

Tribhuvan University

**Transgressive Body: A Comparative Study of Franz Kafka's "The
Metamorphosis" and Philip Roth's *The Breast***

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Letter of Approval

This thesis titled “Transgressive Body: A Comparative Study of Franz Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis” and Philip Roth’s *The Breast*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Dipak Lungeli has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

To read Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" and Philip Roth's *The Breast* is to decode the meaning of transgressive body in postmodern perspective which Kafka articulates by transforming the protagonist Gregor Samsa into contemptuous beetle whereas Roth portrays David Kepesh in the form of dislocated female breast. The change in physical body of the protagonists surprises the reader. Yet, through the mental consciousness, cognitive capacity and linguistic understanding in the protagonists, we experience the narrative events and know that they are human beings. The significance of the anti-evolutionary process in the metamorphosis of the protagonists lies in its violation of the culturally encoded meaning of the 'body' and human subjectivity. Thus, by redrawing the concept of 'body', Kafka and Roth blur the deeply rooted hierarchy like human/ non human (animal), male/female, subject/object, mind/body and inside/outside. Kafka's concern is about human and animal bipolarity whereas Roth anticipates dominant dichotomy inherent in gender meaning. In this regard, Kafka in terms of trans-physicality violates anthropocentric definition of human body and Roth brings trans-sexuality in the domain of gender meaning. However, they in common with the portrayal of metamorphosis, explore human complexity, absurdity and fragmentation in better way.

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I. Introduction

Anti- Evolutionary Transgression of Body

The meaning of the body has been conventionally conceptualized in accordance with its physical conformities with all physiological facts and furthermore its significance is rooted with human identity and subjectivity. Such pre-established concept of the body marginalizes other body possibilities such as metamorphosed body with the assumption that they belong to cultural minorities. Thus, the conventional meaning of the body is associated with what we call evolutionary process of living being because it believes that human being in the present form is the absolute and most developed form at all. But unlike Darwinian evolutionary concept, the transgression of body in the novellas is anti-evolutionary process in which metamorphosis deals with such an existence within which protagonists return back to the past since the way they are transformed seems degraded and primordial. In this way, the blind spot of metamorphosis interestingly becomes the departure from the conventional narratives of body as it redraws the concept of body by bringing human subjectivity into the question. Therefore, metamorphosis as transgressive body on one hand is violence against all pre-designed notion of body and on the other hand it also brings new possibilities of human subjectivity.

In this sense, Kafka and Roth's purpose through transgression of their protagonist is to criticize the valorization of anthropocentric presumptions regarding the superiority of definite human body and subjectivity. And through the portrayal of versatile and unstable identity that skips from one existence to another, these novellas not only challenge the hierarchical presumption and very essence of barrier but also

minutely explore the inherent absurdity complexity and fragmentation of human being through the experience of the protagonists.

Metamorphosis, although seems to be an awful catastrophe because it is corporeal otherness but in fact, it is a route of escape from social norms and values. Here, the point is not to show the vulnerability of the heroes as victims but to counter the stereotypical concept of the body. It is consciousness and superiority of cognitive capacity and linguistic understanding in the protagonists through which we experience the narrative events and we know that they are human beings, no matter that their sensory perceptions suggest otherwise as Naama Harel opines:

Apparently metamorphosis stories, which describe human transformation into non human entities like animal and do not represent animals at all , since psycho-physical split between human and animal remains .The human body becomes animal body and but the mind- in respect to cognitive abilities and knowledge- remains human. Metamorphosis literature, in which the human body is transformed into an animal body, challenges the species barrier between and raises doubts about human superiority. (399)

In fact, Harel's opinion suggests that narrative voice of the protagonists, their statements about how they feel, what they do, what they think, suggests the building of their coherent self that assembles their human subjectivity. In Kafka's "The Metamorphosis", the split between animal body and the human mind is not explicitly specified and in the case of Philip Roth's *The Breast* too there is hybrid existence of the protagonist comprised of male identity inside female organ. And, indeed, the transformed protagonists experience what it is to be like for a human being to be animal, and as lifeless breast yet the human around the transformed heroes are usually

unaware of the fact that how those heroes are violating stereotypical concept of the body.

Kafka and Roth portray their protagonists' situation as fantastic predicament within the world documented narratively as realistic so that they measure the human condition in a better way. Although the protagonists celebrate their self alienation, posit themselves in the debased state of the world and their body has lost their previous social determinants, and they seem to be in struggle with discursiveness, these stories do not merely deal with a human turned into animal and breast but with such an existence in which the combination between human and non human and male and female experience respectively break the body hierarchies.

Kafka in "The Metamorphosis" portrays his protagonist Gregor in the metamorphosed form of vermin. When Gregor Samsa wakes up to find that he has been transformed into a giant insect, he is made unable to work by circumstances beyond his control. The result of the metamorphosis – Gregor's status as a member of social system is precisely what makes him insignificant and repulsive i.e. an insect. He is limited from everything like the society, his job, his family and even his own body. Kafka exposes here dehumanization and tragic world of Samsa who is entrapped in the helpless situation. Despite his physical transformation, he is entirely guided by the thinking about his responsibility to look after his family, to the extent of ignoring his own self. Since the time of his metamorphosis, Gregor meets indifferent treatment from others. Kafka's portrayal of the conflict between Gregor's situation and the outer society is to prove how indifferent the human nature is. Kafka provides utmost degree of misery, alienation, and anxiety to Gregor so that inner disjunction of Gregor can give the impression that human society is very much cruel towards others.

Gregor becomes 'other' because his present physical condition doesn't fit him within the boundary of the society. The family for whom he even sacrifices his own happiness and life, doesn't show any respect to him rather they take him as their burden. Gregor's sacrifice for his duty in office remains meaningless due to indifferent nature of chief clerk. Now Gregor is unfit within the established order of labor and commerce and time based economy system due to his physical deformity. This is how Gregor is cut off from humanity just because of his bodily difference. His family members, chief clerk, the visitors and the people around him are the representative characters of human world. They all have able bodiedness hence they are fit in society who demarcate the line between human and non human. In spite of his physical inability to act, Kafka presents the hero losing the human body but possessing the consciousness of human being. By building the consciousness in Gregor through which we experience his speaking, feeling, thinking, hearing, Kafka challenges anthropocentric presumption of human body and looks ironical human nature through the eyes of Samsa.

Likewise the protagonist David Kepesh in Roth's *The Breast* recounts the changes that occurred in his life in the preceding two years beginning with peculiar sensations he felt in his penis. These sensations of increased sensitivity accompanied by increased sexual desire, led to the change that took place between midnight and 4 am. on February 18, 1971, Kepesh became a six foot tall, 155-pound human female breast. Kepesh describes his symptoms before the change from man to mammary. His sexual feelings and desire for Claire, his beloved, changed before his transformation. His desire for sex with Clare in which he got warmth and security vanished with his own metamorphosis. His penis was becoming a nipple and areola and rest of the body was becoming a huge breast disconnected from any human form but surprisingly he

can speak and hear through his nipple about his feelings. Despite the change in his physical body, he still remains human. He can have his sexual desire, feeling and satisfaction with the arousal provided by Clare's kisses and by bathings he receives from the fifty six year old nurse, Miss Clark. So his desire for sexual pleasure is not restricted. Therefore, he aestheticizes his metamorphosis. Kepesh becomes convinced that his training as a professor of literature has brought on his condition. He wonders whether his readings of surreal and fantastic literature by Franz Kafka, Nikolai Gogol and Jonathan Swift have in some way affected his mind. Nevertheless, Kepesh's conscious self and his memories remain unchanged despite the transformation and hence Roth challenges the meaning of the concept of body.

Afore mentioned textual evidences reinforce the comparative study of two texts to deal with the issue of transgressive body so this research will closely compare the issues in the texts. In order to substantiate the hypothesis, the research will draw the insights from the different readings on the concept of body given by different writers. In the process of redrawing the concept of body, this research will focus on the altering of the traditional concept of subject formation. In contrast to common interpretation, this research paper will offer a reading of those novellas with deconstructive outlook in tune to postmodern body concept to prove how they consequently challenge the anthropocentric presumptions and raise questions about human subjectivity. This paper will recontextualize the concept of body no longer sustaining the same meaning of body. This is deconstruction of the constructs that are always a violent against all body possibilities. Therefore the transgressive body is the postmodern concept in which the canonical tradition regarding social practice, notion of subject formation will be redrawn. Meaning of body in relation to self will be altered since physical otherness doesn't signify change in the meaning of human self.

The comparative study reinforces how transgression disrespects borders, positions and rules by questioning the human identity. By examining the metamorphosed figure as a paradigm of what culture calls deviant, this research focuses on how it challenges the assumption that metamorphosed body is opposite to able-bodiedness by looking the texts as means of deconstruction to redraw the concept of body and hence to defamiliarize the identity category of self. Conventional notion of body employs a gap between human and non human. The barrier emphasizes the difference and denies the similarity between human and others. Therefore this paper will examine the way two novellas in which the human body is transformed into an animal body and female breast challenge body hierarchies and human superiority.

Since the publication of the popular novellas “The Metamorphosis” and *The Breast*, many critics have viewed those novellas from different perspectives and angles. But these criticisms do not touch upon the texts with the issue of body in postmodernist outlook since their criticisms in either of the way are guided by monotype, one sided interpretation and traditional approach to the texts. Walter H. Sokel, for instance, looks Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis” from the ground of modernism and its premises like alienation and meaninglessness as he gives his opinion:

“Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis” conforms, in an almost exemplary manner, to both aspects of the modernist assault on the reader. The transformation of a human being into ‘a giant specimen of vermin’ (the literal meaning of the form into which, as the text tells us, Gregor finds himself transformed) shocks and disgusts the reader and it likewise baffles understanding. The initial event of the story could be, and has been, used as a textbook case of a modernist alienation effect.” (27)

For Sokel, Gregor's metamorphosis is nothing more than alienated and meaningless self because he associates its significance with modernist premises. According to Evelyn Torton Beck, Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" has association with the spirit of Yiddish plays which dramatize Jewish ethics and values like battle between father and son, impossibility of obtaining justice within the machinery law and the struggle against authority. In her own word:

"The Metamorphosis", Kafka's best known story, illustrates with particular clarity not only the continuing influence of Yiddish theater but also his working method. In theme, characters, structure, and technique, this story reflects the influence of several Yiddish plays, especially *The Savage one*, by Jacob Gordin, whose work deeply impressed Kafka as the most complex in the repertoire. (38)

Evelyn's concern is that Kafka in "The Metamorphosis" represents authentic form of Judaism that deals with ancient and contemporary Jewish life when he follows the tradition of Yiddish plays with the reawakening of his interest in Judaism. Likewise Margit M. Sinka's approach to Kafka's Metamorphosis is to highlight the comical absurdity and grotesque humor. He says:

I highlight the comical absurdity of Gregor the beetle's preoccupation with the alarm clock, the difficulties he has getting out of bed (our own difficulties magnified a thousand times), his doomed attempts to placate everyone with arguments uttered in a voice that cannot be understood, the hilarity of his looking at his mother eye to eye on the floor, she being on his level because she has swooned, and the ridiculous juxtaposition of his present self with his former self. (109)

Sinka's understanding of Gregor's metamorphosis to prove the theme of absurdity only in terms of comical situation of transformed Gregor is superficial and incomplete since he doesn't mention the underlying issue of body which in fact denotes the theme of absurdity. Maja J. Goth looks Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" from existential point of view. She compares Kafka with Jean Paul Sartre because she finds a mirror of people's sorrows, anxieties and sufferings in their work guided by a common atmosphere of despair, emptiness, and absurdity prevailing in their novels. She writes:

Kafka sometimes illustrates this loss of self by using the experience of a plunge into the world of lower animals. The animal symbolizes the degradation and deprivation of 'Self' and, ultimately, the loss of 'Self'. Man finds himself deprived of his uniqueness. He glides into a nameless vegetating state or changes into a mere insect as in "The Metamorphosis" or again conceives himself as a dog, a mole or an ape right from the beginning. Both Kafka and Sartre, then, experience the loss of what is essentially 'I' as an estrangement from the body. (54)

Another critic Vishal S. Shah considers Kafka's Metamorphosis to be the autobiographical story of Kafka. Shah focuses on the similarity between the life of Kafka and Gregor in terms of the difficulties faced by them. Shah writes: "in "The Metamorphosis", Kafka directly reflects upon many of the negative aspects of his personal life, both mentally and physically. [. . .] when comparing Franz Kafka and his personal life to "The Metamorphosis" it is obvious in more than one ways that he was writing a twisted story of his life, which is ultimately reflected in his literature" (4). Shah's point is that the use of lengthy descriptions of the difficulties that Gregor faces probably signifies Kafka's actual feelings and pains that he suffered within his life, mainly within his childhood.

When Philip Roth published *The Breast* in 1972, the novella met a lot of critical receptions. Some readers picked it up along line of its sexual outrageousness and vulgarity, some highlighted to the parodical body of the protagonist and some raised question to male domination by looking from feminist angle. For many Philip Roth's *The Breast* is flawed as a literary work, a text that proves how immature and whimsical a writer Roth was in the early 1970s.

Harold Pinsker, for instance, views Kepesh's metamorphosed life as problematic because for him Kepesh has lost his human form as he claims that "*The Breast* can only be described as masochistic" (qtd. in Mikkonen 1). Likewise Harap only highlights sexual vulgarity but doesn't mention the taboo breaking representation of sexuality in *The Breast* as he states that "Roth's obsession with sex and his satirical proclivities are focused in *The Breast*, which, despite its brevity, proves attenuated" (2). Irving Howe, on the other hand found that although *The Breast* is "well-enough written and reasonably ingenious, it is finally boring-tame, neither shocking nor outrageous, and tasteless in both senses of the word" (1). His view suggests that Howe perhaps might have felt bored because he is unaware of Roth's deeply rooted anticipation to the notions of subjectivity and body hierarchy in the novella. Another critic Mikkonen Kai gives his different view on *The Breast*. He treats Kepesh's metamorphosis just as a blind spot in the narrative.

The reason for Kepesh's transformation remains an inexplicable "blind spot" in the text However, before and immediately after his transformation, the uniqueness of his situation is not clear to him, and he spends his energies refuting his doctors' accounts of his change and their claim that he is a large breast. His denial is understandable on a practical level: he can't see himself nor sense his body in the old way

and thus must rely on the people around him. The first impressions of his new body are troubling. (3)

Mikkonen's view above is to show how the transformation brings ironic, parodic and confused situation in the life of Kepesh as he loses his previous human form and becomes detached from the outside world. He is limited within the blind spot of his metamorphosed form and the reader can understand him only through his narratives.

To mention the criticism of Melanie Klein, on the other hand is to show how Kepesh's metamorphosis, his body creates the physical sense of togetherness with the mother's breast. In her own words:

[. . .] The mother's body, especially breast provides the original object of symbolization and the field for the child's developing. When the breast gratifies the baby, he or she feels togetherness with the 'good' breast; but when the breast is taken away or not offered to the baby right away when he or she is hungry, the baby feels anxious and angry at the 'bad' breast. It may be said, then, that David Kepesh, as he himself proposes, returns to the presymbolic space of alternating feelings of togetherness with and alienation from the mother through his transformation into a breast." (qtd in Mikkonen 3)

Klein's argument is that because of anxiety toward the "bad" breast, the baby's ego is first formed. When the breast and the caretaker, whom the child learns to know through the breast (or its substitute the milk bottle), is felt to be missing, the baby must begin forming its own separate subjectivity as compensation. A constructive way to deal with the anxiety deriving from denied pleasure is to re-create the mother or the breast for oneself, to make the gratifying 'good' and complete breast appear inside oneself.

In parallel to the argument of Klein, another critic Debra Shostak also looks *The Breast* from psychoanalytical point of view. Her argument is based on Freudian psychoanalysis as Kepesh's transformation into the breast suggests his repressed sexual desire towards his mother because for her, the breast signifies mother. She argues:

The individual's sense of lack of questions can not be answered and desires that can not be satisfied, begins in relation to mother's *breast*. Roth suggests that this apprehension in several ways in the novella, with reference to the Oedipal situation. Kepesh denies that this episode provides a plausible explanation for his catastrophe, the scene leads to the conclusion-since denial often suggests repression-that his condition stands in symbolic relation to his longing for the lost mother. (1-2)

Shostak's analysis is that although Kepesh's mother is virtually absent from him therefore Kepesh repeatedly refers to the maternal as it is displaced onto his lover, Clare Ovington. Kepesh nostalgically recalls Clare for the fulfillment of his sexual desire.

The literature review above shows that, Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" and Roth's *The Breast* have received criticism from various perspectives. All of these critics have their monotype and one sided interpretation of the texts, which is not complete understanding of the book. Approaching the text through some perspectives and assuming to get final and complete understanding of book is traditional approach. None of the above cited critics have touched the issue of 'Transgressive Body' on these texts therefore it demands a genuine research. The research, therefore, approaches these texts through a postmodern look on the basis of body theory. Theoretical modality and critical analysis of the text will be discussed in the second

and the third chapters respectively. Finally, thesis will be summarized and concluded with findings in the fourth chapter i.e. conclusion.

II. Methodology

Introduction to Body Theory

Body theory, though lately developed, occupies a significant space in postmodern discursive practice. It emerged as a postmodern subject, which therefore, establishes an innovative concept of bodies by destabilizing the conventional notion of hierarchical bodies like male/female, human/animal, subject/object etc. In this regard, body theory portrays transformative subjectivities that express and exhibit the multiple aspects of identity; the different locations from which we see and think. In postmodern paradigm, body theory assumes that elements of identity developed ‘at the margins’ must be brought to the ‘center’ by means of which, the hegemony of existing cultural styles of subjectivity can be challenged. Body theory, in this way, with deconstructive outlook, decentralizes the very notion of the ‘self’ by reconstructing the subjectivity.

Body theory is associated with body politics that detaches its positionality beyond the mainstream notion of what we call ‘body’ as such. These body possibilities deny the existence of any ultimate and pre established scientific, philosophical or religious narratives and truths about body. Since postmodernism comes to mean as anything resisting or deconstructing common assumptions of culture, this oppositional spirit is also reflected in body theory which correspondingly is linked with deconstruction of subjectivity. In this regard, body theory is related with postmodern items of heterogeneity, discontinuity, displacement and

destabilization against cultural registration of body. As a postmodern approach, body theory offers an experience beyond the categories of identity, a struggle to create new categories from the ruins of old, new ways of being a body within the cultural field.

Susan Bordo opines:

There are many who do see the body both as a living cultural form and as a subject of scholarly theorizing as a significant carrier and register of culture. Within the scholarly arena, arguably, there has been a major paradigm shift over the last hundred years. Formally, the body was dominantly conceptualized as a fixed, unitary, primarily biological reality. Today, more and more scholars have come to regard the body as historical, plural, culturally mediated form. To the degree that such a shift has occurred to the corollary development of a ‘political’ understanding of the body. (166)

Bordo clearly exposes the differences between the perspectives on body and also shows new kind of thinking on ‘body’ that is being emerged and developed as political understanding or as a politically inscribed entity. Hence, body theory emerged as political entity on the basis of the concepts of deconstruction. And about the inevitability of the deconstruction, Spivak suggests, “Deconstruction is not an exposure of error, certainly not other people’s error. The critique in deconstruction, the most serious critique in deconstruction, is the critique of something that is extremely useful, something without which we can’t do anything” (qtd. in Butler 7). Body theory through transgressive instances of body, upsets the boundaries of the ordinary human body which is attributed in social meanings by following the postmodern notion that, “boundaries can be crossed, confused, consolidated and

collapsed; they can also be revised, reconceived, redesigned or replaced” (qtd in Butler 4).

The true meaning of the body has been made complicated when a cultural constitution violates the sense of subjectivity therefore Gayatri Spivak also finds meanings of body so complex because it is followed by its value codings by the culture as she says, “If one really thinks about the body as such, there is no possible outline of the body as such. There are thinkings of the systematicity of the body; there are value codings of the body” (xii). In this sense, the common idea of body theory lies in the fact that the meaning of the body emerges from its cultural representation. The identity, subjectivity and the body are cultural constructs to be questioned and that all representation is political comprises.

Representation is the organization of the perception of actual bodily differences into comprehensibility, a comprehensibility that is always frail, coded, in other words, human. It exaggerates an already highlighted physical difference when it tends to objectify body oddities by denying them any opportunity for subjectivity or agency and this figure of otherness emerges from positioning, interpreting and conferring meaning upon bodies. In this regard, Rosemarie Garland Thompson states:

Representation is a cultural interpretation of physical transformation or configuration and a comparison of bodies that structures social relations and institutions. It is the attribution of corporeal deviance- not so much a property of bodies as a product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do. Representation yields cultural identities and categories. In another word it relies upon cultural assumptions to fill in missing details. (10-11)

In the course of representation, the social processes and discourses constitute physical and cultural otherness and figures of otherness are highly marked in power relations. The otherness i.e. strange body varieties are marginalized no longer sustaining its cultural visibility. Cultural representation is the constructed identity among social relations which is outlined by the accepted hierarchies of embodiment – valued and devalued. And the corporeal departures like metamorphosed body from dominant expectations go interpreted and punished and the physical conformities with all physiological facts are always rewarded by cultural stereotypes. Thompson associates the cultural other and the cultural self operate together as opposing twin figures that legitimate a system of social, economic, and political empowerment justified by physiological differences as she suggests:

Cultural dichotomies do their evaluative work: this body is inferior and that one is superior; this one is beautiful or perfect and that one is grotesque and ugly. In this economy of visual difference, those bodies deemed inferior become spectacles of otherness while the unmarked are sheltered in the neutral space of normalcy defined through representation, and excluded from social power and status. (7-8)

The limits created by cultural constructivism are exposed as those boundaries of bodily life where abjected or delegitimated bodies fail to count as bodies. The narratives of corporeal/cultural difference simultaneously confirm and challenge the received definition of physical otherness as bodily inadequacy.

Michael Foucault holds that bodies themselves are constituted within the specific nexus of culture or discourse/power regimes. He writes, “We believe, in any event, that body obeys the exclusive laws of physiology, and that it escapes the influence of history, but this too is false. The body is molded by a great many distinct

regimes” (380). Foucault's concept of body is based on his definition of 'power' as he defines:

It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them [. . .] whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies. (92-93)

From the angle of Foucauldian notion of power, the role of human body is symbolically and materially understood. This is based on the fact that how powerful groups maintain their upper-hand over the bodies of less powerful through symbolic and material means in the nexus of politics. Foucault's distinction between two arenas of the social construction of the modern body i.e. 'the intelligible body' and the 'useful body': 'the representational' and 'the practical' respectively are the direct locus of social control, through which culture is converted into automatic, habitual bodily activity. The 'intelligible body' includes scientific, philosophic and aesthetic representations of the body, norms of beauty, models of health, and so forth. These representations, however, may also be seen as legislating a set of practical rules and regulations through which the living body is trained and shaped.

The way body is constructed, it also demands a rethinking of the meaning of construction itself as Judith Butler opines, “The body which fails to submit to the law or occupies that law in a mode contrary to its dictate, thus loses its sure footing –its cultural gravity –in the symbolic and reappears in its imaginary tenuousness, its fictional direction” (139). Butler reshapes the Foucauldian notions of 'power' when

she agrees with Foucault that 'Body' is recognized as a result of 'regulatory ideal'.

'Regulatory ideal' for Butler is 'Power' to Foucault as she opines, "regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce- demarcate, circulate, differentiate- the bodies it controls" (67).

In terms of the understanding of the relationship between power and body, Foucault and Butler have similar analysis. Like Foucault for Butler too, body is determined by power as she says "Power is that which forms, maintains, sustains, and regulates bodies at once." (34). Her definition of body in terms of power is associated with cultural construction as she further states, "Through the complex cultural exchanges among bodies in which identity itself is ever-shifting, indeed, where identity itself is constructed, disintegrated, and recirculated only within the context of a dynamic field of cultural relations" (161-162).

According to Butler, power of discourse produces/constructs subject. The subjects are formed by what Butler calls 'exclusionary matrix'. In that matrix, one requires the simultaneous production of a domain to be a subject and who is not fit within that matrix, loses his/her subjectivity or it leads someone to be abject beings. She says, "the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is after all, 'inside' the subject as its own founding repudiation" (3).

To sum up, afore discussed insights from some body theories aim to deconstruct the previously existing values on the identity position or subject formation and it meant to suggest that the constructed identity is to be denied, overcome, and erased because the elevation and regulation of identity position is marked primarily by political policy in which identity comes into cultural struggle but it is repudiated and excluded from the domain of coherent subjects that is already

constituted. Body theories bring the body minorities as opponents into the light of mainstream culture so as to blur culturally manifested hierarchical position which has excluded other body possibilities. The Body discourse and even a minimally reflexive consideration on the Body reveal that its position in poststructuralist and postmodernist theory is grounded in the participation of theorists in a cultural and historical moment in which the Body has come to occupy a central place in popular discourse, and in academic settings in which materiality is afforded a kind of salience that is denied the immaterial.

Transgressive Body

Transgressive body is the process of deconstruction of the pre-designed notion of the body. Primarily it is based on the postmodernist tendency so it refers to the change in the concept of body. In literal sense, the word transgressive is synonymous to the word like 'transformative', 'transmogrification' or 'transvestism' which they all signify the process of metamorphosis. So its underlying meaning in terms of body metamorphosis is the transgression of the subjectivity thereby it challenges the convention of subjectivity. In conventional concept, true to its meaning only a body with perfect organs became a master trope of someone's subjectivity or identity in an image bedazzled human culture. On the basis of scientific, religious or philosophical paradigm, visibility of the perfect body has become a synonymous indicator of human subjectivity. In the case of missing something from that discourse of body, someone loses his/her identity or subjectivity and as a result they are subordinated and excluded from the social category and there is emergence of hierarchy; a hierarchy of value that assigns completeness to some bodies and deficiency to others. This is what happens with metamorphosed body since it has lost the previous social determinants of body and it can no longer sustain its identity within the social category.

Regarding the notion of subjectivity, 'Transgressive Body' raises some anticipations like once occurring event of metamorphosis that leads to losing its previous bodily traits remains human or not. Therefore, 'Transgressive Body' is a second outlook because it challenges some of the most deeply held oppositions human versus non human, subject versus object, inside versus outside that structure human thinking about the 'self'. 'Transgressive Body' doesn't situate its vantage point within bodily variance or any physical change because it is conceptual framework that violates the cultural encoding of the body and hence in its broadest senses, it redraws the concept of human body.

Since a body is already given a cultural encoding, value and meaning on the basis of anthropocentric interpretation, 'Transgressive Body', then, is a disparity that violates that very notion of the body within its cultural meaning because there is already a pre-designed concept about the body as Susan Bordo mentions "whether externally bound or internally managed, nobody can escape either the imprint of culture or its gendered meanings" (85). This concept is established as social discourse by building a barrier within the bodily difference and in return it changes into a representation. Bordo further says "in our image bedazzled culture, interrogation of the popular representations through which meaning is crystallized, symbolized, metaphorically encoded and transmitted" (86).

'Transgressive Body' itself doesn't signify the physical body as such rather it is a concept that deals with the issue of body thereby revisits the very notion of body. The meaning of 'Transgressive Body' begins from the very beginning of the physical transformation of the protagonists and hence the transgression of the physical body leads to the conceptual meaning of 'Transgressive Body'. Kafka and Roth portray the metamorphosis in their protagonists interestingly no longer losing human traits in

them. This suggests that their attempt is not simply to demonstrate metamorphosis situation but it is ultimately to challenge the notion of body. Therefore, metamorphosis simply doesn't remain as physical transformation but it is transgression of the meaning and concept of human body.

'Transgressive Body' itself situates within the periphery or marginal position of body representation and questions the center by blurring the boundary between wholeness of the body and metamorphosed body. And it undermines the category upsetting the conventional relationship between representation and reality. The deliberate transformation of the body questions the dominant categories like mind/body, inside/outside and subject/object oppositions that likewise inform our notion of self. 'Transgressive Body' as being a postmodernist issue refers to the change in the concept of body. Therefore, it is the process of redrawing the concept of body and it focuses on the altering of the traditional concept of subject formation by proving how transgression disrespects borders, positions and rules by questioning the human identity. The meaning of body does not change in the way the physicality is changed. It is consciousness and superiority of cognitive capacity and linguistic utterance in the protagonists through which we experience the narrative events and we know that they are human beings, no matter that their sensory perceptions suggest otherwise. Regarding the permanence of mind in human, Linda Martin Alcoff states:

(a) the mind is not in fact separable from the body; (b) from which it follows that mind has never been separated from the body; (c) from which it also follows that our dominant conceptions and ideals of reason have been connected to bodies, have been expressions of bodily concerns or needs and reflections of embodied ways of being, and have

had other interesting relations to the body that we have to discover.

(17)

Narrative voice, their statements about how they feel, what they do, what they think, suggests the building of their coherent self that assembles their human subjectivity. About how self consciousness is linked with subjectivity, Robert W. Jenson states, “the discovery of difference is his/her first act of self-consciousness, the revelation of himself/herself as something apart. Just so he/she is constituted in subjectivity, he/ she is what we call a person” (3). ‘Transgressive Body’ is still a human body because their identity is not determined by the physical fact like dismembered body part. And it is the vantage point to look human complexities with a better angle than definite body i.e. human beings could not have understood before. But a blind spot of metamorphosis succeeds to examine them.

While the primary aim of the ‘Transgressive Body’ has been to explore the ways culture represents and social practices construct metamorphosis, a related goal has been to highlight the role of the body in these representations and constructions introducing the idea of metamorphosis into discussion about construction of the body demands confronting the relation between visible bodily particularity and identity. Since body’s cultural construction and acknowledges that all physical existence is infected by multiple narratives of identity, felt or attributed, denigrated or privileged metamorphosed body becomes a repository for social anxieties about such troubling concerns as vulnerability, control and identity .

The identifications shift i.e. metamorphosis does not necessarily mean that one identification is repudiated for another; the shifting may well be one sign of hope for the possibility of confirming an expansive set of connections. Metamorphosis, then, is a representation, a cultural interpretation of physical transformation or configuration,

and a comparison of bodies that structures social relations and institutions thereby the meaning of metamorphosis depends upon perception and subjective judgment rather than on objective bodily states. Hence, metamorphosis is the attribution of corporeal deviance- a property of bodies as a product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do.

As 'Transgressive Body' in tune to postmodernist route, defamiliarizes the familiar narratives of body, it reinforces to look metamorphosis at the same fashion of deconstruction followed by any body possibilities. In its broadest sense, it investigates how representation attaches meaning to bodies. Although identity of the corporeal otherness is overlooked as metamorphosed body, the physically extra-ordinary figure this term describes is essential to cultural project of physical otherness that supports the privileged norm. The concept of the body is recontextualized no longer sustaining the same meaning of the body. Therefore it is reconstruction of the subjectivity and it is deconstruction of the constructs that are always already a kind of violence against the bodies' possibilities.

The purpose here is to alter the meaning of the term "metamorphosis" and hence expand the deconstructive understanding of the cultural construction of the bodies and identities by reframing metamorphosis as another cultural bound so as "to defamiliarize such culturally imposed stereotypical representations and interpretations by focusing on the unraveling of the complexities of identity production within social narratives of bodily differences" (Butler 78).

In this regard, anti evolutionary process is one of the artifacts that follows the prototype of 'Transgressive Body'. An evolutionary process is based on Darwinian paradigm that it is gradual process of modification in living beings. This is a slow, continuous, progressive and irreversible process in which the simple and primitive

organisms existed in the past were changed into complex and advanced organisms of today over a long period of time. This is a natural process in which every living creature goes through advancement and development in the course of time determined by natural selection as Charles Darwin explains, “the change in species by the survival of an organisms type exhibiting a natural variation that gives it an adoptive advantage in an environment, thus leading to a new environmental equilibrium, is evolution by natural selection” (qtd. in Thompson 46).

But quite contrary to Darwinian Theory, through the portrayal of the metamorphosis situation, Kafka and Roth go through an anti evolutionary process since metamorphosis situation is a degrading process going back to primitive human positions which can no more be considered as human as such from the perspective of cultural narratives of the bodies. Nevertheless, Kafka and Roth’s deliberate portrayal of their metamorphosed protagonists signify otherwise because it has an underlying meaning that they redraw the concept of human being for the better understanding of the inherent absurdity, fragmentation and complexity of human life.

Of course, in the course of metamorphosed condition, the protagonists experience utmost degree of complexity and absurdity that no other human outside their metamorphosed world can understand. These protagonists are able to judge other human beings regarding their selfishness and indifferent nature. Through the experience of the protagonists, we also experience how absurd the human life is when it is guided by meaninglessness and fragmentation of identity. We deserve through the protagonists a detail and minute reality of human life in the ruin of complexity and hardship.

Actually the protagonists observe two worlds; one is the inside world themselves and other outside world that we simultaneously follow. The experience of

their own world represents the absurd, fragmented and complex life phenomena of all human beings which a perfect human being has not understood yet. So, Kafka and Roth reach the depth of human reality through their protagonists. On the other hand, their observation of the outside world has more significance since they in other way tease bankrupted human nature that is guided by guilt, fragility, anguish and pretension. Their findings of ironical situation of selfish and indifferent human nature reinforce how they thrive to examine the hateful nature of human beings from the irrational and contemptuous ground i.e. metamorphosed condition which in fact comes to be rational one. In the course of their experience they find out that human beings have moral negativity or they negate the humanity. And these protagonists in return negate the negation of humanity because they deny human follies and love humanity very much. They tolerate masochistic vulnerability yet they have permanence of revolt against a paradoxical and cruel authority and their situation seems to be ironical but actually it is condemnation against all human being as a whole.

In this way, Kafka and Roth depict metamorphosed body as ‘Transgressive Body’ by violating all pre determined narratives about body so as to look the human world from omniscient perspective. In a sense, these stories do not merely deal with a human turned into animal and breast but with such an existence in which the combination between human and non human experience break the dichotomy between human beings and rest of the other beings .The metamorphosed bodies of two texts, hence, transgressive, represents the ‘differance’ (in Derridean term) that violates and disrespects the borders, positions, rules, systems and order born from cultural nexus of bodies.

To sum up, above mentioned theoretical framework reinforces ‘Transgressive Body’ to inaugurate a concept of denaturalizing the cultural narratives and discourses regarding body representation. It goes beyond assailing stereotypes to interrogate the conventions of representation and unravel the complexities of the identity production within social narratives of body possibilities like metamorphosis.

III. Textual Analysis

Transgressive Body in Franz Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis”

Franz Kafka, in his “The Metamorphosis”, portrays transformation of the commercial traveler Gregor Samsa into an enormous insect at the very beginning of the story, which as Margit M. Sinka posits, “probably is the most famous beginning in all of twentieth century prose” (107). This reference suggests Kafka’s manipulation of Gregor’s dramatic transformation into the form of a vermin is deliberate since he wants to deconstruct the conventional notion of the body that employs a barrier between human and the rest of the animal world; it is exhibition of the body possibilities that has been ignored and excluded by cultural narratives before. Hence, manipulation of the metamorphosis i.e. cross corporeal cohabitation at the first glance of the story is the portrayal of transgressive body.

When he formulates human subjectivity in animal form, Kafka’s purpose is that, “If identity is constructed through opposition, it must be constructed through rejection” of the construction of subjectivity (Butler 115). Since the purpose of Kafka is to defamiliarize the familiar and to provide the deconstructive treatment to the conventionally conceptualized notion of body, he goes through the blurring of bodily

boundaries with the portrayal of the process of metamorphosis in Gregor at the very beginning of the story:

As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect. He was lying on his hard, as it were armor-plated, back and when he lifted his head a little he could see his dome-like brown belly divided into stiff arched segments on top of which the bed quilt could hardly keep in position and was about to slide off completely. His numerous legs, which were pitifully thin compared to the rest of his bulk, waved helplessly before his eyes. (733)

This exploration of the vivid transformation and radical displacement in Gregor violates the pre-determined concept of subject formation. The metamorphosis of Gregor follows anti-evolutionary process; “a rupture with all traditional values” and an odd subject formation (Goth 59). This process of metamorphosis of the protagonist raises some doubts about the conformity of Gregor’s human identity in the form of an animal and the clarification of these doubts becomes precise as we understand transgressive body that Kafka is suggesting so far.

The transformation occurred in his life is not merely a challenge to himself rather it is essentially a question raised against social narratives about body and human subjectivity as Gregor says, “What has happen to me?” (734). Gregor ultimately discovers his identity as human being because he can express the feeling of pain, “he began to feel in his side a faint dull ache he had never experienced before” (734). Gregor’s feeling of pain reinforces that his bodily identity is secured because according to Butler, “bodily pain is the precondition of bodily self discovery” (58). No doubt to say that Gregor is human but not an animal and indeed he experiences

what it is like for a human to be animal. Since the humans around him are usually unaware of the fact that he is originally human, he is mistreated with the contemptuous feeling such as, “Come along, then, you old dung beetle!”, “Look at the old beetle, then!” (758).

Apparently, Gregor’s transformation into animal does not represent animal at all as Sinka says “Gregor behaves increasingly like an animal, even though his thoughts seem to remain human” (110). Although his physical form suggests that he is an animal, his human identity is secured as Goth says, “Gregor is a human in the form of an animal and not an animal who has been humanized” (65). Gregor tends to follow, or be detracted by most thoughts that occur to him and we examine his rhetorical questions and the quick self justifications as human traits. Gregor stands for the sole registering consciousness in the largest part of the story and in the course of the story, we find out that his human identity is suggested by his consciousness rooted around his circumstances that he has to cope with as Kafka states, “As all this was running through his mind at top” (735). And since in most cases a psycho -physical split between human and animal remains; his body seems to be an animal body, but the mind in respect to the cognitive abilities and knowledge i.e. consciousness remains human as he says, “I’m all right really, I feel right again” (739). So he possesses human mind though he had lost human physique and his utmost degree of consciousness that constitutes his inalterability of human self which is developed from the very beginning of his metamorphosis and it continues till his last breath.

Through his consciousness, he notes his extraordinary condition followed by remembering and trying to fulfill his duties as a traveling salesman and he is aware of his responsibilities as mainstay of his household and hardship of his family. He is not bothered despite his absurd situation because he was the man of hope and for him

“there’s still hope” (734). And he realized that in this hopeful situation he “at all costs must not lose consciousness” (736). These all facts suggest that his human subjectivity is not lost along the way he has lost his human physique. Gregor was limited within a dark room being detached from outside world and one day he desperately tries to listen the music of violin played by her sister, Grete. Thus, his interest in music has association with his human identity and desire. Kafka writes:

Gregor sister was playing so beautifully. Her face leaned sideways, intently and sadly her eyes followed the notes of music. Gregor crawled a little farther forward and lowered his head to the ground so that it might be possible for his eyes to meet hers. Was he an animal, that music had an effect upon him? (761)

This question seems to be rhetorical as it is consciously misleading. Of course, he isn’t animal, since only a human can be transported by beauty of music in such a subtle way. This answer leads to the conclusion that Gregor’s soul has never been touched by transformation of his body. In another word, the metamorphosis has been suspended in this transfigured moment. In this case, Gregor’s identity as a man has been secured.

Gregor’s insect and human selves struggle together but there is always valorization of his human self over insectness since he is always worried about his duty as traveling salesman, determined to his household as he says “I have to provide for my parents and my sister” (741). He claims his sister’s love, responds to violin music and bothers about his responsibility. Such scenes tend to acknowledge that he by no means has lost his bodily traits of human. In this sense, Kafka writes, “Gregor was a member of the family, despite his present unfortunate and repulsive shape, and ought not to be treated as an enemy” (755). His physical transformation doesn’t

interfere his normal way of life rather it leads him towards more perfection both mentally and physically. Rather he feels comfortable even in his metamorphosed condition as Kafka writes, “he now had his body much better” having “all recollection of his human background” (751-52). Kafka further writes:

Hardly was he down when he experienced for the first time this morning a sense of physical comfort; his legs had formed ground under them; they were completely obedient, as he noted with joy; even strove to carry him forward in whatever direction he choose; and he was inclined to believe that a final relief from all his sufferings was at hand.
(742)

The above quote signifies the permanence of human subjectivity in Gregor who despite his metamorphosis doesn't lose his human traits like sense of physical joy and comfort. Gregor's thoughts, actions, and feelings about his present condition are all human and it has no association with animal psyche.

The parallel issue along with redrawing the concept of body that Kafka explores is the understanding of inherent absurdity and complexity of human being. In this regard, “The Metamorphosis” presents a causally connected chain of events, a sequence of described thoughts, actions, and feelings of Gregor which are linked with his observation of selfish outside world and complex and absurd internal world of himself which Kafka generalizes to be same to all human being. Outside human being are very indifferent to his condition because they simply think him as a matter of hatred; a contemptuous thing and they dare not to come to contact with him. However, the irony is that he is a human being and examines their barren humanity guided by indifference, selfishness and cruelty from the ground of metamorphosis. Indeed, it is Gregor's metamorphosis that paves way for others to build a sense of

hatred towards him. From the same day onwards he is relegated from his family and cut off from humanity just because of his bodily difference. He is made unable to work by circumstances beyond his control. The result of the metamorphosis i.e. Gregor's status as a member of social system is precisely what makes him insignificant and repulsive i.e. an insect. He is limited from everything; his job, the society, his family and even his human body. Kafka exposes here dehumanization and tragic world of Gregor who is entrapped in the helpless situation.

The cultural representation interprets the bodily variance as odd with the sense of estrangement. In this sense, Gregor faces much maltreatment from his family members, chief clerk, the visitors and the people around him who are the representative characters of human world. His father throws a rotting apple in his belly that "went on sticking in his body as a visible reminder, since no one ventured to remove it" (755). Kafka writes:

An apple thrown without much force grazed Gregor's back and glanced off harmlessly. But another following immediately landed right on his back and sank in; felt as if nailed to the spot and flattened himself out in a complete derangement of his senses. True, his whole body was aching; the rotting apple in his back troubled him. (755)

This apple is the symbol of hatred, shame and guilt that remains till his death in Gregor's body i.e. "dung beetle" (758). It remains as visible reminder of hatred until he lives as a beetle. This suggests that the hatred feeling of father is all-encompassing.

Gregor's sacrifice for his duty in office remains meaningless due to indifferent and cruel nature of chief clerk. Now Gregor is unfit within the established order of labor and commerce and time based economy system due to his physical deformity. The hatred continues due to his physical disability as Chief clerk, the man of business

says, “I must say that we men of business, fortunately or unfortunately – very often simply have to ignore any slight indisposition, since business must be attended to” (738). Clerk’s attitude towards Gregor is changed along with the physical change in him. Therefore, he excludes Gregor from his business as he further says, “I see how incredibly obstinate you are, I no longer have the slightest desire to take your part at all. And your position in the firm is not unassailable” (739). Gregor’s relegation from his profession signifies the negative treatment of society towards the disabled person like Gregor. He is no longer treated as a human being as he is cut off from the humanity and society. The lodgers, who were listening to the violin music played by Grete, find “Gregor more entertaining than the violin playing” (761). The lodgers represent human society and they treat him as a means of entertainment as if he is the character of a freak show.

After Gregor’s metamorphosis, the family for whom he even sacrifices his own happiness and life, doesn’t show any respect to him rather they treat him as their present means of burden. Hence, the family member’s misbehavior and mistreatment to him are exclusively the indication of selfishness and indifferent nature of human being. Their carelessness and neglecting behavior to Gregor is reflected as he was made limited within a dark room with “streaks of dirt stretched along the walls, here and there lay balls of dust and filth” (758). Since he was restricted in the dark room, “it had become a habit in the family to push into his room things” and “anything that was not needed for the moment was simply flung into Gregor’s room” (759).

This is how Gregor is cut off from humanity just because of his bodily difference. He becomes ‘other’ because his present physical condition doesn’t fit him within the boundary of the society. Gregor meets indifferent treatment from others. Kafka’s portrayal of the conflict between Gregor’s situation and the outer society is to

prove how indifferent the human nature is. Gregor knows these human weaknesses in a better way than an outside human being could know because he is only the bearer of every such circumstance and problem created by others. In this regard, Kafka's portrayal of Gregor's life as metamorphosed form is, in fact, a building of a vantage point from where he satires human weaknesses. Kafka provides utmost degree of misery, alienation, and anxiety to Gregor so that inner disjunction of Gregor can give the impression that human society is very much cruel towards others.

His metamorphosis becomes upsetting. He is no longer a human to the outsiders as his sister comments, "how can it be Gregor? If this were Gregor, he would have realized long ago that human beings can't live with such a creature" (763). This suggests he is no longer treated as 'he' but it is replaced by 'it' signifying the replacement of human 'self' by animal identity. He becomes an animal and every body around him "try to get rid of it" (763). And what he speaks is "no human voice" or it "might not sound like a human" (740). Gregor dies a meaningless death. What he experiences during his metamorphosis life is hatred and he becomes the means of anxiety. The family annoyance created by Gregor ends along with his death as charwoman indicating the dead body of Gregor, says, "Just look at this, it's dead; it's lying here dead and done for" (764).

Kafka portrays physical split between human and animal yet the human existence of Gregor is not lost and actually what he experiences as a form of vermin is the real understanding of the absurdity that is made up of some contradiction and the paradoxes inherent in human being in general because "The perpetual oscillation between the natural and the extraordinary, the individual and the universal, the tragic and the everyday, the absurd and the logical, give resonance and its meaning of absurdity" (*The Myth of Sisyphus* 114).

Gregor experiences these contradictions and paradoxes and understands the meaning of absurdity. In a sense, Kafka places Gregor isolated in a confused universe and suffering from an increased loss of direction, a loss of personal identity, loss of meaningful human relationship, perversion of trusted insinuation, absence of logical or chronological sequence in events which all suggest human absurdity. Absurdity is common to all human being. No one can escape the absurdity because absurdity of the human existence lies in its insecurity, its rejections, its agony and its disappointment. Hence the inevitability of the absurdity is realized by Gregor through his experience and Kafka makes it universal as he says, “Gregor tried to suppose to himself that something like what had happened to him today might some day happen to the chief clerk; one really could not deny that it was possible” (738).

Therefore absurdity is a process which develops in human being. It becomes a concrete attitude towards the universe in which the human being recognizes that there is no hope for transcendence and the objective structure of the universe as Albert Camus says:

A world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world. But, on the other hand, in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting is properly the feeling of absurdity. (13)

Kafka deliberately chooses an insect because it is a detach position from where Gregor can understand absurdity more better and he makes it possible by providing utmost degree of misery, alienation, and complexity to Gregor in insect form. He, as an insect succeeds to experience the absurdity in extreme degree with the

horrible imagery of self-expression. According to Albert Camus, the transcendence of the absurd situation is not achieved without intense struggle. And Sisyphus does this in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Gregor is also surrounded by absurdity and he is not less than Sisyphus in his treatment.

After a repetition of same efforts he lay in his former position again, sighing, and watched his legs struggling against each other more wildly than ever, if that were possible, and saw no way of bringing any order into this arbitrary confusion, he told himself again that it was impossible to stay in bed and that the most sensible course was to risk everything for the smallest hope of getting away from it. (736)

In fact, the two worlds; the world of everyday life, on the one hand and the world of anxiety represented by Gregor's experience as insect on the other, are the basic conditions of absurdity and these two worlds coincide as natural.

At first hand, the deliberate portrayal of metamorphosis in Gregor paves way Kafka to transgress the meaning of body. Through the transgressed body of the protagonist, Kafka evokes questions on conventionally constructed notion of body. In this regard, metamorphosis becomes the violation of body narratives as it brings body minorities into the domain of body discourse. Kafka displays a new body possibility from the ruin of the old to challenge the body hierarchies. On the other hand, the parallel issue of absurdity, complexity and fragmentation is also associated with the transgressed body of Gregor so that it is better understood.

Transgressive Body in Philip Roth's *The Breast*

The novella *The Breast* makes no attempt to disguise its indebtedness to Kafka's "The Metamorphosis". A professor of comparative literature David Kepesh familiar by trade with Kafka's transformation of Gregor Samsa into gigantic insect,

concludes that he has with his own transformation, “out-kafked Kafka” (82). And one of the strengths of *The Breast* is the way in which Roth makes an absolutely implausible premise believable precisely the lesson that he learned best from Kafka. In this regard, Roth, like Kafka, follows an anti-evolutionary process by reducing Kepesh’s body into a giant female breast so as to endow with the impression of estrangement regarding what he is trying to challenge the dominant social narratives about gender and subjectivity. Roth portrays metamorphosis in Kepesh at the very beginning of the story as Kepesh declares “I have returned to the earliest hours of my human existence, when the breast is me and I am the breast, when all is oneself and oneself is all, when the concave is the convex and the convex the concave” (91).

Roth’s application of an anti-evolutionary process in the very beginning reinforces rethinking about the conventions of subjectivity. Kepesh describes his breast figure as “reduced and primitive” form suggesting its movement of going back to the beginning of human life (16). Kepesh says his transformation is reality because “reality has style” (49).

Kafka ensures Gregor Samsa’s predicament when, in the second paragraph, the narrator asserts “It was no dream” (734). Nothing interrupts in the story to suggest otherwise as Gregor, trapped in his room and his insect body, tries to deal with his fatal estrangement from the world. Likewise, the realism of Roth’s text is relatively unmediated, and the narrator’s voice doesn’t change with his body. Kepesh feels an extremity of dislocation because his body is in catastrophe, and yet his consciousness remains surprisingly constant as Kepesh says, “Of course, it was days after the change had taken place before I even regained consciousness” (19). He continues, “I am able to understand” [though]—I am sightless” (17).

Roth starts from a fantastic premise, but the narrative, unfolding of the transformation isn't similarly fantastic because it is exploration of the implications of the subjectivity. Kepesh says "All I am saying is that despite my alteration, my mode of apprehending and valuing myself has not been appreciably altered; and if that has been the means by which I continue to maintain my identity" (41). We, then, confirm that his consciousness is reflected in his speech and perceptions and precisely that consciousness in itself doesn't change at the moment the body is altered and it constructs his irreducible subjectivity. When at one terrified moment Kepesh asserts "My body was still a body", we have to ask what a body is and what a body is in relation to 'the human' not just what mind's relation to the body is (67). His physical body becomes object. It no longer sustains subjectivity since the consciousness replaces body's function of subjectivity as Mikkonen Kai suggests, "One's sexuality is not found to be simply physical or unconscious but appears to be based on one's conscious self and mental orientation as well" (14).

The interest of the *The Breast* lies in the conflict it presents between sameness and otherness—in exploring, that is, the definition of stability of identity. Roth situates his protagonist's fantastic predicament within a world documented narratively as realistic, so that Kepesh measures the seeming fantasy of his condition against the real. The novella exposes the degree to which mental experience is typically taken to be detachable from the physical. To constitute identity, Roth reproduces the consistency on Kepesh's narrating voice through which we experience narrative events. When Kepesh awakes to find that he has metamorphosed into a six foot mammary gland, the existential question of identity becomes painfully centered on his physical condition. His metamorphosed anatomy is his destiny. All that remains recognizable of Kepesh to the outside world is his voice "speaking in a normal

conversational tone” which most clearly represents the subject as a conscious being to the world and affirms the possibility of an irreducible self, a human self that is not altered the way his body is altered (89).

When Kepesh declares, “I am a breast” in which ‘I’, the sign of subjectivity has become an object, a thing defined by its materiality, a dismembered body part that indicates its own lack (13). However, his declarative statements about how he feels and what he does, says, and thinks suggest efforts to declare a coherent self. Hence, Roth blurs the distinction between subject and object. In undermining Kepesh’s subjectivity, Roth unsettles the conventional cognitive ways we relate the body to human identity. Kepesh the breast has no limbs, no torso, and no face—nothing to orient himself according to the conventions of the ‘human being’. He feels as if the functions of hearing and speech originate in the nipple— that the nipple has replaced his head – and when the doctors conclude that his voice actually emerges from a flap of midsection, he cannot accommodate this information, which contradicts the prevailing metaphors of human selfhood, “my sense of internal landscape doggedly continues to associate the higher functions of consciousness with the body’s topmost point” (15). Because of the alienation from the human world Kepesh better understands the inherent absurdity, complexity and fragmentation that is common to all. As he centers on the distance he perceives between conventional sensory experience and his own, he wants to think that he has gone mad:

That I could not see, that I could not taste, that I could not smell, that I could only faintly hear, that I could not make contact with own anatomy, that I experienced myself as speaking to others like one buried within, and very nearly strangulated by, his own adipose

tissue—were these symptoms so unusual in the trance-world of psychosis? (56)

We, like Kepesh, know that he is a human being, no matter that his sensory perceptions suggest otherwise and he has a normative human voice that by the law of linguistic utterance constitutes Kepesh as a human subject as the subjectivity that Debra Shostak defines is, “the psychic unity that transcends the totality of the actual experience it assembles and that makes the permanence of the consciousness” (2). What Kepesh assumes in his narrative ‘I’ is the sum of his sensations and perceptions across time—his history as a human—that, he hopes, makes his self irreducible. Consciousness constitutes his ‘me’ and in that sense Roth suggests through his use of Kepesh’s narrating voice the continuity of a self distinct from the body. ‘I’ is his identity the same as the voice that speaks ‘I’. In this sense, his bodily variance has not interfered to his ‘self’ or subjectivity. Kepesh’s first person narration of his predicament constructs his subjectivity in discourse.

The Breast through unrestrained and taboo breaking representations of sexuality anticipates the culturally dominant narratives about the human subjectivity. Kepesh’s metamorphosis compels us to rethink about the human subjectivity when Kepesh regarding his transformation declares, “WHAT DOES IT MEAN? HOW HAS IT COME TO PASS? AND WHY? IN THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF THE HUMAN RACE, WHY DAVID ALAN KEPESH” (32)? *The Breast*, then, evokes multiple significations, most obviously because it is a part of surface body indelibly marked as female. Unlike most non-facial body parts, the female breast has frequently been signaled out of representation within body narrartives. It has a tradition as the object of looking, burdened with the complex of meanings associated with the feminine as a maternal and sexual being. However, Roth’s choice of the breast in this

novella, throws into incoherence not only Kepesh's relationship to subjectivity as a feature of the human but also his relationship to that most fundamental sign of identity i.e. 'gender'.

The Breast, hence, with the concept of trans-sexuality, deserves the second look because Kepesh, a male identity in the form of female breast is neither male nor female, he is in between somewhere as a 'third gender'. Roth, in this way, challenges some of the most deeply held oppositions like human versus non human, masculine versus feminine, subject versus object, inside versus outside that structure our thinking about the 'self'. Kepesh's capacity for constructing the self or presenting himself in a public sphere, his gendering and even his sexual pleasure have been compromised and revised by his "endocrinopathic catastrophe" (13). The personal pronoun in his repeated question "what has happen to me?" becomes the site not only of lack but also of shifting polarities of gendered subjectivity (18). By turning Kepesh into a female breast, Roth takes an imaginative leap that places the protagonist at the borderline not only of the 'human' but also of 'gender' as Kepesh asserts, "the breast continues to want to exist. Human I insist I am, but not that human" (28).

Kepesh in his metamorphosis represents the limitations of the either/ or condition imposed by the male/female bipolarity. Kepesh by becoming a subject who seems to be neither male nor female,—experiences himself as male but material body unmistakably represents the female that serves to question binary constructions of gender. Kepesh demonstrates the predicament of the border by means of his anxiety. He wishes to convince his observers that he is "still very much a man" (41). That is, he realizes the logical absurdity of his preconceptions about how his subjectivity is gendered. Roth's choice to transform Kepesh into a female breast allows him to uncover ways in which subjectivity is inextricable from the gendering of the body.

Kepesh's penis is formed itself onto nipple, Roth, thereby suggests the male being turned into a female and Kepesh's inability to say, "I am a man", "I'm – I'm sorry that I – I'm– I-" carries additional weight of referring to the deprivation of his specifically masculine subjectivity (67).

Not only is Kepesh's subjectivity compromised by other's reception of him, but it is also altered from within by his experience of his sexuality, which is shifted by his altered body to an unknown borderland between the masculine and the feminine. When he finds that he feels arousal at the nurse bathing and the massage around his nipple, he conceptualizes it in masculine term as "engorgement" (19). And eventually becomes so preoccupied with satisfying the "phallic cravings of [his] nipple" that he must struggle to control the frenzy of his desire (49). His language reflects his lingering conviction that he is still erotically masculine.

Although Kepesh's understanding of his erotic experience remains masculine, his ceaseless appetite shows the complications of trying to attach gender to the experience of desire. Kepesh always frustrated thinks "there would have to be out in the world who cannot help but laugh" and his desire is also intensified by his helplessness where helplessness is an eroticized feeling with respect to power that represents a male fantasy of the feminine (13). Is Kepesh in his helpless, insatiable desire 'masculine' or 'feminine'? Kepesh's perceptions and conceptions of his sexuality challenge the bipolarity of conventional gendering. If the 'I' that speaks is to all appearances a female breast, the 'I' is by definition 'feminine' but the speaking subject apprehends the self experientially and represents linguistically as 'masculine'.

Roth prohibits Kepesh from knowing himself as a gendered subject, in part because language available to him for self description remains stubbornly binary. His subject is under attack not only from the ambiguity of his gendering as it is

constructed by the appearance of his body but also from the very fact that he remains a sexualized being. His sensory experiences limited to hearing and touch compromises his gendering. In this, as in his metamorphosis into a female breast, he is aligned specifically with the feminine. Given his overtly confused subjectivity, he has 'masculine' consciousness inside a 'feminine' so he stands for the opinion of "the same and yet other" (qtd.in Mikkonen 81).

He is woman as a sign of difference and yet he is even different from woman. He can, then, doubly be described as "a bodily entity that is anomalous and deviant vis-à-vis the norm" (81). Roth maintains the problem of the inside /outside with respect to Kepesh's apprehension of his own subjectivity, such that he still experiences his self as internal and male though his outer self is female breast. So his inner disjunction from this outer self is the key, since he feels compelled to reject the mediated construction of his gendering. In this way the transgressive body of Kepesh i.e. his transformation into female breast undermines the bipolar category, upsetting the conventional relationship between male and female.

Roth, hence, redraws the concept of human body i.e. gender and questions the human understanding and the experience as Kepesh's change forces him to redefine his sexuality, his family members and his culture to negotiate a new position and a moral operative for himself in relation to others. Before his change those forces were the moral imperatives set on him by his work, by marriage and sex, and by his roles as son, friend, neighbor, client and citizen. After his change his social ties seem to have loosened and his duties have lessened in important ways. Although the many social regulations that had caused him distress begin to lose meaning, his body now becomes a site of anxiety. Part of the problem is the limitations put on his senses that change his perception of reality. It is the question of his new sexual identity.

After all, Kepesh's change having transformed a man into part of a woman questions socially defined gender roles. Further, he finds new sexual pleasures in his transformed body. Eventually we see that Kepesh's whole body becomes an erogenous field. His uncertainty about the direction of his sexual desire blurs the perception of his gender. Loss of control is certainly an issue. Kepesh may be aroused by any tactile sensations and those newly sensations are radically different from the ones he experienced as a sexual male. During Clare's first visit, her touch arouses him unexpectedly, creating his first major crisis, "I just want her to squeeze me and sock me and lick me. I can't get enough of it. I can't get stand when she stops. I shout, I scream, Go on! Go on!" (45). Kepesh remains passive and immobile in his new sexual role, however, finds satisfaction in the state of "utter helplessness" in which pleasure come "out of nothingness" (78). Kepesh's erotic body thus becomes an "ironic version of the stereotypical female sexual role in which a woman attains gratifications passively without orgasm" (Kai 13).

A central issue in Kepesh's transformed sexuality is the problem of how to control erotic desire. Soon after he becomes conscious following his transformation, Kepesh is aroused by the touches of male nurse, and that distresses him greatly. Kepesh decides that it must be a female nurse who washes him or his wife who rubs his nipple if he is going to get any physical pleasure from human contact. For Kepesh to be wholly satisfied, the bathing or other erotic acts must involve only himself and a woman; no other person may be present in the room. Despite those precautions, unsettling thoughts keep bothering him. Clare has excited him with her touch during her first visit as their conversation follows:

"Would you do it?"

"If you want me to, of course."

Of *course*. What coolness.

“I do!” I cried. “I do!” [. . .]

“Is anyone in the room?”

“Just you and me.”

“Oh no, sweetheart, no, no.”

“Oh, squeeze me, squeeze me very hard!” (44)

The above quote shows Kepesh’s permanence of his male identity and sexuality. He immediately speculates on the possibility of Clare’s turning into a male organ: “If Clare had turned into an enormous penis. . .” (39). Kepesh quickly brushes off the thought, calls it ridiculous, and thus represses it. However, he is still fantasized by his male sexual desire which he wants to fulfill with her female partner Clare:

I can imagine Clare, I can envision her—I see her sucking on me! I want her to take clothes off—but I’m afraid to ask her! I don’t want to drive her away—it’s bizarre enough as it is, but still I can imagine she has her clothes off, I want them off, at her feet, on the floor. I want her to get up on me, and *roll* on me. Oh, Doctor, you know what I really want? I want to fuck her! I want that big girl to bend over at the head of hammock and stick my nipple in her cunt from behind. And move on it, up and down. (45)

But he is still horrified by the thought of bisexuality so he doubts that he would be capable of the (apparently homosexual) devotion that Clare shows to him. Further, the fact that Clare is so obediently tries to please him and Kepesh actually traps her into a continuous lesbian! affair with his female body. Homophobia is crucial for Kepesh in the reconstitution of his gendered self and of a new moral imperative for his sexual body. When the nurse is replaced, the disturbingly arousing

touch of the new male nurse causes enough resistance to him to control the overwhelming erotic feelings he has. Kepesh asserts:

My nipple into either the mouth or the anus of Mr. Brooks, the new male nurse, is something I just can't imagine with anything like the excitement I would imagine my nipple in Clare, or even in Miss Clark [the previous nurse], though I realize that the conjunction of male mouth and female nipple can hardly be described as a homosexual act.
(57)

What Kepesh, in fact, realizes here is that one's sexual identity is not simply physical, but may be based finally on one's mental orientation. From that insight Kepesh concludes that he has to remain what he has been i.e. a heterosexual male. The tension between the stubborn male psyche and the female organ in which it is located arouses the gender trouble. No matter what happens, David Kepesh cannot give up his male ego as he says, "I am still very much a man –for who but a man has conscience, reason, desire and remorse"? (53). There is a sense that Kepesh has to reinvent his maleness to avoid a total absurdity and nervous breakdown as he further asserts, "I was afraid that the further I went the further I would go [...] I would no longer be anyone. I would have become craving flesh and nothing more" (56).

Homophobia, then, helps Kepesh negatively to relocate his maleness. He mentally relocates his lost penis in his nipple. He wants to penetrate a woman with his nipple; he wants to occupy an active role in a sexual act. Kepesh, thus, centers his subjectivity around the redefinition of his nipple. The symbolic mutilation of his sexual organ, his actual castration, thus permits him to find a new sense of masculinity. And this ironic reconstruction of his gender has significance in blurring the social perception about gender role.

Through all the ironic reversals of sexual identity in Kepesh and Clare's changing relationship, in the contradictions between Kepesh's psyche and his body, and in the definition of his maleness, the narrative creates a situation of sexual ambiguity and this situation of sexual ambiguity questions socially defined gender roles and thus transgresses the law and definition of sexual difference. Kepesh's transformation gives him a new, castrated sexual identity that at first is out of his control and a source of great anxiety but that later he masters. The new gender of Kepesh's body and its contradictory relationship with his male psyche are essential elements that link his metamorphosis to a problematic of subjectivity. By forcing the manifold meanings of the gendered body by representing the very fleshings of gendering, Roth makes a valuable contribution to thinking about the conventions of subjectivity. Thus, *The Breast* is a resistance to gender discourse but a generosity towards otherness i.e. trans-sexuality.

IV. Conclusion

Both stories “The Metamorphosis” and *The Breast* deal with the issue of ‘metamorphosis’ by using transgressive body as the device to deconstruct the stereotypical concept of the body and hence they blur the deeply held hierarchical presumptions like human/animal, male/female, subject/object and inside/outside which has been rooted in the social and cultural narratives of the ‘body’. According to the postmodern premises that ‘margin constitutes the center’, these both texts posit in marginality and counter against conventionally encoded meaning of ‘body’ and raise the question regarding the human subjectivity.

This comparative account discusses the conceptual similarities between the two writers that they both with the use of transgressive body as their conceptual framework, redraw the concept of human body and question human subjectivity with the assumption that the meaning of the body is associated with socio-cultural interpretation. Nevertheless in attempt of redrawing the body concept, there lies a difference in their treatment. Kafka’s concern is about human and animal bipolarity whereas Roth anticipates dominant dichotomy inherent in gender meaning. In this regard, Kafka in terms of trans-physicality violates anthropocentric definition of human body and Roth brings trans-sexuality in the domain of gender meaning. However, they in common with the portrayal of metamorphosis, explore human complexity, absurdity and fragmentation in better way.

In contrast to common interpretations, Kafka’s case, the metamorphosis of the protagonist into a gigantic insect is to challenge anthropocentric presumptions and raise question about human/nonhuman relationships. In the course of metamorphosis of protagonist, the split between animal body and the human mind is not necessarily explicitly specified and indeed, the transformed protagonist experiences what it is to

be like for a human being to be animal. Human around him are usually unaware of the fact that he is originally human being. In this sense Kafka's concern is not merely with a human turned into animal but with such an existence in which the combination between human and non human experience breaks the dichotomy between human beings and rest of the other beings.

Roth's portrayal of male psyche within the female breast offers a challenge to easy notion of binarity putting into question the categories of female and male whether they are considered essential or constructed, biological or cultural. Kepesh's metamorphosis offers paradoxes that expose the slippage in gender categories constituting his identity as third gender. His sense of disjunction and radical displacement causes us to question the dominant gender narratives about male/female bipolarity that undergirds our experience and understanding of gender and sexuality as well as fictions of mind/body, inside/outside, and subject/object, the oppositions that likewise inform our notions of 'self'.

In conclusion, writers' portrayal of metamorphosis is a route of escape from the conventionally encoded meaning of body, identity and subjectivity. Such hierarchical presumption and very essence of barrier must be challenged by transgressing body because after all there are many body possibilities yet to exist since versatility and instability of identity that skips from one existence to another is the very spirit of postmodernism.

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