

## The Different Representation of Suffering in the two versions of *The Vegetarian*

Young-hyun Lee  
*Sungkyunkwan University*

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**Young-Hyun Lee,**

**"The Different Representation of Suffering in the two versions of *The Vegetarian*"**

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**Abstract:** In her article "The Different Representation of Suffering in the two versions of *The Vegetarian*" the author examines how different the representation of suffering in the original and translated versions of *The Vegetarian* and explores the reasons for this difference. The author in particular refers to representative episodes which the translator's strategy distorts even the central concepts of suffering in the original work. Her translated version results in critical misrepresentation of suffering and violence in the original version.

## Young-Hyun LEE

### The Different Representation of Suffering in the two versions of *The Vegetarian*

There is an increasing amount of work being written on suffering, but little of it has been in the field of literature, and even less in comparative literature. Thus, it is worthwhile to do a comparative analysis of suffering in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*—on the original novel written in Korean and its translation into English (which won the 2016 Man Booker International Prize). Suffering functions differently in each, and in the pages that follow, I will explore the sociocultural implications of these differences. It will be necessary to come up with a working definition of "suffering." I will provide this and will work on the assumption that suffering is quite different from pain: the latter is more related with the body, whereas the former is tied intimately with the spirit. In the discussions that follow, I will show that pain and suffering are not synonymous. Cultural context is an important element in construing suffering, and people experience suffering differently, depending on where they are and when they are. The contexts for the English and Korean versions of *The Vegetarian* clearly differ, and much of the original novel is simply absent in the translation. This paper will explore how dissimilar the representations of suffering are in the two versions of *The Vegetarian* and will argue that the two texts express fundamentally different cultural ideas about the acceptable limits of pain and endurance—indeed about the very definition of suffering.

There is obviously an important relationship between pain and suffering, but they are not the same thing. Physical pain is, according to the commonly quoted definition of The International Association for the Study of Pain "an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage. . . Each individual learns the application of the word through experiences related to injury in early life" (Merskey 210). Suffering occurs, on the other hand, "when an impending destruction of the person is perceived; it continues until the threat of disintegration has passed or until the integrity of the person can be restored in some other manner" (Cassell 32).<sup>1</sup> Precisely how and to what degree this disintegration occurs is always culturally specific.

There are also strong connections between illness and suffering. Australian medical doctor Frank Brennan maintains that "the person with a serious illness may experience all manner of suffering—physical, emotional, spiritual. Often those dimensions are interconnected. Indeed, to see them in strict isolation is to miss the point of this interconnectedness" (262). This statement can be rightly expanded to include the suffering of others and restated as follows: one's suffering, whether it is physical, emotional or spiritual, is interconnected with the suffering of other people. As far as the suffering of others is concerned, he says that "one of our defining challenges as humans is our response to the suffering of others" (261). Yeong-hye, the protagonist of *The Vegetarian* recognizes herself as both the victim of violence and its perpetrator. This recognition can be taken as one example of her response to the suffering of others. She is a victim when the family dog is killed and her family and neighbors have a dog-meat feast, regardless of her intention. On the other hand, the experience turns out to be so traumatic as to cost her to lose her own life in the end. The first change that her recognition of herself as a victim and perpetrator of violence caused in her life is to stop eating meat.

In many ways, meat is traumatic in *The Vegetarian*. The meat-eating theme symbolizes the violence that Korean patriarchal society directs at Yeong-hye. She stops eating meat because she doesn't want to participate in the suffering that the meat production system maintains. This abstention obviously is the same in both versions of the book, but the meat cultures of Korean and English-speaking Western constituencies (to which the translation is pitched) are obviously different. Thanksgiving dinner in the US has turkey as the main dish; Chuseok (Korean Thanksgiving) has galbi (sautéed beef ribs). Culinary diversity is big in the West; not so much so in Korea. Vegetarians are everywhere in San Francisco; not so in Seoul. Young-hye's story is exotic in the West; not so in Korea. A vegetarian in Korea will easily believe her suffering; a vegetarian in Vancouver might find it a bit more unbelievable.

It would be very wrong to assume, however, that all people experience pain and suffering in the same ways within a given culture. Joseph Amato, in *Victims and Values*, explains that "in traditional cultures a woman is expected to suffer well in matters of sexuality, reproduction, and child rearing, yet she is exempted from having to suffer other types of pains, like those resulting from a blow, with equal dignity" (15). This is certainly true of Korean culture. In such an androcentric society as presented in *The Vegetarian*, violence is very present. The violence is present in both the English and the Korean

<sup>1</sup> Elaine Scarry discusses pain in a similar fashion: "Intense pain is . . . language-destroying: as the content of one's world disintegrates, so the content of one's language disintegrates; as the self disintegrates, so that which would express and project the self is robbed of its source and its subject" (35).

versions of the novel. Yeong-hye's father and husband are both violent toward her. This kind of violence traditionally was not regarded as abnormal or strange in Korea, but things are changing. Contemporary Koreans take her father's beating as unacceptable. Yeong-hye's husband is also violent. His violence is sexual, and she refuses his demand, as he explains in the first person, by putting "up a surprisingly strong resistance. . . . Once that had happened, she lay there in the dark staring up at the ceiling, her face blank, as though she were a 'comfort woman' dragged in against her will, and I was the Japanese soldier demanding her services. As soon as I finished, she rolled over and buried her face in the quilt. I went to have a shower" (Han 38, translated version). This scene, which is narrated by Yeong-hye's husband, reveals how inconsiderate, egocentric, and even violent the husband is, even in his most private relations with his wife. Comfort women (sexual slaves of Japanese soldiers) are one of the most unhappy and tragic legacies of Korean history. The representations of Yeong-hye as a comfort woman dragged in against her will in both the original and translated versions reflect the historical realities of postwar Korea and reveal how painful her situation is, whether it is called pain or suffering.

Yeong-hye's suffering cannot be explained without mentioning Confucianism, which is historically bound up with Korean culture. Martina Deuchler, has explained that within Confucian thinking, "education for women," especially, "was indoctrination. Its purpose was to instill in women, through the weight of China's classic literature, the ideals of a male-oriented society and to motivate them for the tasks of married life. Indeed, the pattern of behavior developed by the Confucians had the rigidity of a stereotype which did not allow for individual variations, so that Confucian society acclaimed particular women not for their individuality, but for the degree of perfection with which they were able to mimic the stereotype" (258). Yeong-hye is a woman expressing herself in a Confucian culture. In both versions of the novel, her husband and her family, especially her father, commit violence towards her and do not accept her decision to stop eating meat or to become a vegetarian. They cannot condone her different way of eating.

Yeong-hye's declaration of vegetarianism, which is the main reason of her suffering, is taken as being against the social norm: conformity and harmony are more important than individual achievement or ingenuity. Hence, the saying runs as follows in Korea: "모난 돌이 정 맞는다" (A cornered stone meets the mason's chisel). Distinguished professor of social psychology Richard E. Nisbett at the University of Michigan explains that:

It isn't that Asians feel badly about their own attributes. Rather, there is no strong cultural obligation to feel that they are special or unusually talented. The goal for the self in relation to society is not so much to establish superiority or uniqueness, but to achieve harmony within a network of supportive social relationships and to play one's part in achieving collective ends. These goals require a certain amount of self-criticism—the opposite of tooting one's own horn. If I am to fit in with the group, I must root out those aspects of myself that annoy others or make their tasks more difficult. In contrast to the Asian practice of teaching children to blend harmoniously with others, some American children go to schools in which each child gets to be a "VIP" for a day. (Nisbett 54-55)

Yeong-hye's decision to be a vegetarian is almost taken as her dissociation from society because it is different from other people's way of living.

Dis-integrated from the society surrounding her, Yeong-hye is in a helpless state because of the violence of her husband and father. The failure of people around her to recognize her suffering is a failure to recognize her very being. Indeed, as her brother-in-law rightly notes, "whether human, animal or plant, she could not be called a 'person'" (95). Jeff Malpas has poignantly observed that "while suffering may threaten the integrity of the self, the recognition of suffering is also a recognition of the being of others" (2). Yeong-hye simply doesn't exist as a person in the society presented in the novel. The psychological toll here is heavy, but this toll is represented differently in the two versions of the novel. The sociological and temporal elements, in addition to the physical pain caused by this violence, shows the sociocultural context, which develops differently in the original and translated versions respectively.

Each culture has its own acceptable limits of pain and endurance: the two versions of *The Vegetarian* express fundamentally different cultural ideas about these limits. Moreover, whether an event is traumatic or not in a society depends on its culture. The central event in the Korean version of the three-part novel is the traumatic experience for Yeong-hye of the dog-killing and subsequent feast. The representation of this incident in the translated version reads like any ordinary daily event.<sup>2</sup> This novel

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<sup>2</sup> Korea, just a half century ago, was a poor country suffering from shortage of materials including food. Eating a beef or pork dish was a rare experience to ordinary Koreans at that time. Except for dog meat, there was nothing

revolves around Yeong-hye's declaration of vegetarianism and the ensuing responses. The readers, though, have to depend on her husband's perspective in the first part, "The Vegetarian"; on her brother-in-law's in the second part, "Mongolian Mark"; and on her elder sister In-hye's in the third part, "Flaming Trees." It is through Yeong-hye's dreams and her recollections that readers can grasp her situation and experience more directly. The dog-soup feast in her neighborhood is a traumatic event also in the sense that the dog has been raised by her own family and had been known to be clever to the neighbors until it bit her in the leg. After the incident, Yeong-hye falls into a state in which she is not able to understand correctly the characteristic and the impact of her experience, which explains how traumatic the event was.

Trauma denotes "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (Caruth 11). Its symptoms include what Freud called "'the positive symptoms' (flashbacks and hallucinations) and the 'negative symptoms' (numbing, amnesia, and avoidance of triggering stimuli)" (Caruth 130). In the translated version of *The Vegetarian*, we have descriptions that are incommensurate with the traumatic characteristic of the event. These descriptions effectively turn the experience into an ordinary daily event. Given the definition of trauma, the killing of the dog functions as the chief cause of Yeong-hye's trauma. The following dream, which is also included in the translation, reveals how Yeong-hye reacts as she witnesses the dog's killing:

. . . the dog that sank its teeth into my leg is chained up to Father's motorcycle. With its singed tail bandaged to my calf wound, a traditional remedy Mother insisted on, I go out and stand at the main gate. I am nine years old, and the summer heat is stifling. The sun has gone down, and still the sweat is running off me. The dog, too, is panting, its red tongue lolling. A white, handsome-looking dog, bigger even than me. Up until it bit the big man's daughter, everyone in the village always thought it could do no wrong. (Han 48-9, translated version).

This scene depicts how the dog is tied to her father's motorcycle and killed and how Yeong-hye responds to the situation, which is a terrible experience for a nine-year-old girl. The little girl remembers the stiflingly hot summer day on which "the sun has gone down, and still the sweat is running off me," according to Smith's translation (48). References to the sun are not in the source text. Smith's explanation of why Yeong-hye sweats profusely makes the account less abhorrent and more plausible to the Western readership. The difference between the two texts is significant: Smith's version posits the sun as the cause of the sweat, whereas the source text posits the trauma as the effect of the event itself. The dog's death is traumatic for Yeong-hye, in the sense that it is, to cite trauma theorist Cathy Caruth, "experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (4). We see this represented in the original version of *The Vegetarian*.

The traumatic dog death scene and the dog-meat feast in her neighborhood are less disturbing in the translated version than in the original one:

While Father ties the dog to the tree and scorches it with a lamp, he says it isn't to be flogged. He says he heard somewhere that driving a dog to keep running until the point of death is considered a milder punishment. The motorcycle engine starts, and Father begins to drive in a circle. The dog runs along behind. Two laps, three laps, they circle around. Without moving a muscle I stand just inside the gate watching Whitey, eyes rolling and gasping for breath, gradually exhaust himself. Every time his gleaming eyes meet my own I glare even more fiercely. Bad dog, you'd bite me? (Han 49, translated version)

What is problematic in the Smith's translation in the paragraph quoted above is the second sentence: "he heard somewhere that driving a dog to keep running until the point of death is considered a milder punishment." The source text reads as follows: "달리다 죽은 개가 더 부드럽다는 말을 어디선가 들었대" (Han 52, Korean original). This can be literally translated into English as follows: "Father heard somewhere that dog-meat turns tender when one drives a dog to keep running until the point of death." This idea suggests that the dog meat, when the dog is killed in this way, has a much more tender texture than when it gets killed by being flogged, which was customarily practiced in times of poverty. The translator, though, had the implied brutality in the source text sound less cruel and changed its meaning by translating it as follows: "driving a dog to keep running until the point of death is considered a milder punishment" (Han 49, translated version) and this is different from the original text. The reason why

much which was available to the middle class in those days, as far as meat was concerned. Even chicken dishes were served only for important guests on special occasions in Korea.

this event becomes traumatic to Yeong-hye is that the cause, process, and results of the dog's killing are simply horrible and are virtually unmentionable to the nine-year-old. If the translator reduces or eliminates the traumatic violence from the incident, the meaning will deviate from the intention of the original version.

*The Vegetarian* reveals various kinds of violence against human beings and animals, and the implications for gender here are manifold. Feminist theorist Carol J. Adams has written extensively on the topic of meat as it relates with sexism. Adams writes that "through the adoption of vegetarianism women simultaneously reject a warring world and dependence on men" (171). Through vegetarianism, they want to create a world without violence. Being a vegetarian means that women having been repressed in a patriarchal society choose subjectively to realize self-awareness. Adams continues by saying that "if the body becomes a special focus for women's struggle for freedom then what is ingested is a logical initial locus for announcing one's independence. Refusing the male order in food, women practiced the theory of feminism through their bodies and their choice of vegetarianism" (213). Yeong-hye's vegetarianism is clearly linked to the ideals of feminism, and *The Vegetarian* is all about renouncing gender and species violence and the suffering these produce. Indeed, since, as Adams explains, "the theme of vegetarianism . . . [is the] rejection of male control and violence" (171), it is clear that this is a novel that in both its original and translated forms challenge patriarchy at the gut level, through the stomach. Analyzing *The Vegetarian* through a feminist lens, therefore, is profoundly productive.

Ecofeminism argues that patriarchal society has led to a harmful split between nature and culture. Ecofeminism, which links feminism with ecology, is just one example of perspectives that recognize Yeong-hye as one of the victims of patriarchy. Perpetrators of violence are sometimes not apparent in Smith's version. In the source text, when Yeong-hye sees someone cutting things with a knife on a cutting board, she doesn't like it. In the translated version, this dislike is registered quite differently. The source text runs as follows: "난, 누군가가 도마에 칼질을 하는 걸 보면 무서웠어. 그게 언니라 해도, 아니, 엄마라 해도. 왠지 설명 못해. 그냥 못 견디게 싫은 느낌이라고밖엔. 그래서 오히려 그 사람들한테 다정하게 굴곤 했지. 그렇다고 어제 꿈에 죽거나 죽인 사람이 얼마나 언니였다는 건 아니야" (Han 37). This translates literally as follows: "when Yeong-hye sees someone cutting things with a knife on a cutting board, she doesn't like it. It is the same whether it is my sister or my mother. I cannot explain why though. I just don't like it. So I used to be kind to them. That does not mean that the person who died or whom I killed is my mother or sister." Smith translates the scene as follows: "Intolerable loathing, so long suppressed. Loathing I've always tried to mask with affection. But now the mask is coming off. That shuddering, sordid, gruesome, brutal feeling. Nothing else remains. Murderer or murdered, experience too vivid to not be real. Determined, disillusioned. Lukewarm, like slightly cooled blood" (Han 36, translated version). Han, thus, shows that Yeong-hye's dread is not just toward male characters. The focus is on the person who perpetrates violence, whether it is a woman or a man. Yet, while gender is not involved in how Yeong-hye interprets violence on a visceral level, clearly, as I have shown, gender is central to the *performance* of violence—and, for the readers, central to how we *interpret* violence is culture.

Different interpretations of events originate from different intellectual traditions, as Nisbett argues in *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently. . . And Why*. One of the examples he uses to elucidate the reason for different understandings is that Asians, when acquiring languages, learn verbs first, whereas Westerners learn nouns first. According to his surveys and studies:

We might expect, based on the historical evidence for cognitive differences and our theory about the social origins of them, that contemporary Westerners would (a) have a greater tendency to categorize objects than would Easterners; (b) find it easier to learn new categories by applying rules about properties to particular cases; and (c) make more inductive use of categories, that is, generalize from particular instances of a category to other instances or to the category as a whole. We might also expect that Easterners, given their convictions about the potential relevance of every fact to every other fact, would organize the world more in terms of perceived relationships and similarities than would Westerners. (139-40)

Even on the most basic level of language and syntax, there are substantial differences between Korean and English, and these bear importantly on the translated text. According to Nisbett, some of the mistranslations can be attributed to different ways of syntactic thinking.

One cause of mistranslation, therefore, is found in the effects of the different syntax of Korean and English and in the degree of directness in conversation and narrative strategy of each language. English is, in some ways, more direct than Korean. In the simplest of terms, the subject is muffled in Korean. English sentences foreground the subject, whereas Korean sentences foreground the situational context of what they want to say (for example adverbial phrases, rather than the agent). Without mentioning

who the agent is, it is perfectly possible to convey meaning in Korean, whereas almost any sentence without a subject is ungrammatical and does not make any sense in English. The translator often does not catch who the agent is. For instance, the source text describing the work ethic of Young-hye's husband reads as follows: "그녀의 수고를 덜어줄 사람이 자신뿐이라는 것을 그는 알고 있었다" (Han 77). The literal translation of this would be as follows: "Her husband knew that he was the only one who could save her some trouble" (my translation); Smith, however, translates it thus: "He knew that this was the only time of the week she would allow herself a bit of a break" (Han 70, translated version). Smith's translation clearly reveals a confusion about the subject of the sentence, and the result is nonsense. A more serious mistranslation is found in the next sentence: "한마디 불평도 없이 안팎의 살림을 혼자 해내는 아내가 고맙기도 했다" (Han 77, Korean original), which translates literally as follows: "I was thankful to my wife who makes a living as well as does housework alone without a word of complaint" (my translation). Smith's translation reads: "She was even grateful that he let her take on so much responsibility, running a business as well as a household, without so much as a word of complaint" (Han 70, translated version). The translator does not understand the agent of the sentence when the specified subject in the source text is missing, but the subject is perfectly understood in Korean. Her suffering and her husband's feeling toward her disappear in Smith's translation.

Sometimes Koreans may sound too passive and humble to Westerners, because they have to use proper terms and expressions, depending on their social standing. Korea is a patriarchal and hierarchical society, one heavily influenced by Confucian thinking. Such an aspect of Korean culture that bears relevantly on the topic here has to do with kinship. While one doesn't want to seem uncharitable, there are, nevertheless, clear mistranslations in Smith's version of the novel that need to be addressed. By misinterpreting the relationships of the leading characters, Smith causes confusion in understanding suggested and hidden meanings among the characters:

At nine o'clock the next evening I visited the ward. Yeong-ho greeted me with a smile.

'You must be tired, no?' he said.

'How are the children?'

'Ji-woo's dad's staying with them today.'

If only my colleagues had decided to go for drinks after work, I would have had the perfect excuse to avoid the ward for another two hours. But it was Monday, so there was no chance of any such reprieve.

"How's my wife been?" (Han 52, translated version)

The cause of confusion in this dialogue is between "처형" (sister-in-law) and "처남" (brother-in-law). This scene shows the dialogue between In-hye (Yeong-hye's sister) and Yeong-hye's husband. Though In-hye has only one son, Ji-woo, Smith used the plural forms: "the children" and "them." The readers will be confused in figuring out who "them" and "the children" are. Even though the translator confuses such kinship nouns, she could have made it right, if she understood the situational context. The translator did not grasp the relationship of characters, the flow of the story, or the context of specific situation in many episodes.

Because of the translator's failure to understand the cultural context, In-hye's adaptive mechanism and disintegration process is misrepresented in the English translation. In-hye as a young girl is the epitome of the abused child in the sense that she seeks to fulfill what is required of her and strives desperately to curry favor with her father. Later in her life, she has an overly idealized impression of her husband, but, like the fractured image she has of herself, it is an ambivalent one, the product of her abuse as a child. Because the image of her father is superimposed on that of her husband in her pain, she cannot let her guard down against even her husband. The Korean original (and my literal translation) read as follows:

그를 사랑한다는 확신이 그녀에게는 없었다. 그것을 부지중에 알면서 그녀는 그와 결혼했다. 혹 그녀에게는 자신을 좀더 위로 끌어올려줄 무언가가 필요했던 건 아닐까. 비록 그가 하는 일은 경제적 보탬이 되지 않았지만, 교육자와 의사가 대부분인 그의 집안 분위기를 그녀는 좋아했다. 그의 말투, 그의 취향, 그의 미각과 잠자리에 자신을 맞추기 위해 그녀는 노력했다. 처음의 얼마 동안은 여느 부부들처럼 그와 크고작은 언쟁을 하기도 했지만, 오래 지나지 않아 체념할 수 있는 것들은 체념하게 되었다. 그러나 그것이 정말 그를 위한 것이었을까. 함께 살았던 팔년 동안, 그가 그녀를 좌절시킨 만큼 그녀 역시 그를 좌절시켰던 것은 아닐까. (Han 193, Korean original)

[She was not convinced that she loved him. Knowing her feeling toward him in advance, she married him. Maybe she needed something to pull her up. Although he did not make any economic contributions, she liked

the thought that he is from a well-reputed family in our society. Most of his family were educators, doctors, and the like. She tried to fit herself into his way of talking, his taste, and his way of making love. For some time during the early stage of marriage, like many couples, he had a big and small dispute with her, but after a while she resigned herself as much as she can. But was it really for him? Maybe she has frustrated him as well as he has frustrated her for the past eight years. (my translation)]

It is worth considering why Smith deleted this paragraph. In-hye admits to having married her husband in the hope of "pulling herself up" in Korean hierarchical society, without any conviction of loving him. After marriage, she just tried to fit herself into his way of life. All of this shows how stable and safe she wants to be. The translator perhaps interpreted this part as being inconsistent with In-hye's character. Culturally speaking, her way of life or her adaptive defense mechanism, though, is neither strange nor peculiar in her own society, where "maintaining harmonious social relations is likely to take precedence over achieving personal success" (Nisbett 49). The reason why the missing paragraph is essential in conveying the main idea of the source text is revealed in the following excerpt, which shows how painful and agonizing In-hye's life has been, contrary to her expectations. The violence of her husband (who is irresponsible economically and ethically) against her is reflected in her recollection of the past:

When he arrived back at the house early one morning, sneaking in like a thief after several days away, got into bed and tried to put his arms around her, she pushed him away.

"I'm tired . . . I said I'm tired."

"Just put up with it for a minute," he said.

She remembered how it had been. Those words had run through her semi-conscious mind again and again. Still half asleep, she'd managed to get through it by thinking to herself that it was all right, it would just be this one time, it would be over soon, she could put up with it. The pain and shame had been washed away by the deep, exhausted sleep she slipped into immediately afterward. And yet later, at the breakfast table, she would all of a sudden find herself wanting to stab herself in the eyes with her chopsticks, or pour the boiling water from the kettle over her head. (Han 169, translated version)

What American psychiatrist Judith Lewis Herman terms "contradictory identities" (106) clearly sit uncomfortably in In-hye. The "debased and an exalted self" (106) seem irreconcilable. Herman argues that "in the abusive environment, moderation and tolerance are unknown. Rather the victim's self-representations remain rigid, exaggerated, and split. In the most extreme situations, these disparate self-representations form the nidus of dissociated alter personalities" (106). Herman's statement is proven in the third part of the novel, which is narrated in the perspective of In-hye. In-hye always tries to act sincerely and nicely to control the situation. She responds calmly to the violence perpetrated by her father or her husband and does not reveal her inner agitation. In reality, however, she wants "to stab herself in the eyes with her chopsticks, or pour the boiling water from the kettle over her head." The domestic violence she has experienced at the hands of men is directed inward here. This type of domestic violence against women is often inter-generational, though the victims try to endure it for the children.

In-hye, who has suffered severe pain in this patriarchal society of Korea, is concerned about the hereditary characteristic of patriarchy in the source text, but this is not present in the translated version. Patriarchy clearly covers entire structures of domination and exploitation that affect women's position in society (Le Play). Though In-hye endures all this hardship, the realization that the violence could be passed down to her son makes her more sorrowful. Such a perception, however, is absent in the translated version: "Once her husband had fallen asleep, the bedroom was still and silent again. She picked up [her son] Ji-woo, who had been sleeping on his side, and put him back down so that he was lying on his back, seeing as she did so how pitiful they must appear, mother and child faintly outlined in the darkness" (Han 169, translated version). The source text mentions the resemblance between her husband and his son to imply In-hye's fear and concern about the hereditary characteristic of patriarchy. What she finds out here looking at her husband and her son is that her son pitifully looks like his father. The translator, by putting the mother in the place of father, deleted the sorrow In-hye felt over her son and her husband. The thought that the violence would not stop here and be passed down to the next generation plagues In-hye. It is clear here and in the other instances I have discussed that the source text and the translation express different ideas about pain and suffering. I have explored how dissimilar the representations of suffering are in the two versions of *The Vegetarian* and have shown that the difference between the suffering in the source text and the translation are owing to cultural differences in the very definition of suffering.

Pain and suffering are not the same, as many scholars have noted, but they are linked. So too is traumatic deeply imbricated with suffering. For Yeong-hye, meat represents trauma and suffering. Yet, each of these terms are culturally specific. Yeong-hye's declaration of vegetarianism is the cause of her suffering, and it goes against the country's social norms: conformity and harmony are more important than individual achievement or ingenuity. Dis-integrated from the society surrounding her, Yeong-hye is in a helpless state because of the violence of her husband and father. The failure of people around her to recognize her suffering is a failure to recognize her very being. The central event in the Korean version of the three-part novel is a traumatic experience to Yeong-hye—her family dog is brutally killed, and her family and neighbors feast on the dog-meat and its soup when she is nine. The traumatic dog death scene and the dog-meat feast in her neighborhood is less disturbing in the translated version than in the original one. *The Vegetarian*, moreover, reveals various kinds of violence against human beings and animals, and the implications for gender here are many. Yeong-hye's vegetarianism is clearly linked to the ideals of feminism, and *The Vegetarian* is all about renouncing gender-based and interspecies violence and the suffering these produce. Perpetrators of violence are sometimes not apparent in Smith's version, whereas Han tries to represent them. Different interpretations sometimes originate from different intellectual traditions. Another cause of mistranslation is found in the degree of directness in conversation and narrative strategy. English is in some ways more direct than Korean. By misinterpreting the relationships of the leading characters, Smith causes confusion in meaning. In-hye, who has suffered severe pain in this patriarchal society of Korea, is concerned about the hereditary characteristic of patriarchy in the source text, but this is eliminated in the translated version. The different representations of suffering in the two versions of the novel express fundamentally distinctive cultural ideas about the acceptable limits of pain and endurance, and knowing about these can contribute to the development of better communication between Asian and Western cultures.

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### Author Profile:

Dr. Young-hyun Lee's current research is within ecocriticism and the environmental humanities. Lee has published and lectured on issues of concern such as the controversies surrounding Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and GM foods, food ethics, and translation studies. Her publications of translated books include *Do You Know the* "

*Comfort Women* "of the Imperial Japanese Military?" (2017), and *나의 첫여름* (*My First Summer in Sierra*), which Lee cotranslated with Won-Chung Kim in 2008. Lee currently holds a one-year research award from the National Research Foundation of Korea at Kangwon University and teaches translation studies and English prose as a lecturer at Sungkyunkwan University in Seoul. Email: <[artemisid@naver.com](mailto:artemisid@naver.com)>