

***An Ecofeminist Homology as Reflected in Salwa
Bakr's Thirty-One Beautiful Green Trees and
Han Kang's The Vegetarian :
A Comparative Study***

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Abstract

This paper intends to illustrate the close similarities between Salwa Bakr's short story *Thirty-One Beautiful Green Trees* (1986) and Han Kang's novel *The Vegetarian* (2007) through the lens of the ecofeminism theory as a comparative study that has not been attempted so far. Ecofeminism is a theory that mainly linked the oppression of women and nature. Both of them are exploited under the patriarchal culture of the Egyptian and the South Korean societies as it will be depicted in the present paper. Bakr's *Thirty-One Beautiful Green Trees* tackles social ecofeminism that portrays the colonization of women's identity and body as well as nature. While Kang's *The Vegetarian* handles vegetarian ecofeminism that rejects the idea of dealing harshly with women and animals as objects that have no rights. Both of these works explore the spiritual side that the protagonists adhere to and their psychological suffering.

Key Words: Ecofeminism, SalwaBakr, Han Kang, culture, oppression, social ecofeminism, vegetarian ecofeminism, spirituality.

Introduction:-

The term ecofeminism examines two perspectives; ecology and feminism. The first woman wrote about ecofeminism was the French woman Francoise d' Eaubonne in 1970s. Ecofeminism is an intersectional approach that is against the subordination of women and the degradation of nature; how they are mistreated. It rejects the devastating value of men towards what is associated with women, nature and animals that arises out of the patriarchal cultural and political forms, in addition to the worldwide capitalistic interests. Ruether states:-

Patriarchal culture has defined women as being 'to nature' This is shown in the way in which women have been identified with the body, earth, sex,... weakness.... A second level of ecofeminist analysis goes beneath the cultural-symbolic level, and explores the socio-economic underpinnings of how the domination of women's bodies and women's work interconnects with the exploitation of land... and animals. (73)

Women and nature are regarded as others. So, ecofeminism is a practical movement that aims at social equity emerging out of the striving of women to sustain their identities and their surrounding nature. Accordingly, the object of ecofeminism is to deconstruct the androcentric thoughts and end up the oppression among the hierarchy of dualism because there is a sort of interconnection in

life on earth as Bakr and Kang try to illustrate in *Thirty –One Beautiful Green Trees* and *The Vegetarian* respectively.

The biographical background of Salwa Bakr and Han Kang:-

Bakr is a prominent Egyptian novelist and a theatre critic for various Arabic magazines. She was born in 1949 to a lower-middle class family. Her imagination is inspired by her mother's tales about the marginalized oppressed women in the Egyptian culture. Thence, she is committed to depict gender inequalities and the deteriorated nature in the Egyptian society. Bakr's works have been translated into various languages as well as Kang's.

As for Kang, she was born in, 1970, South Korea. She published short fictions and novels. As Bakr is influenced by the tyranny and injustice towards women and nature in her Egyptian society, Kang also denies the political and social violence towards the Koreans and more especially towards women and animals, a matter that motivates her to be a vegetarian. Her experience affects her present novel, *The Vegetarian*. Although Bakr and Kang are from different sociopolitical societies, they share the effects of their patriarchal societies on women as well as on the environment.

Both Bakr and Kang are post-colonial writers. Bakr lived through Nasser's socialism era after the British colonialism and 1952 revolution that gained women political rights. Nasser encouraged women to complete their education in the university and gave them the opportunity to work outside home but at the same time dismantled the feminist organizations and refused to

occupy women in high positions. So, the ideology of gender relations continued to be challenged on the domestic and societal level. As Bakr belongs to the 1970s generation, she handles, throughout her works, Nasser's next era, after the defeat of the Egyptian-Israeli war; namely, the repercussions of Anwar Sadat's "Open Door" policy, "al-infitah", and its political, socio-economic consequences on Mubarak's era. "Al-infitah" policy is the main reason behind the inflation, rising of consumerism, capitalism and the destruction of the environment for the interests of the capitalistic people (Jorn 155- 58). The new economic policies and the Egyptian socio-cultural traditions affect the environment as well as women's identities. So, women try to find their lost identities and to reconstruct their environment in this male-centered society as it will be manifested through social ecofeminism in Bakr's *Thirty One Beautiful Green Trees*.

Regarding the South Korean society, it suffers from violence and political repression under the tyrannical rule, starting from the Japanese colonialism, the Korean's War (1950-1953) and the military coup in 1960 that was led by Park Chung-hee (Jung 262). The Korean women concern more about democracy and nationalism as the Egyptian women who come out revolting against the British colonialism. Kang lives through Park's era in which there are many protests against the oppressive presidency that lead to Gwangju massacre. After the political deactivation has been ended in 1980s, the Korean women practice their feminist thoughts against their cultural and socio-political context (Jung 262-63). The South Korean feminist movement aims at stopping violence against women as the male-centric mastery and the colonization of women's bodies are realized as a given and

common condition. Thus, Kang reflects colonialism through depicting violence of the South Korean patriarchal society upon women as well as animals in which she delineates the vegetarian ecofeminism in *The Vegetarian*.

Analytical personal point of view of Bakr's *Thirty-One Beautiful Green Trees* and Kang's *The Vegetarian*:-

Bakr and Kang are ecofeminist writers as they attempt to reform the anthropocentric society to an egalitarian one. Huey-li-Li notes that "[e]cofeminists correctly observe the gender ideology had profound influences on our world view and the construction of cultural institutions" (288). In the Egyptian and South Korean societies, males are talented in capturing women in a dark corner and ignoring their existence. As well, the patriarchal families mute their females' voices. So, Bakr's *Thirty-One Beautiful Green Trees* and Kang's *The Vegetarian* deal with the woman's disappointment, the inadequacy of woman's voice and frustration which is supported with the doubt that her voice has a power that if employed, could be a disaster for her family. The patriarchal thought in Bakr and Kang's present works colonizes and suppresses the protagonists' identities and thoughts. Although in Bakr's *Thirty-One Beautiful Green Trees* the father is absent all the time, the traditional mother advocates and follows the austere masculine concepts towards her daughter. The mother threatens Kareema, the protagonist, to cut off her tongue when the latter tries to smash her familial restrictions because her voice will ruin her brother's future as an officer.

Kareema's mother still thinks from a conventional cultural perspective that women are nothing more than wives and mothers.

Furthermore, in Kang's *The Vegetarian*, In-hye, the protagonist's sister, suffers a lot from her father's, who was a soldier serving in Vietnam, masculine cruelty but she tries to avoid his violence by serving him all the time instead of her exhausted mother. Besides, the father's rough inclinations towards Yeong-hye, the protagonist, as he used to wipe her till she was eighteen years old, suggest the injuries and the traumas of the war zone. Kang describes Yeong-hye's suffering by stating: "Instead, she had merely absorbed all suffering inside her, deep into the marrow of her bones" (*The Vegetarian* 131). Yeong-hye finds nothing in this world to communicate with except nature; likening herself with the tortured animals in her society and then by being metamorphosis into a tree, at the end of the novel. Likewise, Kareema communicates with nature around her by identifying herself with the misused trees that she counts everyday on her way to work.

Gaard explains that "ecofeminism argues that there is no attempt to liberate women (or any other oppressed group) will be successful without an equal attempt to liberate nature" ("Living Interconnection with Animals and Nature" 1). Bakr and Kang share the socio-cultural repression in their societies. So, they pursue to break the boundaries of their masculine societies. Their protagonists feel dissatisfied with their surrounded nature as they believe that their liberating identities are close to that of their surrounded environment. As for Kareema, she endeavors to

change and free the filthy environment around her, at her office, by buying a red desk instead of the old grey one and flowers to beautify the milieu around her. According to the meaning of colors in the Egyptian culture, the red color reflects the sense of power. In other words, it illustrates how much she wants to establish an independent powerful identity; a matter that is entirely refused by her male manager. Breaking out her silence, Kareema refuses this suppression and accuses her manager of being an unfair person following the accustomed male notions. Although women, in the Egyptian society, have several positions in different fields, they are culturally restricted.

Also, Kang's protagonist, Yeong-hye, is discontent with her house's gloomy atmosphere. She always feels that her house is surrounded by darkness and cold especially in her night dreams. This atmosphere reflects her unbearable relationship with her husband, Mr. Cheong, as the latter deals violently with her by practicing sexual sadism, regarding her only as an object to satisfy his sexual desires. Mr. Cheong feels as if he were "a Japanese soldier" (Kang *The Vegetarian* 32) and her silenced reaction recalls for him Korea's past as an occupied country. This ill treatment shows his harshness in raping her feminism. Kang portrays their sexual relation as if actually Mr. Cheong is dealing with Yeong-hye as an animal; namely, sticking down her battling arms and pulling off her pants. Thus, she feels herself emotionally and physically butchered as an animal that is slaughtered into pieces. Adams explains:

Sexual violence and meat eating, which appear to be discrete forms of violence, find a point of intersection in the absent referent.

Cultural images of sexual violence,..., often rely on our knowledge of how animals are butchered and eaten. (68)

So, out of Yeong-hye's dreadful dreams, she decides to transgress her South Korean tradition by discarding eating meat. In other words, she pursues to release herself as well as animals from this ruthless culture.

Unlike Kareema who fails to insist upon her decision before her manager, Yeong-hye is a decision-maker. The latter rebels against her South Korean culture, as it is a society of meat-eating, by becoming a vegetarian justifying: "I had a dream" (Kang *The Vegetarian* 15). In Western culture, meat has long been applied as delineation for women's persecution, victimization and mistreatment. According to the vegetarian ecofeminist principles, vegetarianism means refusal of the oppressive masculinity as "meat eating is a manifestation of patriarchal values; that in Western culture, meat is associated with masculinity and virility whereas vegetarianism is considered effeminate and is associated with women" (Gaard "Ecofeminism and Native American Cultures" 299). So, Yeong-hye centrifuges the idea of being subordinated as a tool without any identity. Her defiant decision is met by her father's patriarchal violence. Hence, her father hits her trying to tie her as a haunted prey and putting meat into her mouth but she vomits. According to the masculine considerations, women and animals are regarded as others of lesser value. Remembering how

South Korean culture torture animals, she hurts her wrist, as she determines to free herself and the animals from this traditional injustice, with a knife and an animal scream bursting out of her mouth.

Kang and Bakr mingle the present with the past. They use digressive details to help the reader to know more about the South Korean and the Egyptian cultures and consequently to sympathize with the protagonists. They display how the past as well as the present of Yeong-hye and Kareema is miserable as they were ill-treated by the masculine figures in their families and societies. As far as the memories of the past are revealed, to the reader, the protagonists are disgruntled with their present conditions. Kang and Bakr's narration between the past and the present reflects the internal and external reality. It is an act of opposition against the imposing muscular narratives that tends to use systematic constraints and imperatives on marginalized female voices (Amin 234). Through this fragmentation, Kang and Bakr want to break the male oppression over women. In other words, they want to create independent identities by breaking the suppression forced upon them.

In consequence, the distressing traumatic memories encourage the protagonists to free themselves from their oppressive culture as meat and blood are symbols of brutal masculinity that affected their lives. Meat gets to be a term stands for women's abuse utilized similarly by patriarchy and feminists who say that women are considered to be

pieces of meat (Adams 75). On one hand, meat is associated with men because it is full of power as men. On the other hand, women are described as being pieces of meat as they are used as a confirmation or affirmation of this power. Yeong-hye's memories rotate around how her father severely punished a dog that hit her till vomiting blood. Linda Vance illustrates the definition of culture and nature as separated by pointing out "culture as superior, benefited men of privilege because it gave them free rein...- to exploit and subdue the inferior others" (125). As claimed by the South Korean male-dominated culture, Yeong-hye's father strongly ordered her to eat the tortured dog's meat in order to heal. She is affected psychologically by this harsh commanding patriarchal treatment. She made a parallel between herself and the dog, through the treatment of the males' figures within her family. Meat is a symbol of flesh cheapness of women's bodies as well as a symbol of cultural power above nature. Lori Gruen notes:

According to Singer, all beings who are capable of feeling pain and pleasure are subjects of moral consideration.... This principle does not apply solely to physical suffering but also to psychological pain.... For Singer, to disregard the pain and suffering of animals when making a decision that will affect them is 'speciesist'. Speciesism is a bias favor of one's own species and is considered morally on a par with sexism. (78)

According to the vegetarians, eating meat indicates that they deny their association to the animals' bodies and to nature as a whole. By doing so, they strengthen the assumption of patriarchy.

Yeong-hye remembers when she entered a barn to find:-

[a] long bamboo stick strung with great blood-red gashes meat, blood still dripping down. Try to push past but the meat, there's no end to the meat, and no exist. Blood in my mouth, blood-soaked clothes sucked onto my skin. Somehow away out. Running, running through the valley, then suddenly the woods open out.... My clothes still wet with blood. Hide, hide behind the trees. Crouch down, don't let anybody see. My bloody hands. My bloody mouth. (Kang *The Vegetarian* 17)

In fact, Yeong-hye was terrified because she regarded herself as a piece of meat on that "bamboo stick" that has no root. Symbolically, Kang compares between Yeong-hye's two status as she lived in the dark with no identity under the masculine oppression and now after rejecting violence against animals, as well as herself, by refusing eating meat, she is running towards achieving her new thoughts which is revolting the harsh treatment of her family, as well to animals, and the brutal sexual relationship with her husband. As for Kareema, she suffers because she is regarded, in her Egyptian culture, as a piece of meat and a tool to be used by family and society. The restrictions of the traditional Egyptian culture are reflected through her circumcision operation which Kareema considered a sort of

insulting towards women. In Egypt, female genital mutilation is a cultural ritual through which it reflects the society discrimination between genders. Women in Middle-Eastern cultures are regarded as a source of sin and shame. So, in order to control their sexual desire or lust, to avoid shame, they make this brutal process as if sin and lust are only born with them (Abdelhay "Hegemonic Patriarchy: The Persistence of Female Circumcision in Egypt" 9).

Kang and Bakr use the word "lump" in their present works in order to illustrate how their protagonists are regarded only as pieces of flesh suffering from the restraints of their societies. Yeong-hye feels *that* there is something like a chunk on her chest stating that

...layer upon layer are enmeshed to form that lump. Because of meat.... Blood and flesh, all those butchered bodies are scattered in every nook and cranny, and though the physical remnants were excreted, their lives stick stubbornly to my insides. (Kang *The Vegetarian* 47)

Accordingly, Yeong-hye makes the decision to stop eating meat because no one can help her to breath, from the severity of her society's masculine culture, except herself. Likewise, Kareema refers to her tongue as a "lump of flesh" (Bakr 12) that she used to convey her thoughts and ideas which are fully rejected from her family and society. As a result, her mother threatens her by cutting this piece of flesh off if she does not stop revolting

against the capitalistic masculine persons who exploit the female's voices as well as the environment's right.

As Kang explores vegetarian ecofeminism, Bakr examines social eco-feminism as the capitalistic people aim at colonizing and dominating women and nature. Bruna Bianchi explains that

[in] order to sustain the unlimited growth model, capitalism needs different categories of colonies, women,... and nature... economics has been interpreted as a clearly-defined system which has excluded or marginalized many aspects of human existence and non-human nature .(1)

Ecofeminism holds social and political perspectives as women and nature are created for men's needs. Political repression was a shortcoming in Mubarak's era as people's voices, especially women, were exploited to fulfill the concerns of the capitalistic people. Bakr draws a very expressive portray when Kareema saw a "weasel" (23) on her way to the election as it is a symbol of the candidate, who tried to manipulate her and the other voters' voices for his own interests. In other words, he is blood-thirsty, like the weasel, for his capitalistic aims. This human-centric thought is that man's highest purpose lies in his capacity to attain advance by changing nature. In a schizophrenic way, Kareema fails to confront the masculine thought of her family but comes out of her silence to revolt against her society shouting about the right of nature.

As a way of rebellion against this harsh capitalistic system, Kareema participated in an exposition acclaiming "Jamila Buhairid" (Bakr 22). Actually, there is a great resemblance

between the two characters in the sense that "Buhairid" revolted against the French colonialism that conquered her country, while Kareema rampaged against the capitalistic colonialism that destroyed the beautiful green nature, in her city, for the sake of money. Kareema described this sort of colonialism by a "flood" (Bakr 14) which swept the thirty-one trees that lined the street. She felt that the capitalistic people raped her identity as well as land and nature because the land comprises her identity and her society's collective identity. By transforming the land into private possessions, for the new economical systems' interests, Kareema's identity as well as the existential cohesion of collectives was broken. As a result Kareema and Yeong-hye began to suffer psychologically from what they and their surrounded nature faced.

Chris Cumo notes that:-

...theories of oppression tend toward absolutism
...psychological pessimism..., and gloomy
descriptions of moral life (such as the view that a
world deeply influenced by interwoven systems
of domination is a world in which wide scale
moral improvement is virtually impossible. (6)

Kareema and Yeong-hye's repression led to their psychological tribulation. Firstly, Kareema began to suffer from hallucination. Santosh Kumar... et al state that for Freud, in the case of suffering from hallucination,

...thoughts are transformed into visual images,
mainly of a visual sort, that is, word
presentations are taken back to corresponding
"things" presentations. According to Kolb and
Brodie (1982), hallucinations represent a

breakthrough of preconscious or unconscious material into consciousness in response to certain psychological situations and needs ,e.g., wish fulfillment, enhancement of self-esteem,... (119)

As a result, Kareema began to remember and lament the previous pure environment of her city that was replaced by holes of dirty water and the thirty-one lined uprooted trees that were replaced by the concrete high buildings. After the ripping out of the thirty-one trees, Kareema, herself, decided to cut off her tongue because she felt that she was defeated and had no value as these trees. Hysterical narratives were the result of the chronic pains that she felt.

Santosh Kumar et al state that "Freud (1953) felt that hallucinations are similar to dreams and both conditions represent a psychotic disorder..." (119). According to Freud and Jung, dreams are the result of the repressed painful memories and experiences that reside inside the unconscious. So, these thoughts appear in dreams to reveal the person's desires and wishes that are not expressed in real life. Dreams express the psychological distress of the person. The manifest content of the dream is a metaphorical expression of the implied latent content (Jones 285). Jones notes:-

A dream is not, as it appears to be, a confused and haphazard congeries of mental phenomena, but a distorted and disguised expression of highly significant psychical processes that have a very evident meaning, although in order to appreciate this meaning it is first necessary to translate the manifest content of the dream into its latent content. (286)

With reference to Yeong-hye, she dreams, all the time, about blood, murder, violence and animals. Throughout her dreams, she is considered as a weak animal that is attacked by a brutal one; namely, any patriarchal figure. Later on, when she dreams that she kills a savage cat, she feels that another person awakes inside her. This is her wish to be a powerful person with a new voice, thought and identity. She begins to resist silence and subordination by refusing to eat meat that reflects masculine brutality. Both Kareema and Yeong-hye feel and believe that they connected spiritually to nature around them.

Ecofeminism has spiritual principles as spirituality is a source of nature's beauty. Janis Birkeland writes that "... a 'spiritual' identification with nature, by which it meant a reverence for life processes without regard to their usefulness to humans. However, eco-feminism is not a religion, and people of any belief system can take on board the ethical and political insights it offers..." (23). As the cultural gender perspectives degrade women and nature, the subjugated protagonists search for solutions in heaven, metaphysics and the superstitions. Consequently, Kareema and Yeong-hye feel that they are spiritually more connected to their environment as they believe that earth is regarded to be the source of all living things and their identities are close to nature. They call for the sacredness of nature and equality among all creatures. As for Kareema and Yeong-hye's families, they are characterized as most Muslims and Christians, respectively, by the patriarchal mentality. In other words, Kareema's Muslim family and society are acting as Yeong-hye's Christian family and society by practicing domination and violence against females and nature.

In Bakr's *Thirty-One Beautiful Green Trees*, Kareema sticks to the radical Islamic spirituality, while in Kang's *The*

Vegetarian, Yeong-hye adheres to the Buddhist philosophy to equate the environment's rights, and every living thing, with the females' rights. Kareema resorts to nothing except the Islamic spirituality, even though she is not a religious person, because in Islam, there is no hierarchy since God values both genders as well as nature. Adam and Eve live equally in peace with nature in the paradise. There was a sort of harmonization and unification with nature; namely, they respect nature around them. Islam puts ethics in dealing mercifully with women and peacefully with the environment. According to the Islamic spirituality, humans have not to exploit nature for their own interests because earth spirituality represents earth identity. As to the ecofeminist view, in Islam, tree is a symbol of strength. Lady Mary, The Christ's Mother, acquired her strength from the palm's date to overcome her weakness after delivering her child, The Christ. That is why Kareema feels that she is connected spiritually to the thirty-one trees and their eradication by the capitalistic people equates or means Kareema's nothingness. The land and the trees mark Kareema's spirituality because she regards them as a symbol of identity and as an ancestral heritage. Her seeking to connect spiritually with nature is a consideration for her thoughts with her inner self.

Spirituality differs from one place to another according to the cultural area. Although Yeong-hye is Christian, she does not follow the Christian spirituality as "... the Christian tradition, with its roots in the Hebrew and Graeco-Roman worlds, has been faulted as a prime source of the cultural symbolic patterns which have inferiorized women and nature" (Ruether 74). Unlike Kareema, Yeong-hye follows a new sort of spirituality that connects all creations together; the Buddhist principles. Rita M. Gross claims that "... Buddhism is fundamentally non-dualistic.

Buddhists have long talked of all-pervasive interdependence, of a self-interdependent with its matrix, of the interconnection of all things in the phenomenal world,..." (27). The Buddhists believe that all beings are interrelated. Their philosophical enlightenment rejects the idea of preference of gender as well as the exploitation of nature. According to Buddhism, violence to other creatures is an unethical and an obscene act; that is why those who follow the Buddhist principles are vegetarians, as Yeong-hye. For Vegetarians, they attempt to establish an ideal world that is free from violence and full of pacifism. Buddhism presents that nirvana is a higher extreme spiritual reality that arises above all else. Spiritual illumination and bliss can be accomplished independently through knowledge and meditation (Egri 413). To the Buddhist perspectives, meditation eliminates suffering. Enlightenment is to be free from worry, fear or any means of dissatisfaction. Now, Yeong-hye feels satisfied.

Bakr and Kang depict a very emotional and meaningful portray when Kareema and Yeong-hye are dealing with birds. Although the two protagonists are suffering in the mental hospitals, they care for and sympathize with birds. Concerning Kareema, she rejects the filthy food for herself and for the bird that tries to slip through the window to eat it. She deals with the bird as a creature that has an equal right in this world. As for Yeong-hye, she sympathizes deeply with a bird that falls beside her in the hospital's garden after noticing marks caused by "a predator's bite" (Kang *The Vegetarian* 50) in its face. She catches it hopping to protect it from the violence of this world. Kareema and Yeong-hye feel the suffering of these birds, which are the

symbols of liberty, because they are mistreated just like themselves.

Refusing the strict restrictions of their male-dominated societies appears not only in Kareema and Yeong-hye's thoughts but also in their external appearance. To clarify more, Kareema and Yeong-hye refuse to wear the "bra" which is one of their traditional customs. The "bra" is a symbol of a piece of cloth that restricts their feminine sexuality. It is a means of the traditional image of femininity that hinders their freedom as they aim at breathing freely as plants and birds without constraints. Their insistence on not wearing their bras alienates them completely from their cultures as they are after shattering their conventional cultural femininity. Kareema's female colleagues and her male boss are not satisfied with her act when they notice that her breasts are hanging without a bra. By disregarding their views completely, Kareema resembles herself with a flourish tree; namely, by her released progressive eco-feminist thoughts among the other trees; her colleagues. Similarly, Yeong-hye's guests and her husband feel upset when they realize that she does not wear the "bra" (Kang *The Vegetarian* 24) during the boss's invitation for dinner. Thus, the Egyptian and the South Korean societies claim the madness of the two protagonists because they regard their ecofeminist thoughts as shameful acts. A matter that leads Kareema to have no social relations with her colleagues except within the limits of the work. In the same way, Yeong-hye refuses entirely to communicate with her family and the guests also.

Both Kareema and Yeong-hye want to be appreciated according to their new ecofeminist opinions. Consequently, Kareema disregards the traditional rules of marriage although she is getting on age as she wants to marry a man who is different from the conventional masculine figure of her father, brother and boss; namely, a man who respects her identity and the nature around them. As to the ecofeminist views, if a man values nature, he will respect women. Thus, she wants to set up a relationship based on feelings asking her lover to meet at the edge of the river. Her request stresses how much she is connected to nature and reverberated that her emotions go streaming and aimlessly like the water in the river; with no restrictions. Disregarding her culture, she kisses her lover expressing her emotions. On one side, Kareema's lover refuses to violate their Egyptian culture and reproaches her. On the other side, Yeong-hye's brother-in-law broke the rules of his culture to have sex with her as he did not enjoy his sexual relationship with his wife believing that Yeong-hye is his type. Kang displays the conflict between his culture and his deep desire to establish a sexual relationship with Yeong-hye as if he were in a race that resulting in setting up a sexual intercourse with her.

Yeong-hye's brother-in-law is unlike Kareema's lover in the sense that the former concerns more about evaluating and respecting nature. One can notice that Kang does not name Yeong-hye's brother-in-law because he is different from the other men in appreciating nature. Out of the political viewpoint, Yeong-hye's brother-in-law violated the oppressed masculine nature of the South Korean society, as when he saw Yeong-

hye's blood; he remembered the reality which is full of cruelty and savage because he was deeply affected by his previous videos about Gwangju massacre. Consequently, he has a dream, like his sister-in-law, through his art since he could not cope with the destroyed contaminated nature.

According to Yeong-hye and her brother-in-law's love to nature, they break all their traditional rules when the former agrees to appear naked before her brother-in-law in order to beautify the "Mongolian mark" (Kang *The Vegetarian* 73) on her body with plants and flowers. She wants to conceal the ugliness of her flesh, which resembles torturing the dog and then eating its meat, and turn it to be a cause of delighting. The unity between Yeong-hye and nature is reflected on her body as she realizes that she will never get rid of her dreadful dreams since her body is flesh and blood. Kang describes carefully how the brother-in-law paints Yeong-hye's body by "... red and orange, bloomed splendidly on her shoulders and back... When he reached the hump of her right buttock he painted an orange flower in full bloom with a thick, vivid yellow pistil protruding from its centre ...he just used a large brush to cover the area ... mark with a wash of light green,..." (*The Vegetarian* 74). He made a sort of reconciliation between herself and her body. As to the South Korean culture, the colors that he uses in painting her body have significant meanings as they protect from evil spirit. He uses the red color which is a symbol of passion, energy and life force, the orange color stands for the sun, the green color clarifies the fresh start and the yellow color represents earth as a centre of direction (Kang "*Traditional Korean Colors*" Para.5,6,7). These colors reflect a new developing personality. Symbolically, Yeong-hye

now has no need to light her room as she has empowered and lightened her world by the colors of awareness. She feels that she starts a new stage in her life as the ugliness of her flesh disappeared. Similarly, after finishing painting on her body, the bother-in-law felt that this portrait lightened indeed these terrifyingly mysterious compulsions that had caused him such torment over the past years of violence. Kang represents Yeong-hye with no constraints in her new identity, grabbing a mug with steams coming out of it; a matter that stands for energy and her new self.

Yeong-hye chooses to have a sexual affair with her brother-in-law, after painting his body with flowers, like her, only because he is now a part of the environment, unlike her husband. During their sexual intercourse, "their bodies look like overlapping petals.... His red flowers closed and opened repeatedly above her Mongolian Mark, his penis slipping in and out of her like a huge pistil" (Kang *The Vegetarian* 98). Yeong-hye believes that when humans become parts of nature, they react naturally. Still, she is integrated with nature as she enters the veranda stretching her legs widely with "petals" as if "she wants to make love to the sunlight, to the wind" (Kang *The Vegetarian* 102). One can notice that both Yeong-hye and Kareema identify themselves with trees. On one side, Yeong-hye finds her real identity when her body is painted with flowers and plants. On the other side, Kareema resembles herself with the thirty-one cutting trees in the sense that she has no room in this world after their removal. So, she decides to get rid of her tongue by cutting it as these trees because she fails to establish her oneness with her surrounded nature.

Feeling ashamed, the families of the two protagonists find no where for their daughters except the mental hospitals as their thoughts go against their Egyptian and South Korean societies respectively. Bakr and Kang show how their societies incarcerate their protagonists. The hospital is regarded as a confinement like their external societies. Kareema's hospital is like a prison as she is treated badly by her ugly fat nurse. Bakr describes the hospital by being a gloomy place with its filthy ceiling and unclean walls that cease Kareema's breathe. In addition, Kareema has no right to protest against the spoiled food that has been offered to her. Equivalently, Yeong-hye is forced-feed and fastened by the doctors as she was forced before by her father. Still, she refuses utterly to eat. Yeong-hye succeeds one time to escape to be found, after that, in the mountain among the trees as if she is one of them. Kareema and Yeong-hye run across the window but they find no outlet to go. Symbolically, their imprisonment in the mental hospital indicates that there is no escape from the patriarchal Egyptian and South Korean traditional culture.

Bakr's *Thirty-One Beautiful Green Trees* is realistic with a breath of naturalism, while Kang's *The Vegetarian* is surrealistic. Kareema and Yeong-hye struggle to resist repression in different ways. As for Kareema, she encounters the quashing and suppression of her eco-feminist thoughts through narration as she has nostalgia for the disappeared beautiful environment. She insists to write her story, about why she is forced into the mental hospital, illustrating that she is refused by her male-dominated family and society. Throughout writing, she wants to tell everyone how much she suffers in order to make people

sympathize with her story as a way of changing the patriarchal thought of her Egyptian society. Whereas, Yeong-hye fights suppression through fantasy; namely, metamorphosis. She recognizes that her dream does not stop since her body is a human one. Accordingly, in the mental hospital, Yeong-hye makes a handstand considering herself a tree. She reckons that all she needs is water and sunlight. Amin illustrates that

metaphoric bodies... stand outside bounded spaces resist any culturally specific depictions of identity. The boundaries between place and person, environment and culture become permeable as the stagehands metamorphose into human figure. (236)

Through metamorphosis; Yeong-hye dissolves the border between culture and nature, self and the other. Therefore, she keeps silent in order to deepen her belief and confirm her point of view that she actually becomes a tree. Psychologically, throughout her fantasy, Yeong-hye wants to desert her fleshly prison in order to get rid of all human bodily restrictions stating that "I'm not an animal anymore..." (Kang *The Vegetarian* 128). Yeong-hye finds no way to resist these cultural traditions except through metamorphosis because she believes that violence, all the time, is the result of refusal and opposing culture. As a result, she wants to turn to a realm where there will be no violence, among them, disappointment and suffering to achieve her true freedom.

Kang's novel is narrated in the first person narration of Yeong-hye's husband, her sister and her brother-in-law. One can notice that Yeong-hye does not narrate; an issue that mirrors how much she is marginalized. Kang represents Yeong-hye with few words as the latter gives insufficient reply to her family regarding

her decision to become a vegetarian. Through the novel, Yeong-hye speaks rarely in order to reflect the image of the oppressed South Korean women. Her separation with her society's cultural mores is represented in her decision of becoming a vegetarian person. While Bakr's short story is told in the first person narration of Kareema; a matter that persists on reflecting her agonizing experience of the male domination on women and nature. Bakr uses a sort of provocation between the dialect of the males and that of the females, representing Kareema. In other words, the formers use the standard dialect while the latter speaks by the colloquial dialect. Bakr makes the colloquial dialect conspicuous as a way of challenge to the male foundation of mastery.

Out of similarity between Bakr and Kang's works, the number thirty-one is repeated in both of them. From the researcher's point of view, the thirty-one trees in Bakr's short story represents Kareema's age. To clarify more, after uprooting the thirty-one trees, one by one, Kareema feels that her life is meaningless as she resembles them and extracts her power from them. However, Kang paints Yeong-hye peeling "[t]hirty odd remaining potatoes formed a small mound to steam..." (*The Vegetarian* 33) them. Unlike Kareema, Yeong-hye wants to get rid of all her previous years to start a new life with a new identity. In addition to that, the word "concrete" (23) is a repeated word in Bakr's short story and "concreteness" (*The Vegetarian* 14) in Kang's novel. This hard word mirrors how there would be no emotional relationship between people and nature as the merciless capitalistic people remove the living trees and replaced them by the harsh buildings. Also, it reflects the harsh treatment of Kareema's family and society to her. Similarly, Yeong-hye's parents and husband deal badly and roughly with her as it is a normal matter that "when reality had yet to assume its usual concreteness..." (Kang *The Vegetarian* 14).

Conclusion:-

Throughout the Egyptian and the South Korean societies, Bakr's *Thirty-One Beautiful Green Trees* and Kang's *The Vegetarian* critically applies Francoise de Eaubonne's theory of eco-feminism. Bakr and Kang condemn the two society's socio-cultural assumptions and norms in dealing with the confinement of women as well as nature. In other words, the hierarchal social structure is behind women's oppression and nature's deterioration; namely, females and nature are constantly accessible as the allegorical mechanism for man's conception. So, the two protagonists, Kareema and Yeong-hye, in Bakr's *Thirty-One Beautiful Green Trees* and Kang's *The Vegetarian* aim at liberating themselves and their environment from socio-cultural domination.

Bakr and Kang display the colonized masculine oppression of the domestic and the societal sphere on the protagonists and the nature around them. On the domestic level, the two families, of Kareema and Yeong-hye, captivate and objectify their daughters as they treat them only as objects that have no right to have a word because, according to their male-dominated culture, they are subordinated. As well the social, economic and political background causes and affects the marginalization of females and nature. So, the capitalistic privileges and the patriarchal culture norms are behind women and nature's repression.

Accordingly, Bakr represents the social ecofeminist Kareema who tries to rise up against her masculine capitalistic society that denies her identity and the environment's right around her by uprooting the thirty-one trees and subrogating them by the concrete buildings. Politically, the rise of capitalism denies women from decision-making in the economic organizations.

Still, women's involvement in labor institutions does not grant them the right to participate in the decision of industrialization; namely, they are molded, as well as nature, in subordinating groups. Women regard themselves and the environment as victims of their society. Kang renders the perspectives of the vegetarian ecofeminists through Yeong-hye who feels that she is tortured physically and emotionally as animals; a matter that leads her to violate the South Korean culture by rejecting eating meat. Vegetarian ecofeminist is a means of refusing violence of the male-domination. It is an assertion of one's association to nonhuman creatures.

As to the eco-feminist concepts, Kareema and Yeong-hye attempt to turn down the idea of power-over in order to reform the social order to a non-gendered society. Ecofeminism recuperates the relationship between humans and nature aiming at reevaluating the concept of the other. Kareema and Yeong-hye's, as ecofeminists, viewpoint is to alter their societies from a fragmented and withdrawn mentality to a more coordinating and all-encompassing appreciation of the other. Ecofeminism recognizes that sensitivity and kindness are essential highlight of comprehensive unity that abolishes oppression and aggressiveness towards the marginalized groups; that is why Kareema and Yeong-hye connect through Islamic and Buddhist spirituality to the environment around them.

In consequence, Kareema and Yeong-hye's ecofeminist efforts are neglected through the masculine suppression of their societies. They are accused of madness for questioning the boundaries of their society's cultural taboos. Both of them enter a world of denial through hallucination and fantasy. Kareema resists repression that imposed on her through narration while Yeong-hye combats this unjust cultural hierarchy through metamorphosis.

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التجانس النسوي-البيئي كما هو منعكس في قصة سلوي بكر إحدوي و ثلاثون شجرة جميله و رواية هان كانج النباتيه: دراسه مقارنه.

ملخص البحث

يهدف هذا البحث الي مقارنة القصة القصيرة للكاتبة المصرية/ سلوي بكر، إحدوي وثلاثون شجرة جميلة مع رواية الكاتبة الكورية الجنوبية/هان كانج،النباتية من خلال نظرية التجانس النسوي البيئي الاجتماعي و النباتي . تتشارك الكاتبتان في توضيح فكرة اضطهاد المرأة والبيئة علي حد سواء من قبل المجتمع الذكوري- المصري والكوري الجنوبي. كما يتناول البحث الجوانب السياسية والاجتماعية للمجتمعين حيث يقوم المجتمعان باستعمار فكر و كينونة المرأة و كذلك البيئة المحيطة من اجل تحقيق اغراضهم فقط.

ففي قصة/ سلوي بكر ، يقوم المجتمع بتشويه البيئة و تهيمش حقوق المرأة . فكما طال المجتمع الرأسمالي من البيئة و طوعها لأغراضه ضارباً بعرض الحائط حق المواطن في حياة صحية و بيئة نقية ؛ أيضاً عصف بحق المرأة و انتهك حقوقها و جرم صوتها من أن تعبر أو تطالب بأبسط حقوقها في الحياة. إنه مجتمع ذكوري بحت يطوع المرأة لتصبح أداة طيعة في يد أب ثم أخ ثم زوج أو صاحب عمل أو زملاء. يفرض عليها المجتمع قالب معين تحبس في صياغته عرف ذكوري: أم تعمق لتلك الصياغة فتعطي الأب السلطة في التصرف و كذلك الفكر الذكوري التقليدي للأم فيفرضون عليها الملابس و الصحية في العمل و كذلك حقوقها السياسية و الاجتماعية مرهونة بهذا الفكر الذكوري. فبانقطاع الشجرة الإحدوي و الثلاثون يتوقف عمر البطلة ؛ كريمة ؛ لتدخل قالب الخرس الأنثوي أو الصمت الجبري.

و بالمقارنة مع بطلة رواية/النباتية فنري أن النموذج تكرر رغم إختلاف المكان و الثقافات ؛ فقد ضاقت البطلة/يانج ، ذرعا بمجتمع ذكوري داخل الأسرة حيث سلطة الأب المحطمة لكل إرادة لتنتقل الصفة الذكورية بعد ذلك لزوج يمارس الوحشية مع الزوجة كما يمارسها مع الحيوان ؛ فلا رفق بحيوان و لا برفيقة درب لان . وضعت البطلة نفسها كأنتي بمحاذاة الحيوان ؛ فكلاهما أعجمي لا حيلة لهم و لا مقدرة علي مقاومة. و في مقارنة شديدة القوة رأت البطلة أن انتهاك حيوان مثل الكلب و الإنتقام منه لأنه عقر أحدا يدفعهم لأكل لحم هذا الكلب هو داء و دواء بغير إرادة منه. تركت يانج زوجها يغتصبها دون أي محاولة للمقاومة و إمعانا في إحساسها بالتقرز كشفت عن جسدها الذي لطالما أحست أنه جسد كلب معرض للذبح و الإفتراس في أي وقت. غريبة هي المرأة إن داعبت مشاعرها برقة لانت حيث تفهم زوج أختها طبيعتها جيداً و تحول من ذكر حيواني الغريزة لمبدع أخرج بشاعة ما فيها و بشاعة جسدها فرسم علي جسدها عناصر الطبيعة بألوان خلافة و غير فكرتها عن الجنس حتي أصبح بالنسبة لها رحلة لبساتين مبهجة.

و لكن في النهاية فشلت البطلتان في تغيير الفكر الذكوري و كذلك في معايشة المجتمع فانفصلا عن عالميهما و إنتهي الأمر بهما لدخولهما مستشفى الأمراض العقلية.