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## **Constructing “Harmful Literature”: Moral Protection Discourse on The Vegetarian in South Korea**

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### **Abstract:**

The international recognition of *The Vegetarian* by Han Kang has generated not only literary acclaim but also significant public controversy in South Korea. This paper examines a statement issued by a national parents’ association calling for the removal of the novel from school and youth library collections. Using the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, the study analyzes how the statement constructs the novel as a morally harmful text and positions the association as a legitimate guardian of youth. The analysis proceeds on three levels. At the textual level, the paper identifies lexical choices and imperative structures that frame the work as dangerous and inappropriate. At the discursive level, it examines how the statement mobilizes institutional authority and the rhetoric of moral protection to justify demands for restriction. At the social level, the study situates this discourse within broader tensions surrounding literary freedom, educational responsibility, and cultural values in contemporary South Korea. The analysis also considers the public comments of the Gyeonggi-do Provincial Office of Education, which supported the concerns raised by the parents’ association. The paper argues that these institutional responses illustrate how debates over *The Vegetarian* reflect broader struggles over censorship and the role of literature in public education.

### **Keywords:**

*The Vegetarian*, Han Kang, Critical Discourse Analysis, Literary Censorship, Moral Protection.