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Neither being Object nor being Subject: a Backward Movement from Lacanian Symbolic Stage to Pre-oedipal Stage in Han Kang's Novella *The Vegetarian*

Prasenjit Panda

I am much more open about categories of gender, and my feminism has been about women's safety from violence, increased literacy, decreased poverty and more equality. I was never against the category of men.— (Judith Butler "As a Jew, I was taught it was ethically imperative to speak up" in Haaretz. February 24, 2010)

Gender, sex and sexuality have become hot cake for any debate concerning feminism or gender studies. Female body has been seen as a metaphor of weakness and feminine quality by the world of dominating masculine patriarchy. This suppressive phallogocentrism becomes one of the major ideologies by which female body is constructed, evaluated and measured ever since the human eats the fruit of knowledge. The very essence of a female body is wiped out by rational patriarchy as it is believed that female bodies are defective male bodies, marked by lack, the lack which forms the necessity and negative opposite to the plentitude of masculinity and stamped with imaginary associations in which female bodies are experienced chaotic, formless and threatening. Hence female body is termed as Achilles heel for the women world until and unless the advent of postmodern feminists starts seeing the body as no longer a weakness for them rather as a strong weapon to resist, to revolt and to retaliate against the stereotypes presentation of female body in any narratives constructed by the patriarchy. Post modern feminists like Elaine Showalter, Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray and others have tried to demystify the myth of the patriarchy and its episteme by relating female body with creativity and power. Though not powerful like *Laugh of the Medusa* or not as radical like *Mad woman in the Attic*, Han Kang's *The vegetarian*, a novella which is translated into English by Deborah Smith is the true portrayal of a journey from objectification of body to subjectification of body. The novel echoed a lot about how women were treated at that time after the colonial period, and that is the reason why this novel had a really good local impact at first. The writing encounters a system of severe principles of Korean culture, which demands devotion to the family and conformism. Kang belongs to a