and relationships.

The study also reveals that psychological suppression is of great importance in this transformation. Yeong-hye doesn't speak her pain, she expresses it by resisting and denying herself. Her decision not to eat meat is a symbolic act of non-violence and as she rejects all food it is a gesture to try to avoid life. The analysis reaffirms Freud's theory that trauma can manifest itself in symbolic and sometimes harmful ways, rather than being extinguished. Another significant finding is how the development of identity is impacted by patriarchy violence. Family members and social institutions control, objectify and coerce Yeong-hye all throughout the novel. All these experiences further add to her psychological separateness and further fracture her subjectivity. The novel proves to be an illustration of the close links between social violence and psychological trauma.

Additionally, this study shows that Yeong-hye's body is the main means of expression for trauma. She identifies herself with the plants, she is resistant to violence and she represents the breakdown of identity. In this metamorphosis, Han Kang calls into question the very notion of human subjectivity, autonomy and bodily existence. Finally, *The Vegetarian* demonstrates how trauma is a persistent and ongoing mental force to change memory, identity and embodiment. The novel conveys that the inability to deal with traumatic experiences affects the self and gives rise to multiple subjectivities and self-positions, which are not socially categorisable. Traumatic memory, repression, and a transformation of the body are interconnected and provide Han Kang with a deep investigation into the psychological effects of violence and the precariousness of the human person.

Based on these results, the study finds that Yeong-hye's experience is a form of rebellion to the oppressive system and at the same time a psychological fragmentation in

tragedy. The Vegetarian is a significant contribution to the current debates on memory, repression, gender and identity in literary studies, not only because of its complexity and the way it represents trauma and subjectivity, but also because of the symbolic nature of the vegetarianism.

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