



Queerness and the Female Body in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*: Metamorphosis, Refusal, and the Politics of Unbecoming

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Abstract

This paper examines Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* through the lens of queer theory to explore how Yeong-hye's refusal to eat meat operates as a layered site of resistance against normative structures of gender, kinship, and consumption. Drawing on theoretical registers from Lee Edelman's *No Future*, Jack Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure*, Elspeth Probyn's "Eating Queerly", Carol J. Adams's feminist-vegetarian theory, and Derrida's concept of carnophallogocentrism, the paper argues that Yeong-hye's transformation from passive wife to vegetal being embodies a queer project of unbecoming. By tracing her trajectory across four interlinked domains—food refusal, bodily estrangement, the breakdown of domestic and familial order, and her ultimate vegetal metamorphosis—this study shows how her silence and withdrawal enact an epistemic and ontological crisis that disrupts patriarchal and anthropocentric logics. The paper situates Yeong-hye's subjectivity as what Magdalena Zolkos calls a "repudiative" figure, who cannot be reintegrated by art, family, or medicine. Rather than read Yeong-hye as a symbol of passive victimhood, the paper proposes her metamorphosis as a radical critique of reproductive futurism and normative intelligibility. This refusal of narrative closure positions *The Vegetarian* as a potent site for interrogating how queerness resists domestication through negation, opacity, and the politics of self-erasure.

Keywords: carnophallogocentrism; epistemic refusal; metamorphosis; queer negativity; vegetarianism