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## A Refusal of Consumption and an Ethics of Incorporation in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*

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*Due to the success of Deborah Smith's English translation of Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*, the effects of her translation became a focus for scholarships surrounding the novel. Some celebrate how the translation of her works have allowed Korean culture and history to be made known globally. Some have criticized the many linguistic inaccuracies of Smith's translation of *The Vegetarian*. However, *The Vegetarian* simultaneously participates and resists consumption. Through an examination of the publishing and translation history of the novel, this paper proposes a criticism of the publishing industry, in the way it celebrates and participates in the violence of consumption. Meanwhile the novel's resistance to consumption is framed through the tension between incorporation and consumption, in which an ethics of incorporation arises. Incorporation implies embodiment of the body eaten by the body eating, while consumption suggests the destruction of one for the other. Yeong-hye, the main character of the novel, demonstrates a disavowal of participating in the violence inherent to consumption through her radical vegetarianism, and instead poses an ethics of incorporation with the animal Other. Through the literary analysis of the novel, this paper will demonstrate how the narrative content of the book presents a way to imagine an ethics of incorporation and refusal of violent consumption in publishing and translation practices rather than reproducing the same violence.*

Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* is a novel published in 2007 about Yeong-hye, a typical and simple Korean housewife, gradually undergoing metamorphosis set in motion by her sudden vegetarianism. The novel is organized into three parts, "The Vegetarian," "Mongolian Mark," and "Flaming Trees,"

each narrated respectively through Mr. Cheong, her husband, the unnamed brother-in-law, and In-hye, her sister, observing Yeong-hye's transformation. The story begins with Yeong-hye becoming vegetarian because of a dream, despite strong opposition from her family and her husband, and her gradually escalating transformation by the end of the novel into something vegetal as she refuses to eat anything at all while institutionalized. Through Yeong-hye's radical vegetarianism, the novel puts forth an ethics of refusal as a response to the quotidian violence of consumption. It proposes incorporation of the Other, decentering the subject, instead of consumption, in which the Other is destroyed for the sake of the human subject, and imagines vegetarianism as a nonviolent mode of being and a refusal to participate in violence to its extreme. Yeong-hye's actions provide a critique of subjectivity based on distinction and identifiability and suggests that the human is always already not human. As the novel unfolds, she becomes more and more imperceptible and unidentifiable as a human subject.

While the narrative poses the refusal to eat and the refusal to be eaten as a mode of resistance, Deborah Smith's 2015 English translation of *The Vegetarian* made the book readily available and palatable, that is, consumable, edible, as a commodity object to the Anglophone audience. The book entered the global literary market, while the story and its ethical position simultaneously resists global capitalist consumption of South Korean cultural production.<sup>1</sup> The translation was published by Portobello Books during a time when Korean novels were starting to garner more interest. In the U.K., Smith's translation of *The Vegetarian* won the Man Booker International Prize in 2016, becoming the first Korean novel to win. Emmanuel Roman, CEO of Man Group, commented in a press release announcing the novel's win: "The sales of Korean books have risen from only 88 copies in 2001 to 10,191 in 2015, a reflection of the South Korea Market Focus at London Book Fair in 2014. This paper examines these two layers of the novel. The ethics present within the inner contents of the novel pose a contradiction and a response to the problems from the outer layer, the publication and translation history, of the book.

By refusing to eat meat, Yeong-hye enacts a becoming-vegetal

1 I make the distinction of South Korea, as opposed to Korea, to make aware of the two countries' (North and South's) emergence as nation-states as a result of U.S. interventionist politics and imperialism during the Cold War. It is vital to keep that particular history in mind when thinking about North/South Korea as a product of U.S. imperialism.

that rejects consuming the animal Other and instead incorporates herself with it, becoming further enmeshed and entangled. “Incorporate” from the Latin *incorporāt*, meaning “to embody, include”, is a transitive verb meaning “to combine or unite into one body or uniform substance; to mix or blend thoroughly together.”<sup>2</sup> “Consume” from the Latin *consumere* means “to destroy, wear away, to kill” and is a transitive verb for “to swallow up in destruction,” “to eat or drink,” or “to read (literature), watch (film) esp. voraciously, to absorb (culture, art, etc.).”<sup>3</sup> To place these two words within the context of eating prompts one to think about the interaction between the body eating and the body eaten. Incorporation allows for the body eaten and the body eating to become entangled, while consumption destroys and kills the body eaten for the body eating. Yeong-hye destabilizes that distinction between subject and object, active and passive, in her incorporation of the animal Other. Furthermore, incorporation/consumption can become a mode through which one can think about other relations and encounters with beings (not just eating). How is a body (of literature, animals, culture, women) prepared for consumption? How does one resist against being consumed *and* consuming others? What creates the conditions for incorporation to be possible?

The publishing industry participates in the violence inherent to consumption and examining the publishing history of *The Vegetarian* specifically unravels the ways in which this violence that is inherent to consumption manifests and complicates itself. On the other hand, the narrative within the novel, as explored through Yeong-hye’s character, presents a radical disavowal of participating in the violence of consumption. Yeong-hye lays bare an ethics that refuses consumption, urging us to reject consumption and transform the consuming relationship between translator and Oriental text, reader and text. First, the paper will discuss the outer layer of the novel, the publishing history of *The Vegetarian*, and how the publishing industry produces a consuming relationship between the translator and the text. Next, it will explore the inner layer of the novel itself and how

2 “incorporate, v.”. OED Online. March 2022. Oxford University Press. <https://www-oed-com.ccl.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/93962?rskey=AEVeUG&result=3&isAdvanced=false> (accessed March 16, 2022).’

3 “consume, v.1”. OED Online. March 2022. Oxford University Press. <https://www-oed-com.ccl.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/39973?rskey=Gaa8ZK&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed March 16, 2022).

the character Yeong-hye demonstrates a resistance against consumption.

### **A brief publishing history of *The Vegetarian***

Tracing the publishing history of *The Vegetarian* helps reveal the publishing industry and acts of translations as not isolated, but embedded within a historical and political context. This examination will reveal that the publishing industry encourages consuming the Oriental other in the form of translated literary works. In this case, translation becomes (among other things), a post-colonial tool for perpetuating Western hegemony, in which other foreign cultures' assimilation into a global market is a point of unquestioned celebration. The profitability of South Korean cultural production also legitimizes South Korea as a valuable and recognizable subject in the global market. Because of the increasing profitability and the economic benefit cultural production yields, Republic of Korea (ROK) also actively promotes dissemination of translated Korean texts through government funded programs such as the Literature Translation Institute (LTI). This poses a complication to the simple trajectory of the West consuming the East and points to a cyclical situation wherein the consumed East self-promotes itself as marketable and consumable. Simultaneously, when examined closely into the narrative within *The Vegetarian*, we see a refusal to participate in consumption through Yeong-hye's character. This tension of a consumed literary text with an anti-consumption ethics generates a way to imagine an ethical approach to translation practices.

To begin this brief publishing history of *The Vegetarian*, the three parts of the novel in Korean were initially published separately and serially as short stories in three different South Korean literary journals from summer of 2004 to winter of 2005. They were later collected and published as a single novel in 2007 by Changbi Publishers. Then Deborah Smith translated *The Vegetarian* into English, and it was published in 2015 by Portobello. Just as Emmanuel Roman had stated in the press release announcing *The Vegetarian's* winning the Man Booker, the 2014 London Book Fair was focused on Korean writers. At this event, Deborah Smith attended and spoke as one of the few Korean-to-English translators in the U.K. This played a significant role in Smith's professional career as it led to her meeting the editor of Portobello/Granta which led to her book deal in translating *The Vegetarian*.<sup>4</sup> Deborah Smith

4 Deborah Smith, "Allie Park interviews translator Deborah Smith (*The Vegetarian*)," interview by Allie Park, *Korean Literature in Translation*, 15 June 2014, <http://www.ktlit.com/allie-park-interviews-translator-deborah-smith-the-vegetarian/>.

translated it in 2015 after having learned Korean for only about six years.<sup>5</sup> In 2016, Deborah Smith's translation of *The Vegetarian* won the Man Booker International Prize, splitting the prize money of £50,000 between translator and author. It is pertinent to think about the timeline of these events because it informs the context of the publishing industry that made the publication of an English translation of *The Vegetarian* possible. Many South Korean scholars and critics celebrate the novel's winning the Man Booker International Prize as a momentous feat in which South Korean literature was globally recognized in the Anglophone literary market. Global recognition of South Korea as a culture producing academically noteworthy literature is politically charged. Through global consumption, South Korea is recognized and legitimized.

Deborah Smith's approach to translation is also crucial in contextualizing the material history of the novel. She studied Korean at the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London. In an interview with Allie Park from *Korean Literature in Translation (KTLIT)*, Smith explained that what motivated her to learn Korean was not the people nor an interest in Korean culture, but from discovering Korea as an untapped market with a potential for profit in translation. In the interview, Smith tells Park, "Part of the reason I chose Korean as that language was that I suspected it would provide certain opportunities for getting work as a translator, given the almost complete dearth of Korean literature available in English, and the fact that I knew Korea was a highly-developed, modern country with—presumably—a flourishing publishing industry."<sup>6</sup> What sets the stage, or the dining table, for *The Vegetarian* to be published and consumed in English are the neoliberal practices of the publishing industry, like the presumed limited competition for finding work as a Korean-to-English translator, the appetizing allure of a modernized but non-Western foreign country, and the pressure to make oneself marketable as a translator. By making Korean literature available and consumable to the Anglophone, and therefore global, audience, South Korea's cultural product becomes marketable and profitable. Smith states later in the interview, "Again, as I had no prior connection with, or investment in, Korea or Korean culture, it wasn't so much an ambition to promote Korean literature overseas as the sense that there was a (relatively) untapped niche that I

5 Jiayang Fan, "Han Kang and The Complexity of Translation," *The New Yorker*, 8 January 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/01/15/han-kang-and-the-complexity-of-translation>.

6 Smith, "Allie Park interviews translator Deborah Smith (*The Vegetarian*)."

could exploit to my advantage!”<sup>7</sup> Her relationship to the language is one that is motivated by economic gain in a neoliberal economy that rewards and demands individuality and one’s marketable identity as a “London Koreanist.”<sup>8</sup> Smith’s approach to language and translation is one that is stripped of the material conditions of Korean people and instead one that participates in neocolonial relations with the Oriental Other. The publishing industry produces translators like Smith, encouraging and necessitating a parasitic, capitalist relationship between a dominant language and the profitable and marketable foreign Other. The capitalistic notions of property-value that engender the conditions in which Smith encounters and engages with the South Korean language fundamentally implies a violent and consuming relationship with the Other.

Numerous scholars and critics in South Korea as well as America have criticized Deborah Smith for the inaccuracies and omissions in her translation, despite Han Kang’s approval of Smith’s translations.<sup>9</sup> The inaccuracies that have been pointed out range from syntactical errors to cultural ones. Jiayang Fan from *The New Yorker* and Charse Yun from *Korea Exposé* have pointed out homonym errors, including how she mistranslates “pal [*arm*]” for “bal [*foof*].”<sup>10</sup> Smith also often misidentifies the subject of the sentence, which is particularly ambiguous in Korean because the sentence structures are not subject-verb-object (SVO), like British/American English, but subject-object-verb (SOV), with the subject and object often completely omitted and only implied in context.<sup>11</sup> Wook-Dong Kim in “The ‘Creative’ English Translation of *The Vegetarian* by Han Kang” conducts an extensive assessment of Smith’s English translation choices from the source text and cites that, “According to a research paper presented at a conference at Ewha Women’s University in October 2016, 10.9 percent of the first section of the book was found to be mistranslated, while another 5.7 percent of the original text was found

7 Smith, “Allie Park interviews translator Deborah Smith (*The Vegetarian*).”

8 Deborah Smith’s Twitter bio stated “London Koreanist” which since has been changed.

9 Fan, “Han Kang and The Complexity of Translation.”

10 Charse Yun, “You Say Melon, I Say Lemon: Deborah Smith’s Flawed Yet Remarkable Translation of ‘The Vegetarian,’” *Korea Exposé*, 2 July 2017, <https://www.koreaexpose.com/deborah-smith-translation-han-kang-novel-vegetarian/>.

11 Hyejung Shin, “데버러 스미스(Deborah Smith)의 채식주의자 다시쓰기 번역 관점에서 본 문제점 및 향후 과제 [Deborah Smith’s Rewriting of *Chaesikjuuija*: Thoughts from a Translation Perspective],” *Journal of Korea Contents Association* 17, no. 10 (2017): 659.

to be omitted.”<sup>12</sup> How is it that the novel won the Man Booker International Prize specifically for its English translation when so many inaccuracies can be identified? It becomes clear that the Man Booker International Prize is not awarded based solely on merit and instead perhaps awarded strategically and politically. This is not to discredit the achievements of translators and authors who have won awards like the Man Booker, but a politics of the publishing industry is at play in the giving and receiving of awards. Who is awarded financial support for their work and who is not? Additionally, what is surprising to discover is that five years prior to the publication of Smith’s translation, Janet Hong, a reputable Korean to English translator, had published a translated excerpt of part one from *The Vegetarian* in *Azalea*, an academic journal of Korean literature and culture.<sup>13</sup> Although it is unclear why Janet Hong did not go onto translating and publishing the novel in its entirety, we can speculate what could have happened if Hong had published *The Vegetarian* five years earlier in 2010. How would the English translation of *The Vegetarian* be discussed differently if it were translated by Janet Hong? Would the Anglophone audience receive this novel differently under a different translation and translator? Would it have caught the attention of the Man Booker committee?<sup>14</sup>

While some have defended Deborah Smith’s translation by citing the fact that Han Kang had approved of the translation herself, using the author function to legitimize Smith’s translation poses a limitation on the kind of discussion that can be generated. Roland Barthes in “The Death of the Author” states, “To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing... In the multiplicity of writing, everything is to be disentangled, nothing deciphered...”<sup>15</sup> Forgoing authorial intent opens up the possibility for the novel to be discussed outside of measuring the (im)possibility of faithfulness of a translation to the original

12 Wook-Dong Kim, “The ‘Creative’ English Translation of *The Vegetarian* by Han Kang,” *Translation Review* 100, no. 1 (2018): 65.

13 Han Kang, “Excerpt from *The Vegetarian*,” trans. Janet Hong, *Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature & Culture* 3, (2010).

14 Though it is important to note that the Man Booker International Prize awarding translated international books and not just books from Commonwealth began in 2016, making it obviously impossible for Hong’s translation (if it had been published in 2010) to receive the award. But this speculative exercise still stands. Would it have caught the attention of an established award committees?

15 Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. S Heath, (London: Fontana, 1977), 147.

text and outside of analysis as an unveiling of a truth. Furthermore, some critics have ultimately defended her translation by celebrating the book for having opened up Korean literature to the world. Charse Yun in the same article in which they were critical of Smith concludes, "Instead of jumping on her errors in a 'gotcha!' kind of criticism, one could argue that it's impressive how much Smith got right for a relatively new learner of the language."<sup>16</sup> Yun continues, "And ultimately, Smith carried out perhaps the most important task of all: She successfully introduced a work of literature to people who might otherwise never have had a chance to read it. In that regard, Smith was faithful to the end."<sup>17</sup> Certainly, translations at its best can form connections across cultures and languages. However, Yun is arriving at this conclusion from the assumption that representation and visibility politics is unquestionably beneficial. Merely celebrating the novel's success based on it bringing more attention to Korean literature does not challenge the violence of consumption practices. Under this assumption, all consumption is positive and favorable. It is this assumption that this paper argues against, and Smith's translation needs to be discussed under new terms that question these assumptions.

Most assessments of translations are done by comparing the translated work against the source text. However, this effort to assess literalness and faithfulness to the source text creates tension and begs the question whether an essence of a source text can be transported unscathed and perfectly from one language to another. If translations are necessarily failures, how can we rethink Smith's failures in translation differently, outside of measuring accuracy? In lieu of how Smith's politics of translation is also fundamentally informed by her relationship with foreign languages, the Other, what are the consequences of Smith's participation in the violence of consumption? What kind of ethics does this publication history reveal? Smith's failure in translation resides not in her linguistic inaccuracies, but in the unacknowledged participation in the violence inherent to consumption. While an individual translator, Deborah Smith, in this case, is not the sole perpetrator of this violence and no one is pure from the violence of consumption, there ought to be a way to take flight, refuse consumption, and imagine a new way to reconfigure relations produced in acts of translation

16 Yun, "You Say Melon, I Say Lemon: Deborah Smith's Flawed Yet Remarkable Translation of 'The Vegetarian,'" *Korea Exposé*, 2 July 2017, <https://www.koreaxposure.com/deborah-smith-translation-han-kang-novel-vegetarian/>.

17 Yun, "Deborah Smith's Flawed Yet Remarkable Translation of 'The Vegetarian,'" *Korea Exposé*.

and publication. Again, the structures of the publishing industry produce translators like Smith, in which a neoliberal and consuming relationship with the Oriental Other is rewarded and profitable; however, individuals must be held accountable for their actions in an effort to transform the structural problems. Literature can be the space in which such exploratory and imaginative work can take place. The narrative contents of *The Vegetarian* present us with an ethics of incorporation that Yeong-hye demonstrates and enacts throughout the novel. Even through Deborah Smith's English text that we are given, Yeong-hye demonstrates an ethical and incorporating relationship with animals through her vegetarianism. Even through the consumed text, we are able to find an ethics that firmly resists consumption.

### **A refusal of consumption and an ethics of incorporation in The Vegetarian**

Yeong-hye enacts a refusal to participate in the violence inherent to consumption and instead poses an alternative ethics, one of incorporating the Other rather than consuming it. She accomplishes this through her disavowal of eating meat. Her realization that she is already meat and is consumed by the men around her allows her to formulate an ethics of incorporation as a response to the violence in consumption. The novel presents an ethics through which translations and publication practices can then be reconsidered and transformed.

Yeong-hye describes how she accidentally cuts herself while cutting meat the night before she had the dream: "My hand, the chopping board, the meat, and then the knife, slicing cold into my finger."<sup>18</sup> Her hand becomes indistinguishable from the meat on the cutting board, and when she sticks her bloody finger in her mouth to stop the blood, it leaves her "strangely pacified."<sup>19</sup> In this moment, she is becoming both the meat consumed and the one consuming, and Yeong-hye realizes that she is entangled with the animal. When the blood from the meat and the blood from her hand meet and become indistinguishable, she finds herself already meat. She has already been meat, the flesh consumed, in her relationships with patriarchal figures in the family, her husband and her father. In *Thinking Through Animal*, Matthew Calarco writes, "To be human typically means to disavow the fact that we, too, are flesh—that we, too, are meat. But to acknowledge oneself as inhabiting

18 Han, *The Vegetarian*, 27.

19 Han, *The Vegetarian*, 27.

a shared zone of exposed embodiment with animals is to recognize that we are in deep and fundamental ways *like animals*.<sup>20</sup> This decenters ontological claims from the human to other beings, and through this decentering, it causes “the displacement of the privilege of ‘the human’ as a subject position.”<sup>21</sup> Her realization that she is meat transforms her relationship with animals and meat, as not one in which she consumes them for her own life. Instead, she derives her sense of self from incorporating animals into herself without consuming them. Her refusal to eat meat is a refusal to participate in violence. Instead, she repositions herself in relation to animals in which the boundaries between animal and her, human, are indistinguishable. When she sees her blood mix with blood from animal meat, she has a profound realization that she too has always already been meat. The violence against animals is not a metaphor for her oppression, but instead she *is* meat: she too suffers when animals suffer. Animal suffering is her suffering, and thus their liberation is her liberation. Rather than predicating her interconnectedness with the animal through sympathy, Yeong-hye profoundly realizes that she *is* meat, that she *is* animal as opposed to she is *like* meat, *like* animal. Her relationship with the animal is against metaphors. Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* write, “Metamorphosis is contrary of metaphor.”<sup>22</sup> Her becoming is not a metaphor, but it instead blurs the distinction between animal and human.

Yeong-hye is not pure from violence, but her impurity does not pose a limit to her ethical response to violent consumption. Her complicity to violence is not contradictory to her ethics. Instead, it positions Yeong-hye as thoroughly entangled as both the one consuming meat and the one being consumed by those around her. In her dreams, boundaries that maintain distinction become indistinguishable, without reducing to the same: “Murderer or murdered... hazy distinctions, boundaries wearing thin. Familiarity bleeds into strangeness, certainty becomes impossible. Only the violence is vivid enough to stick.”<sup>23</sup> She sees a face, something like hers but not hers, something familiar, in the blood from the meat. As a result, she decides to stop eating meat. Yeong-hye recalls a memory, in an italicized vignette, of her complicity in violence when

20 Matthew Calarco, *Thinking Through Animals: Identity, Difference, Indistinction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 58.

21 Calarco, *Thinking Through Animals*, 57-58.

22 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1986), 22.

23 Han, *The Vegetarian*, 35.

her dad cruelly punishes a dog for biting her when she was a child. Not only is the dog tied to a motorcycle and is driven around until he dies, but the family also hosts a feast and consumes the dog. She remembers “the smell of burnt flesh” and the “two eyes that had watched [her], while the dog was made to run on, while he vomited blood mixed with froth, and how later they had seemed to appear, flickering on the surface of the soup.”<sup>24</sup> Yeong-hye is not innocent nor clean from this violence: “The lives of the animals I ate have all lodged there. Blood and flesh, all those butchered bodies are scattered in every nook and cranny, and though the physical remnants were excreted, their lives still stick stubbornly to my insides.”<sup>25</sup> It is from this position of impurity that she launches her ethical actions. They are stuck inside of her, their flesh inside hers, and the two, Yeong-hye and the animals, are entangled through violence.

Additionally, she realizes that she is consumed by the men around her. Men who have committed an act of violence against Yeong-hye, like her husband and her father, are associated with meat in the novel. Yeong-hye tells her husband that she smells meat from his body. She smells it “from the same place [his] sweat comes from.”<sup>26</sup> When her husband forces himself on her in part one, he compares her to a “comfort woman” once she, according to him, gives in to his advances and passively lies in bed.<sup>27</sup> State violence and marital violence are interconnected under gendered patriarchal violence. Yeong-hye’s father, who fought in the military during the Vietnam War, violently reacts to her refusal to obey his command, to eat meat, by force-feeding her meat with his hands at the dinner table. Won-Chung Kim in “Eating and Suffering in Han Kang’s *The Vegetarian*” also marks this moment as a form of rape and her refusal as “an outrageous and unacceptable challenge to her father, a paragon of the patriarchal and androcentric man.”<sup>28</sup> Yeong-hye’s brother-in-law, obsessed with her unique Mongolian mark, fantasizes eating her and her Mongolian mark: “I want to swallow you, have you melt into me and flow through my veins.”<sup>29</sup> Through gendered sexual violence, the distinction between her and meat is blurred. Just as the animal meat are sticky and stuck

24 Han, *The Vegetarian*, 50.

25 *Ibid.*, 56.

26 *Ibid.*, 25.

27 Han, *The Vegetarian*, 38.

28 Won-Chung Kim, “Eating and Suffering in Han Kang’s *The Vegetarian*,” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 21, no. 5 (2019): 5.

29 Han, *The Vegetarian*, 121.

inside of her, she is also stuck inside of men who have consumed her violently.

Through a disavowal of consumption, Yeong-hye demonstrates an ethics of incorporation, in which the animal is not distinguishable from her and instead she embodies the Other, the animal. Yeong-hye is able to enact this kind of ethical response to violence despite not being pure from the participation of violence. She recognizes that she too had consumed animals, consumed others, and in recognizing that just like animals she too is also consumed, she seeks to reject consumption in an effort to save herself and animals. Through literature, this novel imagines a radical vegetarianism and a rejection of consumption to its extreme. Even though, as discussed earlier, the publication history of the English translation of this novel is one fraught with the violence of consumption, and despite the criticisms about the accuracies of this translation, an ethics of refusal and incorporation still arises. Despite the consuming relationship (Deborah Smith and Korean language) from which the translation of *The Vegetarian* emerges from, the English translation still allows for this reading to be conducted, a reading that subverts the relation established by capitalistic consuming forces outside of it. This tension of a consumed text presenting an anti-consumption ethics generates a fruitful and productive imagination of what an ethics of incorporation and refusal can look like in translation and publication practices. It does not mean that translations are an impossibility, and it does not mean that white translators should not translate ethnic texts. Just as Yeong-hye is not pure from violence inherent to consumption, we are also not pure from the violence inherent to consuming works of literature. However, it is from that impure position that Yeong-hye is able to produce an ethics in which she is thoroughly entangled with the Other and is not seeking after ethical purity but instead refusing to participate in perpetuating systems of violence. It is not about whether she succeeds in not participating in systems of violence, but in the very act of refusal, she resists. In translation and publication practices, we ought to refuse to participate in the consuming relationship between a translator and foreign language in which translators consume foreign languages and cultures to make a profit. Instead, translators ought to reconsider how they are already entangled with the Other and the source text (whether they are outsiders of the source texts' culture or not) and complicate the necessary failure of translation acts. While it is not up to the responsibility of the individual to resolve structural violence, we must conduct acts of refusal despite the seeming impossibility of any resolution.

## Conclusion

The publishing history of *The Vegetarian* reveals how the publishing industry participates and reproduces the violence inherent to consumption. While not diminishing the linguistic inaccuracies and the accomplishments of this translation, a criticism of Smith's translation can be articulated through a critical examination of her translation approaches and a lack of an ethical relationship with the Other, the Oriental text and language. On the other hand, the novel simultaneously presents an ethics of incorporation through Yeong-hye's refusal of consumption. Yeong-hye enacts this through her radical vegetarianism predicated not on her purity from violence but on an entanglement with the animal Other. What occurs within the contents of the novel then poses a critique of Deborah Smith's English translation that is not predicated on assessing its linguistic errors, but in challenging translation as a site of consumption. Smith's translation failures lie not in confusing homophones in Korean like "[bal]" for "[pal]" but from unquestionably reproducing the neoliberal consuming relationship between a translator and foreign language. While it is not solely her responsibility to change the structural problems of the publishing industry, Smith's willing participation in this violence must also be factored in when evaluating her translation practices. Furthermore, this examination urges us to reconsider the assumption that achieving global recognition and making a non-Western country's cultural production profitable and consumable is undoubtedly beneficial. Rather than focusing on profitability, translators ought to challenge assumptions within their methodology that they operate under when approaching translation projects. Translations can become a methodological approach that subverts such consuming relationships, like using translations as a preservation method for endangered languages or using translations to creatively challenge assumptions about language and the transferability of meaning. There is not one "proper" way of conducting translations, however the ethics we are able to derive from Yeong-hye in *The Vegetarian* urges us to imagine what an ethics of incorporation and acts of refusal could look like within the publishing industry and translation practices.