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**Kristeva's Social Theory: A Lacanian Critique for Education**

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## **Abstract**

This research aims to provide a symptomatic reading of the work of Julia Kristeva. A symptomatic reading is one that constructs the problematic or the unsaid of the text. As a symptomatic reader, I attempt to occupy a position within a theoretical discourse that interrogates the texts by Kristeva and those that surround her work. In doing so, my aim is to make visible the suppressed and excluded discourses within Kristevan theory and which have enabled that theory to make sense in particular ways.

The specific systems of meaning in Kristeva's work that I will interrogate coalesce around her theory of the semiotic and the symbolic, which is presented as a revolutionary theory of subjectivity in relation to the social. Kristeva's theory will be critically examined in terms of how it is formulated in relation to the theories of Althusser, Hegel and Lacan. Each chapter aims to displace an accepted or dominant interpretation by Kristeva and also by her readers.

In reconstructing the problematic that is concealed in Kristeva's work, I will explore how her theory maintains an Althusserian approach to social theory, and how this underlies her critique of Hegel and Lacan. In the final chapters on Lacan, my argument is that Kristeva's critique of Lacanian psychoanalysis is inherently flawed and that this, therefore, leads her psychoanalytic work into ethically difficult areas. In the last chapter, on education and transference, I will show how certain educational applications of Kristevan psychoanalysis culminate in the very same ethical problems. These ethical difficulties, I will argue, are avoided by Lacanian psychoanalysis and, therefore, by its application to education.

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## Introduction

### Social Theory and Kristeva

Every investigation begins when we cease to take something for granted (Copjec, 1994: 164).

Only a dogmatist "on the level of his task" can never be afraid of putting into question the previous results, turning them upside down without mercy if the new quests make it necessary, thus turning them into provisional stages of a search (Dolar, 1998: 37).

The aim of this thesis is to investigate certain key aspects of Kristeva's work from a critical perspective, specifically with regard to its contribution to, firstly, social theory and, secondly, education. The general argument is that Kristeva, and many of her readers, have misunderstood Lacan largely on the basis of a limited reading of his work. These misconceptions undermine Kristeva's project which is to improve upon Lacanian psychoanalysis and to provide a revolutionary theory of subjectivity.

The question that I begin with in this introduction is, what can Kristeva's work contribute to education? As a literary theorist and a practicing psychoanalyst, Kristeva's writing has importance to social theory and therefore to education. Theorists who have emphasized this approach to such a literary and psychoanalytic theory are Philip Wexler and Anthony Elliot, who in different ways have examined the Kristevan theory of subjectivity. Wexler is a sociologist of education and author of numerous articles and books that are used in education syllabuses. His research addresses fundamental questions about what education is and what its role in society should be. Elliot is a social and political theorist who has published many books in the areas of social theory, cultural studies and psychoanalysis. His books and articles are texts in sociology, psychoanalytical and literary courses. The possibilities and the problems which Wexler and Elliot have found in Kristeva's work, serve as an introduction to the following chapters where I will address specific areas of a Kristevan social theory and its application to education.

In one of his major texts, the *Social Analysis of Education* (1987), Wexler proposes an alternative to the tendency in sociology to obscure and deny changes in culture and thus in social knowledge (1987: 10-11). Rather than the conception of social knowledge as distinct from the larger cultural changes, Wexler argues for a social analysis of education which takes 'seriously the current movement of society and culture' (11). The current movement, according to Wexler, includes the cultural theories of structuralism and poststructuralism,

Russian formalism, semiotics, postmodernism and deconstruction. These cultural theories are important for the social analysis of education in terms of their emphasis upon the production of knowledge and meaning.

Processes of significance, of making meaning, and the traditional locus of their study, become the focus of an interpretive social science. More and more of shared social meaning and the activity of social understanding is encompassed by the now auratic term: text (7).

A social analysis of education may be formulated by employing certain cultural theories of signification, since these theories enable an understanding as to how schooling - like all social practices - produces, distorts and transforms knowledge (13). Amongst the cultural theories to provide this understanding, Wexler includes Kristeva's theory of the semiotic (11). The semiotic is a pre-verbal and corporeal condition of signification and, therefore, it is the productive and disruptive element of symbolic processes of meaning. Wexler finds Kristevan theory to be useful for a social analysis of education because it examines the interconnections of knowledge and meaning with the body and identity.

Other sociological theories of education, such as critical pedagogy (to which Wexler was once aligned), had already given attention to the relationship between knowledge and power, but those studies became distanced 'from past, contemporary and emergent social movements; to replace with generality, the specific requirements of an educational politics' (87). Rather than this disconnection of educational social theory from historical and cultural movements, Wexler encourages critical pedagogy to associate issues of knowledge with those of identity. Kristeva's poststructuralist theory of the transverbal belongs to the cultural movement Wexler calls "textualism", in which the social forces of production are analysed in language and discourse. Textualism determines its theory by the social practice of language and this approach will 'reconnect theory, research and practice in the new sociology of education to historical movements in society and education' (88). Although Wexler looks to poststructuralist theories to renew the sociology of education, he also underlines the Marxist and structuralist elements of textualism and this allows for a line of development from the previous sociology of education towards a critical sociology of education.

Sociology of education in the late 1970s had recognized the significant contribution of Althusserian structuralism in a critique of educational ideology. A key point in Wexler's critique of the sociology of education is that it was only 'an abstract appropriation of Marxist theory', where schooling is understood as a reflection or a reproduction of social ideologies (45). Although the sociology of education in the 1970s had not yet utilised the full potential of

Althusser's work, his theory of ideology as a material practice directed sociology away from the simplistic view of ideology as 'the imposition of ideas to an analysis of the discursive practices' (39). Wexler points to the theoretical use of Althusser when he explains that the demise of what is called the new sociology of education has been due to an awareness of how the reproduction model of ideology in schooling had been based on a principle of correspondence, rather than the more accurate principle of contradiction (40-41). In opposition to the reproduction model, Althusser's structuralist approach to the mode of production had explicitly criticized and transformed the orthodox Marxist theory of levels, by which the forces and relations of production are considered wholly determinative of the superstructural levels of culture, ideology, politics and law. Thus, in contrast to a simplistically determined conception of the social formation, Althusser's theory of practice requires each level of the social field to be considered as a distinct practice with its own knowledge and object, and therefore each practice is not only economically determined but is overdetermined in a complex relationship with other levels of the structure. As I discuss in Chapter 1, Althusser's conception of the social formation is a fundamental influence on Kristeva's theory in which the semiotic is the other scene of language and meaning. Significantly, for Wexler, the problems in the new sociology of education can be highlighted by Althusser's conception of society and may be alleviated by Kristeva's poststructuralist theory.

Althusser's contribution to an analysis of education is made evident in Wexler's explanation for the theoretical shift in the sociology of education with regard to the concept of the social structure.

The concept of totality was replaced by an awareness of relative institutional autonomy. Structural integration gave way to the description of internal contradictions. The reproduction of social domination was conceptually mitigated by the study of conflict. Sources of social change were found in an unfolding set of structural contradictions of the capitalist economy, and in the cultural autonomy and resistance of the working class. The reproduction theme fell into disrepute even among its original proponents (41).

In this passage Wexler explains how the new sociology of education is reconfigured in accordance with Althusser's social theory which attempts to maintain the differences, rather than the similarities, between the various social levels. My thesis begins by examining the Althusserian theory of overdetermination, where a social practice is at once determined and determining in relation to other practices in the social structure and, specifically, how this approach is developed in Kristeva's conception of the semiotic as that which is in

contradiction to the symbolic order of meaning. In Chapters 1 and 2 the Althusserian effect within Kristeva's work is explored, in order to analyse certain conceptual problems with regard to how the relations between the subject and society are theorized by Althusser and, therefore, by Kristeva.

Kristeva's theory of the semiotic is important for Wexler's social analysis of education in that it establishes connections between language and the subject, in which 'the process of movement from one discursive logic to another ... is one of change and re-formation in the course of social action' (165). This approach helps to introduce my initial research question as to how Kristevan theory is relevant to education, for Wexler is concerned with how the study of signifying practices is a study of the production of knowledge, and how this is opposed to a static conception of meaning and value. Poststructuralism, or textualism, enables a 'socially de-sublimating reading' of educational knowledge (133).

[The poststructuralist] critique of liberalism is, however, not of the ideology of individualism, but rather of its discourse: *of the means of producing its meaning*. In choosing the discursive means of production, rather than the reified products which have been taken for 'things' or 'ideas', this more distanced form of critique anticipates a new politics in a society in which: *the struggle over the means of producing discourse, over language and the practices of forming discourse, becomes the major locus of social life* (134).

Wexler's approach to poststructuralism and education is implicitly addressed in the following chapters, where I critically examine Kristeva's theory of the production of meaning in terms of its theoretical configuration, its critical reception, and its educational application. My overall strategy in this investigation is informed by the emphasis, exemplified here in Wexler, on the production of meaning for social analysis. Hence, the procedure I follow throughout is to question certain established readings of and by Kristeva in relation to her theory of signification. The interpretive strategy I employ is described by Wexler as a questioning of the process of constructing knowledge, and this requires us to consider the production of knowledge 'as a series of editings and recodings' (105).

In attempting to edit and recode the established interpretive field of and around Kristeva, a major area in my project is Kristevan psychoanalysis and its relationship with the work of Jacques Lacan. While Wexler does not refer to Lacan by name, he is explicitly critical of Lacan's theory that the unconscious is structured like a language. Wexler's criticism is that this conception of the unconscious has the 'individualized and universalized form ... of capitalist ideology', in that it replaces the unconscious and the drives with signification (175).

For Wexler, Kristeva's work is a counteractive to the Lacanian determinism of the signifier, since in her theory, the 're-constitution of the subject of discourse takes place outside of Oedipal immediacy of even the institutional replications and reminders of familial, Oedipal relations' (165). From this perspective, Lacanian psychoanalysis conforms to a capitalist ideology because it aims to naturalise the symbolic process, while Kristeva's work is attentive to a logic that is heterogeneous to 'the discursive logic of the father and his symbolic order' (166). In Wexler's reading, Lacanian psychoanalysis cannot contribute to a social analysis of education because it does not allow for an account of identity production in educational relations (175). As a contrast to Lacan, Kristeva's theory of the semiotic shows how the subject and meaning are put into process by the corporeal, drive energies which, in regard to social theory, gives an understanding of the relation between 'discourse and individual formation and motivation in the emergent educational relation' (167, 174).

In Chapters 3 and 4, I am interested in certain areas of difference between Kristevan and Lacanian psychoanalysis, and these differences can be introduced here via Wexler's interpretation of these two theorists. By directing his critique at the Lacanian emphasis on the symbolic structure, Wexler conforms to a certain reading of Lacan which tends to neglect the important shifts in Lacan's theory. As I discuss in Chapter 3, such a selective reading of Lacan is a prevalent one, particularly amongst those critics who are attracted to Kristeva's work which, as I also demonstrate, contains this very same reading of Lacan. Chapter 3 therefore concerns important questions in my inquiry. If Kristeva's psychoanalytic work is generated in opposition to Lacan's, then as an oppositional interpretation of Lacan it requires analysis. How does Kristeva read Lacan? Is her critique valid? Does Kristeva provide an improvement to what are claimed to be the problems in Lacanian psychoanalysis?

Another social theorist, Anthony Elliot, has also recognized that social theory has much to gain from the contribution of cultural theories, such as psychoanalysis and critical theory.<sup>1</sup> In *Social Theory and Psychoanalysis in Transition* (1992), Elliot examines how psychoanalysis provides 'new interpretive strategies for critical social theory in relation to self, self-identity, and subjectivity' (Elliott, 1992: 1). In order to understand the relations between self and society, social theory can benefit from psychoanalysis, which is concerned with unconscious desire in the constitution of the self and how this bears upon issues of power and domination in society. The work of Lacan, and of post-Lacanianists such as Kristeva, is intended to address these very issues, yet Elliot finds that there are fundamental conceptual weaknesses in Lacanian psychoanalysis, which, according to Elliot, also diminishes the extent of Kristeva's advancement upon Lacan.

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<sup>1</sup> Elliot's book analyses two main theoretical approaches to the self and society: one is Lacanian psychoanalysis and its associations with poststructuralism, the other is the critical theory of the Frankfurt School (Elliott, 1992: 2).

The limitations that Elliot sees in Lacanian psychoanalysis repeat and extend upon Wexler's critique of Lacan's conception of the unconscious. Elliot's objections to Lacanian psychoanalysis are, like Wexler's, based on the complete determination of the subject by the symbolic order. Elliot provides a more extensive discussion of Lacan than Wexler with regard to a number of Lacanian concepts such as the imaginary, the mirror stage, the object (a), lack and desire. A key point in Elliot's critique concerns Lacan's apparent neglect of the drives and affective states that are incommensurable to the symbolic order: that is, 'since Lacan treats the libidinal drives as an incoherent fiction, his account of the nature of psychic representation is ... inadequate' (148). In Elliot's view, Lacanian psychoanalysis is not concerned with how dominant ideas and values can be resisted or challenged by the individual subject and, instead, 'his concept of the symbolic focuses on those mechanisms of the structural ordering of the self and self-identity' (155). Moreover, because Lacan's theory of subjectivity is founded on an ontological lack, any social action taken by the subject will only leave the subject fundamentally dissatisfied. The conclusion Elliot draws from this is that social critique is 'stripped of any ethical dimension' since any cultural or social activity is reduced to the same causal lack (261). The conceptual inadequacy of Lacan's work for a social theory is, therefore, that 'it fails to deal with the fundamental drive of the unconscious for pleasure, satisfaction, fulfilment' (261). Elliot examines important and, as I will show, frequently asked questions about Lacan's work which my thesis aims to address in terms of Lacan's approach to the drives and, also, the issue of a Lacanian ethics of psychoanalysis. In the following chapters I will re-examine the kind of questions, as typified here by Elliot, in relation to Kristeva's psychoanalysis, which is perceived as an advancement upon, albeit one that remains limited by, Lacanian psychoanalysis.

As with Wexler, Elliot finds that Kristeva's theory of the semiotic as the other side of language is promising for social theory, in that it offers the possibility for resistance to the subject's domination by the Lacanian symbolic (220-22). For Elliot, Lacan's subject is utterly determined by symbolic discourses, while Kristeva's theory positions those symbolic structures in a dialectical relationship with semiotic drives (227). Since Kristeva allows for the disruptive element of drives, her work is also concerned to elaborate how 'the semiotic is principally centred around those "archaic" dimensions of subjectivity which precede the mirror stage in Lacan's work' (228). Elliot's criticism is that Kristeva's theory of the semiotic does not succeed in resisting oppressive structures, for it can only exert its disruptive force in and through the symbolic order that functions according to the law of the father (230). Exemplifying a certain interpretive approach to Kristeva (an approach I discuss in detail in Chapter 3), Elliot's conclusion is that Kristeva remains within the Lacanian theoretical bind, for her work does not undertake 'a thoroughgoing revision of the Lacanian concept of the

symbolic and the origins of psychical reality' (230). With regard to this reading, a question I examine and attempt to answer is whether or not Kristeva does provide a comprehensive revision of the Lacanian symbolic. In Chapter 3 my purpose is to question the interpretation of the Lacanian symbolic as a totalising and dominant structure, which can be found in interpretations both by Kristeva and of Kristeva.

Elliot's text is important for its elucidation of how psychoanalysis might contribute to social theory, specifically in terms of its emphasis on self-reflection, which involves the development of strategies to interpret and transform the connections between subjective experience and social structures (271). Nevertheless, Elliot's discussion concludes that the psychoanalytical theories of Kristeva and Lacan are not equal to this task. The Lacanian symbolic order cancels out the 'primary capacity of the psyche to make representations, identifications, affects', and this further contaminates Kristeva work insofar as it cannot account for the relationship between revolutionary language and social revolution (139, 226). The question of how Kristeva theorizes this relationship between the semiotic and the symbolic is addressed in Chapters 1 and 2 where I outline the conceptual background to this theory and the problems that arise from that theoretical alignment. Since it is Elliot's argument that Kristeva cannot escape the deterministic Lacanian symbolic, he is able to conclude that neither Kristevan nor Lacanian psychoanalysis are able to contribute to a theory and critique of society. In terms of the goals of psychoanalysis and those of social theory, the Lacanian theory of subjectivity, which for Elliot includes Kristeva's theory, is not concerned 'with the capacity for critical self-reflection, and thus an alteration of the psychical economy of the self, is repressed at this level of Lacan's work' (141). In Chapters 3 and 4, I will critically examine the significant differences in Kristevan and Lacanian psychoanalysis, particularly in terms of the function of psychoanalysis as a process for the exploration and alteration of subjectivity.

To present the main issues and approach of the following chapters it is therefore relevant to compare my purposes with Elliot's. In his introduction to *Social Theory and Psychoanalysis in Transition*, Elliot outlines the central aims of his study.

- 1 To serve as a critical introduction to some fundamental concepts and issues in social theory and psychoanalysis, focusing upon developments in modern critical theory, Lacanian and post-Lacanian thought, the theories of structuralism and poststructuralism, and feminist appropriations of psychoanalysis.

- 2 In general, to insist that the interconnections between the psyche and social field, the self and society, have not yet been formulated in an adequate fashion, and must be substantially rethought.
- 3 To contribute to the task of reformulating key problems in social theory and psychoanalysis, developing an approach sufficiently alert and sensitive to the psychological processes of the self and human social relationships, deployments of ideology and power, and the analysis of sexuality and gender division (11-12).

In comparison with those aims my approach is similar yet theoretically less extensive in that I am specifically concerned with Kristeva's work and its affiliation with Marxism, structuralism and poststructuralism, Hegelian philosophy, Lacanian psychoanalysis and certain applications of Kristeva's work in education. As with Elliot's aims, this thesis is also a critical introduction, where I revisit certain concepts and theories by Kristeva and Lacan which for social theorists, like Wexler and Elliot, are either valuable or problematic. The key concepts and areas of relevance to a social analysis that I will be addressing are: the semiotic as a subversive force for the symbolic and subjectivity, the difference between the Kristevan and Lacanian conception of the symbolic, the question of the drive in Lacan's work, and the ethical implications of each theory in relation to education. My strategy throughout this thesis is to question the received interpretations of Kristeva's work in relation to Althusser, Hegel and Lacan in Chapters 1 to 3. In the final chapter, the problem I address is whether social theory in education has too easily accepted that Kristeva's work is an advancement upon Lacanian psychoanalysis.

In regard to the second aim in Elliot's summary, my thesis is also concerned with the relationship between the psyche and the social field as Kristeva formulates it. In Chapters 1 and 2, on the basis of an analysis of the received interpretations of Kristeva's work, my purpose is to return to Kristeva's early theory of the semiotic - which, however, is retained throughout her later work - and to reconsider the conceptual limitations of this theory of social and subjective revolution. Chapter 2 is the turning point where through Žižek's re-interpretation of Hegel the thesis becomes directed towards Lacan. Here I discuss how the effect of Althusser's influence upon Kristeva (as explained in Chapter 1) is to cause a conceptual blind spot in Kristeva's interpretation of Hegelian negativity, with the result that what is subversive in Hegel's theory is reduced in an Althusserian misreading. Kristeva's critique of Hegel helps define her interpretation of Lacan's theory of desire, since the notion of negativity in Hegel concerns the question of how the particular identity is produced in and by a social formation. If Kristeva misreads the Hegelian conception of causality by reducing its subversive operations, then might her reading of Lacan's theory of desire and the

symbolic order involve similar problems? How might these problems impact on the understanding of the social and the subject in Kristevan psychoanalysis?

Chapter 3 further develops the question of interpretation in Kristeva's work, by showing how in theory, in practice and in application to education, Lacan's psychoanalysis is at variance with Kristeva's. While I would agree with Elliot that Kristeva does not provide a proper advancement of Lacan, I depart from his findings and contend that Lacan's work is a far more valuable psychoanalysis and, therefore, social theory than is considered in Elliot's study. In effect, by having rethought what are Elliot's first and second aims, by implication my concluding argument will address Elliot's third aim of contributing to the reformulation of key problems in psychoanalysis and social theory. In Chapters 3 and 4, I show how Lacanian theory is already an advancement upon Kristeva's psychoanalysis and, on the basis of this, these chapters also address the problem of how Lacan has been interpreted by Kristeva and others sharing the same approach as we have found here with Wexler and Elliot.

These texts by Wexler and Elliot are nonetheless both significant contributions to the theoretical points of connection between social theory and psychoanalysis. Above all Wexler has extended the theoretical horizons of social theory and of education by emphasising that educationists need to understand their specific field within the complexity of the broader social field. In order to take into account certain developments in the social field of knowledge, this thesis heeds Wexler's emphasis and, in the context of those critical developments, examines anew the question of the contribution of Lacanian and Kristevan psychoanalysis to social theory. The outcome of this critique is to reposition certain accepted views both in Kristeva's reading of Lacan and in prominent interpretations of Kristeva. These readings have misunderstood Lacan's theory of subjectivity to be one where the symbolic law wholly dominates the subject.

## The Revolution in Kristeva's Theory of the Semiotic

Kristeva's theory of the semiotic has remained important in her work since the extensive examination of pre-linguistic operations within signification in *Revolution in Poetic Language*. The development of the theory precedes the 1974 French publication of *Revolution in Poetic Language*, beginning with Kristeva's first writings in the late 1960s, and continuing into the 1990s with her psychoanalytic research on the trans-verbal, or the production of meaning.<sup>2</sup> How did this important concept arise? Which theoretical areas provided coordinates for the concept to be positioned alongside and against? What are the initial concerns and aims within the development of the semiotic?

### 1. Interpreting Absence

Other readings of Kristeva have likewise given a central place to the semiotic in her work, yet these readings have tended to neglect the earlier essays before *Revolution in Poetic Language*, which most clearly reveal Kristeva's theoretical influences. In her book *Julia Kristeva: Speaking the Unspeakable* (1998), Anne-Marie Smith has shown that throughout Kristeva's work there is a 'conceptual coherence and ... a vast, integrated work-in-progress', and this perception underlines Smith's aim to 'trace the evolution of the concepts of the semiotic and the symbolic through Kristeva's work' (1998: 4, 14). Yet although Smith's project is concerned with 'how the whole of Kristeva's oeuvre ... involves a consistent elaboration of the category of the semiotic and its interaction with the symbolic', her book only rarely deals with Kristeva's publications before *Revolution in Poetic Language* (15). I think Smith is right in claiming that Kristeva's texts present us with a work-in-progress and while this progress can be understood in terms of *Revolution in Poetic Language*, the theory of the semiotic must also be examined in the context of the earlier essays.

John Lechte's influential book, *Julia Kristeva* (1990) includes a chapter entitled 'Towards the Semiotic' and is concerned with the early theoretical influences on Kristeva, specifically Barthes, Benveniste, Bataille and Saussure. My aim here is to show that in addition to these central influences is the equally important affiliation of Kristeva's early work with Althusser's structuralist and Marxist theories. From that perspective, my interpretation differs from Kelly Oliver, in *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind* (1993), who tells us that Kristeva 'started her work as a reaction against the rigidity of structuralism' (1993: 7). In this chapter I

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<sup>2</sup> In 1988, Kristeva described her work at the Institut du Vivant of the University of Paris 7, where the semiotic is part of a research project in which both biologists and psychoanalysts investigate the unconscious and its translinguistic logic (1998: 324-5).

am interested in how Althusserian structural Marxism permeates the early writings until, and including, *Revolution in Poetic Language*.

As John Lechte has shown in his comprehensive study of Kristeva's work before *Revolution in Poetic Language*, many of the essays from the 1960s to the early 1970s are the logical and coherent predecessors for her later, key concepts (1990: 92). Lechte approaches the early works by emphasising Kristeva's interest in the logical and the formal with respect to the materiality of language (60), whereas I want to centre on the notion of system or order, and the concomitant issue of the transformation of that order.

### **Marxist Revolution**

In its foundational stage, Kristeva's theory of the semiotic has an unmistakable left-wing impetus to oppose and change the dominant, oppressive social order. In *Revolution in Poetic Language* the Marxist analysis of practice is a crucial aspect in Kristeva's endeavour to develop a new theory of revolutionary signification. My aim is to critically examine Kristeva's theory of the semiotic with regard to its Marxist influences, and this influence is most apparent in Kristeva's texts preceding and including *Revolution in Poetic Language*.

To begin with I will examine two of Kristeva's earliest essays - 'Semiotics: A Critical Science and/or A Critique of Science' (1969)<sup>3</sup> and 'Gesture: Practice or Communication?' (1969) - which rely on an Althusserian approach to Marxism and are also decisive in shaping the theory of the semiotic. In 'Gesture: Practice or Communication?' gesture is described as a practice preceding representation and language, while later in Kristeva's work gesture will be theorized as a semiotic practice. In 'Semiotics: A Critical Science and/or A Critique of Science' Kristeva argues for a theory of semiotics and signification which operates as a critical practice where production is emphasized over product. The later theory of the semiotic in *Revolution in Poetic Language* places emphasis upon the production of meaning and sense, and thus proposes that the semiotic as a process is 'anterior to the sign and syntax ... [yet] necessary to the acquisition of language, but not identical to language (1974: 29).

These essays which employ Althusserian conceptions of production and practice situate Kristeva's early work in close proximity to Althusser's structural Marxism. Each essay begins with a similar observation on contemporary culture and society that underlines the necessity for certain theoretical changes in the study of signs and signification. As the science of signs, semiotics is integral to theories of knowledge and ideology, and as such 'this kind of

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<sup>3</sup> The dates in parentheses refer to the original publication date.

discourse [is] a clear register of the cultural subversion which our civilization is undergoing' (Kristeva, 1969c: 75). The changes that Kristeva recommends for semiotics are compelled by the subversions in culture: where previously semiotics was centred on the language system and the verbal, it must now account for non-verbal semiotic systems such as sound, gesture, the visual, and affect, 'so as to adopt another point of view, situated outside its own system' (Kristeva, 1969b: 266). Kristeva intends to reformulate the models in semiotics that have centred on phonology and semantics and have restricted the boundaries of its research to communication and determinate meaning (268-9).

At the beginning of her project, Kristeva emphasizes the necessity of incorporating gesture in the study of signs. For Kristeva gesture is a productive aspect of signification that precedes representation yet is all the while constitutive of representation. To account for gesture, semiotics is required to incorporate an aspect Kristeva calls 'relational' as opposed to sense, meaning and structure (269). A semiotics that includes gesture rearranges the closure of a sign system based on determinate meaning and opens it out towards its other. Gesture is 'a sign system which is "posterior" to it but through which it is necessarily thought, as a kind of afterthought' (270).

Two later essays on visual art can help to explain Kristeva's early theoretical developments. In the essay 'Jackson Pollock's Milky Way: 1912-1956' (1989), Kristeva uses Harold Rosenberg's term 'action painting' to define Pollock's paintings as a semiotic space where 'no image is visible in the pulverised texture of the canvases ... Images are suspended, symbols avoided' (1989: 36). Pollock's 'battle with representation' is related to 'Pollock's gesture' which is 'not instrumental, but an encounter with chance' (36). Likewise, in discussing the sculptor Alain Kirili, in 'The Imaginary Sense of Forms' (1991), Kristeva interprets the gestural elements of the works in the context of semiotic corporeality, in which the artist 'shapes the obscure sense of our bodies into form and matter before speech arrives to cast light on them' (1991: 30). Gesture is therefore not additional to meaning but is, instead, productive of meaning, for it extends the sign system towards the non-verbal and directs semiotics away from its previous studies centred on communication.

Kristeva's 1969 essay on gesture makes apparent its Marxist influences in the homology of communication and a system of exchange (Kristeva, 1969b: 266). Therefore, any production - be it signifying or economic production - is conceived solely in terms of its value,

from the point of view of distribution and social consumption, or, if you like, of communication, work is always value, be it use value or exchange value. In other words, if, in communication, values are always a crystallized form of work, work

represents nothing outside the value in which it is crystallized (Kristeva, 1969c: 82).

The exchange of products is likened to the interchange of signs and meaning in communication, thus value is determined according to the possibility for the reification of work and of signs, and their subsequent circulation in the system. The logic Kristeva uses here can be understood in terms of Fredric Jameson's concept of structural parallelism, 'in which it is affirmed that at some level of abstraction the "structure" of the three quite different realities of social situation, philosophical or ideological position, and verbal and theatrical practice are "the same"' (Jameson, 1981: 43-4). The logic of structural parallelism is an important framework for Kristeva's new theory of signification in which semiotics is defined as the 'development of models, that is, of formal systems whose structure is isomorphic or analogous to the structure of another system (the system under study)' (Kristeva, 1969c: 76). From this theoretical perspective, the class structure is homologous with artistic forms, each relying upon specific formal systems, such as language or the economy, and as such each structure must be analysed not only in terms of its product and exchange-value, but more essentially for its processes of production. Structural parallelism thus enables Kristeva to, first, take a critical position towards Marx for his emphasis on value, rather than on the 'notion of a productive labour prior to value or meaning' and second, to align her theoretical concerns with Althusserian structural Marxism insofar as semiotics is defined as a 'science of ideologies' (82, 78). In accordance with this Althusserian influence, Kristeva's theory of signification is an oppositional theory, which proposes a double subversion of humanism and its prevailing discursive structures (75-6, 79).

### **Althusser in Context**

Althusser's influence on Kristeva's work is referred to in histories of the French structuralist period, particularly *Jacques Lacan & Co.: A History of Psychoanalysis in France, 1925-1985* (1990) by Elisabeth Roudinesco, *The Making of an Avant-Garde: Tel Quel* (1994) by Niilo Kauppi, and *History of Structuralism* (1997) by François Dosse. And also in a number of critical texts by Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists* (1989), Michael Payne, *Reading Theory: An Introduction to Lacan, Derrida and Kristeva* (1993), and Anna Smith, *Julia Kristeva: Readings of Exile and Estrangement* (1996).

Historically Althusser has a significant place in French structuralism and his association with Kristeva can be traced to the journal *Tel Quel*, launched in 1960, and which Kristeva joined in

1966 (Roudinesco, 1990: 526-7). According to Roudinesco, *Tel Quel* reflected the intellectual and political debates of the time and drew on the major theories of the day.

The displacement of the structuralist configuration onto the avant-garde literary scene began in the fall of 1967 with the publication in *Tel Quel* of .... [the] "Programme" ... written by Philippe Sollers .... Sollers put together a skillful amalgamation with the help of concepts elaborated during the structuralist years (528-9).

The theories elaborated in Sollers' essay, "Programme", are those of Foucault's work on madness, Derrida's trace, Lacan's return to Freud, and Althusser's epistemology, and they enable Sollers 'to situate the history of textuality within dialectical materialism' (529). Althusser's epistemology helps to understand the significance Althusser had for the *Tel Quel* writers. In his development of Bachelard's concept, Althusser examines how an epistemological break reveals the gap between ideology and theory.

[W]hen a new science is born - when it detaches itself from the field of the ideology from which it breaks: this theoretical "uncoupling" always and inevitably induces a revolutionary change in the theoretical problematic, and just as radical a modification of the object of theory (Althusser, 1968a: 157).

For the *Tel Quel* writers, this concept became the underlying rationale for alternative literary forms with its own new literary theory. Althusser's reading of dialectical materialism (i.e., the theory of the history of the production of knowledge), was for *Tel Quel* writers a framework for analysing how literary texts are politically effective in the relationships and structures of society. As Kauppi explains, *Tel Quel* writers proposed an equivalence between intellectual practice and political practice, which entails a re-conception of the human sciences in both its epistemology and its discourse (1994: 107).

Although the *Tel Quel* writers drew on many different thinkers<sup>4</sup>, according to Kauppi Althusser's work is especially useful for the distinction he made between ideology and theory. In Althusser's conception, 'ideology is a system (with its own logic and rigor) of representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts ...) endowed with a historical existence and a role within a given society' (1965: 231). Most importantly ideology is not solely an

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<sup>4</sup> According to Kauppi, Sollers' 'value hierarchy' of thinkers were: Althusser, Lacan, Artaud, Kristeva, Lenin, Einstein, Freud, Mallarmé, J.-A. Miller, Foucault, Marx, Saussure, Spinoza (1994: 224). Notably, Derrida and Barthes are not included in Kauppi's list, whereas Roudinesco claims that from 'the outset, Derridean theses dominated the work of the Telquelians', and that the 'journal accorded as much importance, if not more, to the theses of Barthes and Derrida as to' Lacan's (1990: 528).

abstract or insubstantial system, rather it is materialised in the entire social organisation, in its apparatuses and its practices (Althusser, 1969: 156). In Kauppi's history of *Tel Quel* the concepts of the epistemological break and of ideological practices made possible the *Tel Quel* theory of the text and, moreover, the development of new theories such as Kristeva's semanalysis (1994: 236).

Althusser's influence extends beyond the *Tel Quel* group, as Dosse underscores in his history of structuralism:

the protests of 1968 were inflected with a Marxist discourse and Althusser had provided the means of reconciling loyalty to Marxism with the desire for structural rigor. All of the '68 generation used Althusser's categories in every reach of knowledge ... Althusserian thinking was part of the times .... the political practice of an entire generation discovered Marx revisited by Althusser (1997: 164).<sup>5</sup>

*Tel Quel* members took part in these protests and maintained a theoretical alliance with Althusser, in particular with regards to his negotiation of practice and theory (176). As a member of *Tel Quel*, Kristeva is biographically and theoretically linked to Althusser, to the extent that practice becomes a key component in the development of her theory of the semiotic and its related signifying practices.

### **Critical Perceptions of Althusser**

Like the historical texts, the critical texts on Kristeva have indicated the important influence of Althusser on Kristeva's early work, although they do so in more equivocal terms than I do. In his interpretation of *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Payne concludes his analysis of the Kristevan approach to practice with the statement that Althusser's 'thought seems to haunt her discussion of Marxism and ideology' (1993: 200). Even though he makes this point, Payne's interpretation does not examine Althusser's influence and focuses instead on Kristeva's critical reading of Marx, Lenin and Mao (200).

Anna Smith's reading of Kristeva provides a wider perspective on Kristeva's theoretical influences than Payne. For Smith the theoretical association between Althusser and Kristeva hinges upon anti-humanism. As Smith explains, anti-humanism rejects the humanist view of history in which the human subject is the central agent (Smith, 1996: 20). Althusser's anti-humanist structuralism asserts that the 'forces of history that arose out of materialism were

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<sup>5</sup> As an example of Althusser's influence during this time, Dosse refers to the sales - seventy-eight thousand copies in two years - of the 1968 paperback edition of Althusser's *Reading Capital* (1997: 164).

generated by economic and political discursive structures, not human behaviour' (20). Yet while Kristeva's project draws upon Althusser's anti-humanist model, for Smith Kristeva's work does not 'correspond precisely to Althusser's re-reading of Marx' (21). With respect to Smith's conclusion, it may be productive to examine the correspondences and differences between Althusser and Kristeva. In this chapter I will examine this relationship both within Kristeva's work and also in the critical discourse surrounding it.

Whereas Payne and Smith recognize an Althusserian influence in Kristeva's writings, other critics have viewed this influence as far less enduring. According to Grosz, Kristeva's work up until and including *Revolution in Poetic Language* 'adheres closely to an Althusserian framework, whereby the subject is a function and effect of the socio-symbolic order' (1989: 41). Nevertheless, Kristeva's work during the seventies proves to Grosz that this 'adherence to marxism and to an account of ideology is loosened' and that Kristeva's 'commitment to psychoanalysis seems to have grown in inverse proportion to a widening distance from Althusserianism' (63, 70). Grosz claims that Kristeva's gradual divergence from Althusser is due to the changes in her theoretical concerns, which are

explicitly directed towards the pre-oedipal mother-child relation: the mobilisations of drive energies; the thetic moments; the semiotic, pre-linguistic conditions of symbolic functioning; and the unspoken moments of faltering, instability and breakdown in the subject and the text are all themes anticipated, if underdeveloped, in her earlier works (70).

In this reading by Grosz, Kristeva's theory of the semiotic in signification is the beginning of the end of Kristeva's reliance on Althusserian theory. In contrast, I find that Kristeva's theory maintains its Althusserian foundations. For instance, Anna Smith has confirmed that from 1965, Kristeva's conception of the subject was, at the beginning, 'embodied in a material practice' which is linked 'to the Freudian psychic drives' (1996: 18). While some interpretations of Kristeva's work have diminished or overlooked the relationship of Kristeva's work with Althusser,<sup>6</sup> certain historical and critical interpretations have recognized the connection, specifically in terms of Althusser's theory of material practice. Yet these historical and critical readings do not examine the association in depth and this cursory approach has

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<sup>6</sup> Other examples of interpretations of Kristeva which neglect or marginalise Althusser's influence are Lewis who discusses the importance of Marxism in Kristeva's work with no mention of Althusser (1974); two essays, by Mai and Rose each, also emphasise Marxism in Kristeva but only briefly refer to Althusser (Mai, 1991: 41ff) (Rose, 1993: 42, 45-8); Lechte in his book on Kristeva, refers to Althusser briefly and makes no direct link between Althusser and Kristeva (1990: 18); Oliver's book on Kristeva makes no reference to Althusser and largely confines her interpretation of Kristeva's structuralism to Saussure (Oliver, 1993: 91ff).

tended to obscure the significant contribution of Althusser's influence on the conceptual foundations of Kristeva's work.

## 2. The Althusser Connection

There are three general themes that Althusser contributes to Kristeva's early work, which I will discuss in relation to the semiotic. The themes are, the subversion of the dominant ideological order, the emphasis on production and practice, and the Althusserian re-evaluation of Marxist and Hegelian philosophies via structuralist models. I will discuss these themes in relation to the Althusserian conceptions of practice, symptomatic reading, the problematic, and structural causality.

### The Theory of Practice

The principal aim of Althusser in his book *For Marx* is to eliminate the epistemological 'gap between theory and practice'; 'theory is essential to practice' because it helps practice 'to grow' (1965: 165-6). In relation to practice, Althusser makes a distinction between a general practice and particular practices, with theory being a particular practice which is in line with the generality of practice (167). The general definition of practice is 'any process of transformation of a determinate given raw material into a determinate product, a transformation effected by a determinate human labour, using determinate means (of "production")' (166). Theory is one practice among other distinct practices, such as social, political and ideological practices (167). Theoretical practice 'works on a raw material (representations, concepts, facts) which it is given by other practices, whether "empirical", "technical", or "ideological"' (167). The important issue here is the 'determinant moment' of practice which

is neither the raw material nor the product, but the practice in the narrow sense: the moment of *labour of transformation* itself, which sets to work, in a specific structure, men, means and a technical method of utilizing the means (166-7).

Althusser's conception of practice is central to Kristeva's critique of Marx in her essay 'Semiotics: A Critical Science and/or a Critique of Science'. In that essay, Kristeva makes use of the Althusserian emphasis on the moment of transformation, that which is prior to the end product. It is from this Althusserian position that Kristeva finds a missing element in Marx's theory of production. In Kristeva's reading, production for Marx is both work as process and the social relations of production, yet it is the former which is not given the attention of the latter in Marx. The result is that 'work is "reified" into an object occupying a

precise place ... in the process of exchange' (Kristeva, 1969c: 81). To Kristeva, Marx only conceives of production 'in terms of the distribution and circulation of goods, and not from the inside of production' (81). In this way Kristeva performs a "symptomatic reading" of Marx, a form of reading established by Althusser when he reads Marx reading classic economic texts.

### **Symptomatic Readings by Kristeva and Althusser**

Althusser's *Reading Capital* begins with the concept of symptomatic reading in order to set the scene for his own reading of Marx. In Althusser's theoretically circular fashion, this method of reading, which is applied to Marx, is found already in Marx who also employed the symptomatic or double reading.<sup>7</sup> The first step in this reading is called 'a retrospective theoretical reading' and concerns the logic of the visible and the invisible (or oversight) (Althusser, 1968c: 18, 19). In this reading Marx gives attention to concepts which the classical political economists like Adam Smith did not see, that is, the 'absence of a concept of surplus value' (143). But Marx only arrives at the discovery of this lapse in his predecessors' texts through the second, double step in the symptomatic reading. In the double reading it is shown that the traditional theories of political economy are blind to the fact that they had actually produced a whole new problem regarding value. In other words, the gaps surrounding value in the classic text of political economy are also the very places where a new object is produced. In this sense, it is not the individual subject who discerns the absence in a text, rather it is an effect of the structure and its modifications in a theory (22-9).

Any object or problem situated on the terrain and within the horizon, i.e., in the definite structured field of the theoretical problematic of a given theoretical discipline, is visible.... The sighting is thus no longer the act of an individual subject, endowed with the faculty of "vision" which he exercises either attentively or distractedly; the sighting is the act of its structural conditions, it is the relation of immanent reflection between the field of the problematic and its objects and its problems (25).

Even though Marx conducts a double reading on the texts of previous political economists, Althusser explains that it is only due to Freud that we have 'begun to suspect what listening, and hence what speaking (and keeping silent) means' (16). Underneath the supposed

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<sup>7</sup> Althusser explains this circular interpretive procedure in the introduction of *For Marx*: 'this operation in itself constitutes an indispensable circle in which the application of Marxist theory to Marx himself appears to be the absolute precondition of an understanding of Marx and at the same time as the precondition even of the constitution and development of Marxist philosophy' (1965: 38).

transparency and innocence of speech and hearing lies another discourse, an unconscious one. Althusser credits his notion of symptomatic reading to Marx and also to Lacan's reading of Freud, which led to Lacan's understanding of the unconscious as structured like a language (16). And, just as Althusser reads Marx through psychoanalysis, similarly Kristeva reads Marx through Althusser and psychoanalysis.

In what sense is Kristeva's reading of Marx a symptomatic reading? As I discussed above, Kristeva finds that Marx's theory of production delimits work - the processes of labour - to its social value, that is, to its movement of exchange and circulation within society. In Kristeva's reading, Marx's oversight concerns the internal aspect of production, that is, work before it becomes a product - work as practice and process. According to Kristeva, 'Marx had neither the wish nor the means to tackle this notion of a productive labour prior to value and meaning' (1969c: 82).

With the second step in the symptomatic reading, Kristeva finds in Marx's *Capital* 'another space where work can be apprehended without any consideration of value, that is, beyond any question of the circulation of merchandise' (82). Kristeva relates this other space in Marx's text to the Althusserian theory of the emergence of a new critical problem. In this theory, the new problem cannot become apparent from a literal reading, rather the previous theory contains within it a latent but new object, 'which it produced itself in its operation of knowledge and which did not pre-exist it' (Althusser, 1968: 24). Althusser presents this production of the new and latent object of knowledge as not the product of an individual agent's reading, but rather in terms of 'a transformation of the entire terrain and its entire horizon, which are the background against which the new problem is produced' (24). For Kristeva, the other space that transforms Marx's theory of production - and thus any theory of signification - is psychoanalysis and its discovery of the unconscious, which requires new questions to be asked of Marx's theory of production.

### **The Problematic of Semiotics**

Kristeva finds references to this other space of production in the first chapters of *Capital*, where she finds that 'work does not yet represent any value or mean anything' (Kristeva, 1969c: 82).<sup>8</sup> In this other space, before work becomes a product of value, there must be 'the relation of a body to expenditure' (82), therefore the problematic in *Capital* concerns the material act of work. The problematic is explained by Althusser in *For Marx* and *Reading Capital*. In both texts Althusser links the problematic to an epistemological break, which he

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<sup>8</sup> The quotations from *Capital* in Kristeva's essay 'Semiotics' are not referenced, however the reader will find that Kristeva is referring to Chapter 1, Sections 2 & 3 of *Capital*.

also calls a theoretical revolution. According to Althusser the problematic is a particular unity of a theoretical formation, a formation which can either be ideological or scientific, while the epistemological break causes the mutation of that problematic (Althusser, 1965: 32 & 32-33n). In relation to the problematic, a theoretical formation is 'constituted by a structure which combines' the objects on which it labours, the theoretical means of production, and the historical relations in which it exists (Althusser, 1968c: 41). The two important points here are, first, the mutation of a theoretical formation necessarily affects the objects and its structure, and second, the mutation in a theoretical problematic concerns 'the act of posing as a problem what had hitherto been given as a solution' (154-5). These are important because the aim of the symptomatic reading is to expose the problematic. That is, the problematic has to be discovered within the apparent and manifest unity of the ideological discourse.

To understand how Kristeva employs these Althusserian concepts, it is useful to return to Kristeva's essay 'Semiotics: A Critical Science and/or a Critique of Science', which includes the following quotation from *Reading Capital*.

The new object may well retain some link with the old ideological object, elements may be found in it which belong to the old object, too: but the meaning of these elements changes with the new structure, which precisely confers to them their meaning. These apparent similarities in isolated elements may mislead a superficial glance unaware of the function of the structure in the constitution of the meaning of the elements of an object (Althusser quoted in Kristeva, 1969c: 79-80).

This is important to Kristeva's critical analysis of semiotics, because it allows for a link between Althusser's notions of the problematic and symptomatic reading and the Kristevan theory of signification. The point made in this passage from *Reading Capital* is that the problematic is a structure which functions to constitute meaning in a complex, metonymic movement between the whole (the structure) and the parts (effects, meaning). For Kristeva the crucial issue is this very movement or generation of meaning within the problematic. In the development of the theory of the semiotic there is an Althusserian concern with the complexity of a structure which determines the causal logic of meaning and its mutations.

Kristeva discovers the problematic of semiotics through Althusser's epistemology. Because semiotics is a science of ideologies and an ideology of science, semiotics must include questions about practice, much as it already considers product, exchange and value. Since it is according to Althusser that ideology is the material force of ideas as manifested in social

practice and systems, then semiotics as a science of ideology must study signifying practices, their processes, generative capacities, and the connection in a signifying practice between the human subject and society. In this way, semiotics is renewed on the basis of the Althusserian notion whereby semiotics, as a theory of the production of signifying practices, must also draw attention to its own problematic, in which, 'at every instant of its production, semiotics thinks of its object, its instruments and the relations between them' (77). The philosophy of dialectical materialism is a fundamental resource in Kristeva's study of production: specifically the production of meaning and sense.

### **Dialectical Materialism and Semiotic Production**

In *For Marx* and *Reading Capital*, Althusser discusses and clarifies Marx's philosophy of dialectical materialism as 'the theory of the history of the production of knowledge' (Geras, 1977: 235). Dialectical materialism conceptualises the history of different theoretical formations (235). The philosophy of dialectical materialism is integral to this endeavour, because Kristeva's project is centred on practice and production. For Kristeva, dialectical materialism can provide semiotics (the study of signs), with the 'production of the theory of its own model-making' (1969c: 77). If the contribution of dialectical materialism to semiotics is the possibility to theorize its own processes of production, then for Kristeva this necessitates the further theorisation of process prior to representation and signification. As a theory of the production of symbolic meaning, semiotics has been solely concerned with the representational value of a sign in a model of communication. Dialectical materialism extends the field of semiotics by placing the emphasis on the production of symbolic meaning. In Kristeva's view, this means that semiotics is 'a theory which in principle can accommodate that which does not belong to the order of representation' (77).

In *Reading Capital*, Althusser explains how the emphasis on production in dialectical materialism is a materialist approach to the process of knowledge, because knowledge or 'thought is the historically constituted system of an apparatus of thought, founded on and articulated to natural and social reality' (1968c: 41). From this perspective, Althusser identifies a double production in dialectical materialism, of 'knowledge as production', and also of production as 'the essence of the very movement with which the knowledge of it is produced' and also conceives of (40). According to Kristeva, semiotics has accounted for signification - its knowledge - as production, but it has not yet been able to account for the very processes of its (signifying) production. The conclusion is that the essence of signification is the logic of negativity, as in the generative capacities that precede and exceed signification. Semiotic production is 'the work involved in the process of signification as anterior to the meaning produced and/or the representative discourse' (Kristeva, 1969c: 83).

In these early essays on the production of signification, Kristeva links a Marxist theory of production with Freud's discovery of the dream work. As we have seen, this is a connection that Althusser had also made with regard to symptomatic reading. For Kristeva, Freud's analysis of the dream work 'revealed production itself to be a process not of exchange (or use) or meaning (value), but of playful permutation which provides the very model for production' (83). Kristeva's reference is to *The Interpretation of Dreams* where Freud ends the chapter on dream-work by differentiating between 'the production of the dream-thoughts and their transformation into the content of the dream' (Freud, 1900: 649). Freud understands the dream as a 'product', whereas the dream-work is in the service of repression, and 'makes use of a displacement of psychological intensities to the point of a transvaluation of all psychological values' (650). In Kristeva's interpretation, the movement of psychological intensities in the work of the dream connect the body and its expenditure, revealing processes that are pre-representative.

Symptomatically reading Marx through Freud, Kristeva shows how Marx's notion of production overlooks the processes of production prior to its circulation and value in society. Yet Kristeva takes the required second step in her symptomatic reading in order to reveal that within Marx's philosophy of dialectical materialism there is an understanding of process in the very movement of the Marxist dialectic, which does not coalesce into a system as with the Hegelian dialectic. Hegel's dialectic, according to Kristeva, is idealist in that the Notion is the controlling force in the linear process of causality. In opposition to the Hegelian dialectic, Kristeva's '[s]emiotic practice breaks with this teleological vision of science that is subordinated to a philosophical *system*', and instead it 'is a place of dispute and self-questioning, a "circle" that remains open' (78). Kristeva's critique of Hegel relies upon Althusser's version of dialectical materialism, that was formulated in opposition to Hegel's apparently idealist and teleological history of knowledge.<sup>9</sup> According to Althusser, Hegel's 'systematic form of the development of the concept is merely an ideological conception of both reason and its history', whereas the 'real history of the development of knowledge' is 'punctuated by radical discontinuities' (1968c: 44).

For an Althusserian like Kristeva, any theory of signification has to take account of the radical discontinuity, the negativity, of material practices which operates in the generation of meaning and communication.

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<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 2 for a more detailed analysis of Kristeva's Althusserian critique of Hegel and how that critique has influenced her theory of the semiotic.

Created as it is by the constant movement between model and theory while at the same time being situated at a distance from them (thus taking up a position in relation to current social practice), this form of thought demonstrates the 'epistemological break' introduced by Marx.... The semiotics concerning us here uses linguistic, mathematical and logical models and *joins* them to the signifying practices it approaches (Kristeva, 1969c: 79).

Kristeva's reference to the epistemological break is a reference to Althusser's epistemology. As Ted Benton explains, Althusser's historical epistemology maintains that a science can be viewed historically in terms of its relationships with other practices in society: in other words it is a view of theoretical work as a social practice (1984: 24 & 36). Benton claims that Althusser's conception of knowledge as production has

the dual advantage of providing means for thinking about the *specificity* of theoretical work within a discipline, with its own inner dynamic, whilst at the same time (through the reference to extrinsically produced raw materials) referring to its necessary articulation and interchange with other social practices (37).

It is from this Althusserian position that Kristeva views semiotics as an investigation into its own processes of production in relation to the human subject and to society. Althusser's conception of knowledge as production is the means for Kristeva to connect her early theory of signification to Freudian psychoanalysis and 'the "other scene" of the production of meaning prior to meaning' (Kristeva, 1969c: 84).

### **3. Althusser and Intertextuality**

Kristeva's interest in the productivity of the text and the text as a social practice is inherent to Kristeva's first important theory of intertextuality, which later in *Revolution in Poetic Language* is defined as one of the operations of the pre-representational semiotic processes (1974: 59-60). In the same year as the 'Semiotics' essay, Kristeva also published the now famous essay on intertextuality, 'Word, Dialogue and Novel' (1967), where, as frequently discussed, Kristeva relies on Saussure and Bakhtin for that theory. Intertextuality combines Saussure's emphasis on the synchronic and social sign system as a network of relations of difference, with Bakhtin's theory of dialogism whereby a sign system always involves a subject in relation to an other. Intertextuality is the text's other scene, in that it subverts the coherent point of view and a centralised sign system by the intersection with other discourses. In Kristeva's theory, intertextuality operates like the unconscious of the text where, through such devices as metaphor and metonymy, it produces representation *and* its

transgression (Kristeva, 1967: 48-9). 'Word, Dialogue and Novel' formulates a connection between the text's other scene and Freud's primary processes. This connection is conclusively made later in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, where intertextuality is defined as Kristeva's contribution to the Freudian discovery of unconscious processes (Kristeva, 1974: 59).

### **Structuralist Texts**

In an essay written in the form of a memoir, Kristeva identifies the influences in her first major theory of intertextuality:

For us structuralism ... was already accepted knowledge. To simplify, this meant that we should no longer lose sight of the real constraints, "material," as we used to say, of what had previously and trivially been viewed as "form.".... From the outset, however, our task was to take this acquired knowledge and immediately do something else.... it was essential to "dynamise" the structure by taking into consideration the speaking subject and its unconscious experience on the one hand, and on the other, the pressures of other social structures.... My conception of dialogism, of ambivalence, or what I call "intertextuality" - notions heavily indebted to Bakhtin and Freud - were to become gadgets that the American university is now in the process of discovering (1983a: 266-7).

Although only two theorists are named, Kristeva is referring to other structuralist theorists, such as Saussure, Barthes, Lévi-Strauss, and Althusser. Saussure's structuralist linguistics allowed for the study of the structure of the sign in relation to the production and systemisation of meaning. Kristeva explains how Saussurean semiotics 'made possible the study of social and symbolic constraint within each signifying practice' (1973b: 27). On the basis of these discoveries in semiotics, Kristeva's project aimed to investigate beyond the symbolic, social value of the sign to 'what, within the practice, falls outside the system and characterizes the specificity of the practice as such' (27). In her structuralist and poststructuralist project, Kristeva's work is informed by Barthes and Lévi-Strauss. In the essay 'How Does One Speak to Literature?', Kristeva explains how Barthes reworks Lévi-Strauss's study of kinship structures to develop a theory of signification immersed in its socio-historical conditions. Whereas Lévi-Strauss is concerned with kinship structures as symbolic expressions of underlying rules governing society, Barthes' concerns are with other cultural productions such as literature or advertising as indexes for the symbolic laws of a society. Kristeva's consistent regard for Barthes' work is, in the following passage, given a structuralist context through Saussure and Lévi-Strauss, while at the same time maintaining

an Althusserian emphasis. To Kristeva, Barthes' contribution is inherently Althusserian as a theory of culture and art that cannot simply be reduced to

social *functions* (to be related to some economic need). But on the contrary, "art" reveals a specific *practice*, crystallized in a mode of production with highly diversified and multiplied manifestations. It weaves into language (or other "signifying materials") the complex relations of a subject caught between "nature" and "culture," between the immemorial ideological and scientific *tradition* (96-7).

Barthes's theory of cultural production relies on a type of social theory which is distinct from Lévi-Strauss's dualistic social theory, and instead provides a more complex understanding of the social formation. Such a social theory allows Kristeva to view art not as the reflection of a single determinate cause in society, but instead, art as a practice is overdetermined by a specific mode of production which is its concrete condition.

The essay 'How Does One Speak to Literature?' is a tribute to Barthes's work which is, for Kristeva, the answer to her title's question. Kristeva chooses a certain point of view from which to interpret Barthes's work, a view that 'allows for us to read in Barthes's work ... contemporary elements of the current discursive-ideological mutation' (94). Most especially Barthes's contribution is a theory of literature 'as a specific mode of *practical knowledge*', which concerns the 'process of meaning within language and ideology' (96, 98). The appeal Barthes's literary theory has for Kristeva is in part due to its connections with Althusser, by enunciating a place of meaning, which although it 'does not *name* is the very place of the materialist dialectic that no human science has yet approached' (98). By adhering to a materialist dialectic, such a literary theory allows literature to be understood as a distinct practice with its own object and epistemology (98).

It is on the basis of practice that Althusser conceptualises dialectical materialism and historical materialism (i.e., the study of social formations and their history). Historical materialism studies different practices and their relations in a social formation, while dialectical materialism is the theory of those practices (Geras, 1977: 234-6). In utilising this notion of practice, Kristeva investigates how literary practice might be understood in terms of 'the dialectical laws of the signifying process', where meaning is produced and dismantled 'through its own history, the history of the subject, and the objective history of superstructures (Kristeva, 1971: 101, 99). The signifying process is therefore found to be contradictory rather than singular or unified, because literary practice is overdetermined by historical material conditions. Working through the symbolic order of language, literary practice is a dialectic of drive process and signifying sense; a 'cathexis of drives ... that operates-constitutes the

signifier but also exceeds it' (102). In this essay, Kristeva once again reminds us that she is reading Barthes from a certain point of view, one which is contemporary and Marxist.

This warrants repeating. Although one detects in Barthes's works a kinship with dialectical principles, portents of avant-garde activities, and the foundations of a program for a contemporary literary theory, it is because we read them in the light of what is being written today (114).

In the early essays from 1967 to 1971, the semiotic chora is not yet a part of Kristeva's terminology; however the essay on Barthes can be read as retrospectively containing certain precedents to the later theory, one of which is the Althusserian materialist dialectic in relation to literary practice. As these early essays show, Kristeva's discovery of the semiotic is founded on Althusser's social theory which defines a society in terms of many different practices and their complex relationships (Geras, 1977: 261).

### **Ideology in Bakhtin and Althusser**

Certain key aspects of Kristeva's intertextuality may further explain the contribution of Althusserian social theory to Kristeva's psychoanalytic and literary theory. In 1974 in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva defines intertextuality as a semiotic operation and this can be traced back to the first conception of intertextuality in 1967. These early essays are obvious acknowledgments of Kristeva's Marxist influences, particularly with regard to how Kristeva reads Bakhtin. In 'Word, Dialogue and Novel' Kristeva claims that Bakhtin's theory of dialogism 'owed much to Hegel', but not to Hegelian transcendence; rather Bakhtin's dialogism is comparative to the movement within the dialectic where the 'idea of rupture' is the 'modality of transformation' (1967: 58). Similarly, in the essay 'The Ruin of Poetics' Kristeva follows Medvedev in describing Bakhtinian research as 'Marxist literary science and the Formalist method meet each other and confront each other over the most pressing problem, that of the specificity (of the literary text)' (1973a: 105). In the theory of the dialogic narrative, it is Bakhtin's Marxist orientation which makes his theory fertile ground for Kristeva's project.

[P]oetic language must be studied in the concrete literary construct and for its differentiating place in the history of meaning-systems, without reference to any unified field of A Meaning or A Conscious Mind. This attitude involves the concept of literary science as a branch of the sciences of ideology (105).

It is important to point out that Bakhtin's concept of ideology is not the same as Althusser's, and this is partly because Bakhtin relied upon an opposition between the individual and society (Easthope, 1993: 123). Althusser's theory of ideology differs in that the social structures are located at the level of the individual, where each 'structure places (interpellates) people in subject positions' (Appel, 1996: 66, 71). Kristeva works with these differences, employing Althusser's theory of ideology and social structures in a combination with Bakhtin's dialogism. The effect of this theoretical combination is that Bakhtinian dialogism becomes intertextuality, a primary process of the unconscious. For Bakhtin, the subject is not at odds with itself, it is not divided in terms of the Freudian unconscious; rather the Bakhtinian view of ideology is one that is directly reflected in a subject of consciousness (Easthope, 1993: 120-22). Nevertheless, Bakhtin's principle of dialogism, or polyphony, in narrative involves the conception of an unofficial consciousness - of the streets, carnivals and market places - which undermines an official consciousness. For Kristeva, the unofficial consciousness is incorporated into the novel, to which it brings a 'specific characteristic' of the novel's structure, that is, ambivalent words in which the 'forming of two sign-systems relativizes a text' (1967: 44). This specific characteristic of dialogism and the concomitant notion of the relativised text are further discussed in 'The Ruin of Poetics'.

The dialogic sees in every word a word about the word, addressed to the word; and it is only on condition that it belongs to this polyphony - to this 'intertextual' space - that the word is a 'full' word....In this plurivocality the word/discourse does not have a fixed meaning (the syntactic and semantic unity are shattered by the voices and accents of the 'others'); it does not have a fixed user in order to maintain the fixity of meaning ... it has no unitary listener to hear it (1973a: 109).

Kristeva finds the ambivalence in meaning to have ideological and subjective implications, for a 'text is not ideological, according to Bakhtin, unless it rests on "the unity of a mind", the unity of a speaking "I", which guarantees the validity of an ideology' (113). Cultural domination is often carried out in the realm of art through certain legitimation processes belonging to ideological and conceptual systems, and part of this process is to silence the voice of opposition (Jameson, 1981: 87).<sup>10</sup> For Bakhtin, novelistic dialogism works against cultural hegemony because the intertextuality of an artwork endows an ambivalence to the words, discourse and ideology. Dialogism, and Kristevan intertextuality, expose how certain ideologies 'in the fictional text [are] contradictory but not ranged in any order of value' (Kristeva, 1973a: 114). Kristevan intertextuality is described in spatial terms in order to

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<sup>10</sup> Notably, David Gross sees a similarity in Jameson and Bakhtin in terms of their understanding of ideology and resistance: 'the very title of Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* suggests the role that resistance plays in fixing what Mikhail Bakhtin would call the conceptual horizons of the belief systems within which the validity of the Marxist argument is assessed' (1989: 102-3).

encompass the function of relativism in art, which is determined by the particular relationships occurring between the signifying structures (1967: 36). As in Althusser's theory of practice, every practice is distinct, yet via the processes of signification different practices (politics, ideology, economics, theory) are all determinate elements in the intertextual-dialogic narrative. To Kristeva, Bakhtin's theory of a 'double-voiced discourse'<sup>11</sup> has parallel methods and concepts with structuralism, as we have seen in the early essays where structuralist narrative analysis joins an Althusserian political-economic theory. A structuralist narrative analysis is based on 'a model where literary structure does not simply *exist* but is generated in relation to *another* structure' (35-6). Kristeva's early work establishes a connection between structuralist literary theory which, like Bakhtin's dialogic narrative, is 'determined by the structured complexity that assigns it to its role as ... complexly-structurally-unevenly-determined [or] overdetermined (Althusser, 1965: 209).

### **The Social in Kristeva's Theory of Signification**

From the beginning Kristeva's aesthetic and social theory has demonstrated the relationship between structuralism and formalism, in which the latter brought a diachronic, historical analysis to structuralism's overemphasis on the synchronic. Those linguists and literary theorists that Kristeva's early essays engage with are all related to the structuralist endeavour. Benveniste and Jakobson were allied to the Prague Linguistic Circle (1926), which was inspired by Saussure's concept of language as a sign system (Kristeva, 1981a: 223-4).<sup>12</sup> Kristeva's reading of Bakhtin makes connections between formalism and structuralism, emphasising that Bakhtin's historic poetics, when 'filtered through the "structuralism" of the Formalists, goes on towards a definition of its object as a type of meaning-system, towards a concept of a kind of historical treatment appropriate to modes of meaning' (1973a: 108). The structuralism of the Formalists can be equated to structural linguistics and German aesthetics<sup>13</sup>, in that they all promote a certain kind of representation

in which one does not analyse the object represented (the 'referent'), but the effectiveness itself as objectal data, as a 'structure' which is always present and which takes upon itself the categories of the represented-but-absent 'referent' in order to project them towards it (103).

Kristeva aligns her work with these aesthetic theories which are structuralist and, further, have a precedence in Kant. As Jameson shows in his analysis of structuralism, the

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<sup>11</sup> See (Allen, 2000: 25).

<sup>12</sup> For Kristeva on Jakobson, see 'The Ethics of Linguistics'; and on Benveniste, see 'Word, Dialogue and Novel', 'How Does One Speak to Literature?', 'From One Identity to Another'.

<sup>13</sup> Likewise Todorov, in his historical study of theories of the symbol, connects the Russian Formalists to the German romantics (1995: 273, 279).

structuralist emphasis on an absent referent belongs to the Kantian logic in which there is a gap separating thought from reality, or from the Thing-in-itself (Jameson, 1972: 109). Jameson, therefore, in disagreement with the criticism that structuralism denies reality and the referent. Instead, according to Jameson, structuralism tends 'to presuppose, beyond the sign-system itself, some kind of ultimate reality which, unknowable or not, serves as its most distant object of reference' (109-10).

Jameson's analysis of structuralism is consistent with Todorov who claims that in structuralism and formalism, 'the poetic function is superior to the referential function', which does not refuse the referent, but rather reveals its ambiguity (1995: 274-5). From an historical point of view, formalism and structuralism are the inheritors of the romantic crisis that Todorov defines as a shift from imitation to production (285). The advantage of which for literary theory is that 'language is perceived in itself', allowing for a new analysis of art's verisimilitude and 'mode of presentation' (272, 275). Since the text's relationship to the world shifts from imitation to production, 'diversity comes to the fore - it grows out of the variety of subjects that are expressing themselves' (286). We can find this emphasis on production in Bakhtin's study of narrative which, for Kristeva, explains how 'meaning-systems do not reflect' social structures, rather they 'correspond to types of meaningful practice (monologic, dialogic, etc.) as models of the world' (Kristeva, 1973a: 108).

Of concern throughout Kristeva's work is the relationship of certain practices to dominant ideological structures, and to the transgression of those structures. The concern with practice is necessary to the later, fully developed theory of the semiotic, which is always inherent to, yet in excess of, the symbolic order. This is the point when, in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva explains that her theory of the semiotic relies on the discoveries of structuralism and its distinction between the law and its dislocation.

The etymological kinship between the terms *semiotic*, *symbolic*, and *significance* clearly points to this differentiated unity [the signifying process], which is ultimately that of the process of the subject. The semiotic is thus a modality of the signifying process with an eye to the subject posited (but posited as absent) by the symbolic. In our view, structuralist linguistic theories come closer to the semiotic than to what we shall call the symbolic, which, dependent as it is on a punctual ego, appears in propositions. Structural linguistics, operating on phonological oppositions or on the two axes of metaphor and metonymy, accounts for some (though not all) of the articulations operating in what we have called the semiotic (1974: 41).

Kristeva's first extended discussion of the semiotic takes place in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, for which she relies on a number of sources, from Husserl to Frege to Marx. In the above introductory passage from *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva accounts for one of the most important influences on her theory, structural linguistics. Of importance to Kristeva's project is Jakobson's study of aphasia, defined as a restriction of either the metaphorical (selection, similarity) and metonymical (combination, contiguity) capacities. Jakobson's study shows these two poles of language to be essential for processing symbolic information and thus for communication (Jakobson, 1956). Drawing on Jakobson's findings, Lacan shows that these two poles of language are essential to the Freudian primary processes of displacement and condensation. These theoretical connections are components in Kristeva's introductory definition of the semiotic, while Althusser's influence is less obvious but also indispensable to the theory.

The semiotic includes the Kristevan concept of the signifying process, as a 'differentiated unity', that depends on an Althusserian understanding of dialectical materialism in which 'the complex whole [society] has the unity of a structure articulated in dominance' (Althusser, 1965: 202). Kristeva's differentiated unity, or the signifying process, can further be interpreted in terms of Althusser's notion of 'principal contradictions', where the process contains 'the manifestation of the structure in dominance that unifies the whole' (205-6). Accordingly, the operations of the semiotic in the text are a 'material discontinuity' of body, environment and society which are linked in a 'dynamic interdependence' (Kristeva, 1974: 99). This is the procedure of semiotic negativity, which introduces into the text 'other realities [that] make it dynamic, and effect its *Aufhebung* in an endless mobility' (99). For Kristeva, the semiotic makes the text a practice which in a social formation is not only determined by certain structures, but is also determining in its effects.

Althusser defines overdetermination as 'the most profound characteristic of the Marxist materialist dialectic', because for the Althusser's work it provides a new approach to the Marxist conception of the social formation (1965: 206). In a social formation the various structures involve different practices which are each determined and determining of certain other practices. Hence the contradiction of each practice (determined and determining) is not restricted to the economic structure (or base), but is inherent in all practices of the different (super)structures in the social formation (Geras, 1977: 252). Kristeva's conception of the signifying process, and its revolutionary effects, is made possible on the basis of Althusser's insight that the structure in dominance is not fixed (to the economic level), but rather each structure and its practice reflect 'the conditions of existence of the contradiction within itself' (Althusser, 1965: 209, 206). The production of signification in Kristeva's work is also the outcome of an inherent contradiction, where semiotic materiality is determined by the

contradiction between the drive forces and symbolic relations, and where such discontinuity is determinative of disruption or innovation in the symbolic (Kristeva, 1974: 25, 68, 51). For Kristeva and Althusser, revolution is not entirely determined by the economic contradictions in the forces and relations of production, rather it is only possible when contradiction is manifest in a variety of social practices.

#### 4. The Semiotic and the Symbolic in Kristeva's Social Theory

Before presenting an analysis of Kristeva's Althusserian theory of revolution, my analysis requires the context of previous interpretations of Kristeva's theory. Since *Revolution in Poetic Language*, the critical reception of the theory of the semiotic has been divided over the capacity for the theory to fulfil its revolutionary aims.

##### Interpretations of a Revolutionary Social Theory

One of the first major English publications on Kristeva, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (1985) by Toril Moi, is specifically concerned with Kristeva's theory of revolutionary language.<sup>14</sup> Kristeva's early theory of language and materiality had specific relevance to Moi. As she explains, it is 'no wonder either that I, as an alien to this country and this language, have found precisely in Kristeva, another *étrangère*, the most challenging point of departure for my own feminist enquiry' (1994: 150). For Moi, the revolutionary potential of Kristeva's theory is founded on the conception of ideology as a system of representation, where, as with intertextuality, the marginal voices of the textual practice function so as to 'disrupt the strict symbolic order' (158, 161, 170). Although Moi is attracted to the promise of revolution in Kristeva's ideas, she finds that the theory is 'politically unsatisfactory' because it does not 'account for the relations between the subject and society' (170-1).

Moi's criticisms of the theory of the semiotic are taken up by Kaja Silverman in *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (1988), where she discusses Kristeva's essays from 1974 to 1983 (1988: 101-140).<sup>15</sup> Silverman's interpretation of the semiotic chora is useful because, through a close analysis of the semiotic, it arrives at a feminist solution to Moi's previous criticism. Silverman first identifies a dual aspect to the

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<sup>14</sup> Moi's book, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* is referred to in later writings on Kristeva as one of the best introductions or guides to Kristeva. See Kaja Silverman's *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (242n9); and Michael Payne's *Reading Theory: An Introduction to Lacan, Derrida, and Kristeva* (205n2).

<sup>15</sup> These essays are 'The Novel as Polylogue' (1974), 'Place Names' (1976), 'Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini' (1975), 'Stabat Mater' (1977), 'Freud and Love: Treatment and Its Discontents' (1983).

semiotic chora that hinges upon its particular relationship to biology and culture. The semiotic is a disposition involving the regulation of drives and this regulation comes about through the child's internalisation of the mother's body, which mediates between the child and the laws of the social and symbolic order. The semiotic is initially preoedipal, yet it is preserved in terms of the generation and disruption of representation (103-4). At this point in her discussion, Silverman addresses Moi's criticism that Kristeva's theory does not provide an account of how social transformation comes about on the basis of a subjectivist semiotic. Silverman claims that the difficulty lies in an inconsistency in the theory of the semiotic chora, which remains unresolved. The discrepancy is that, on the one hand, the preoedipal, semiotic chora is a symbiotic container that must be rejected so that identity and entry into the symbolic is attained. Yet, on the other hand, the semiotic disposition is, for the adult subject, a process that may disrupt identity (104). Silverman's critique exposes an irreducible gap between the semiotic of the subject's development and the semiotic that is a transgression of social identity and meaning. Silverman's conclusion is that Kristeva's theory of the semiotic can only be socially and politically effective by placing greater emphasis on the semiotic as transformative of the symbolic law of the father, while giving less credence to the preoedipal and 'regressive' aspect of the semiotic (125). The political and social articulations of the semiotic, particularly in artistic and trans-verbal forms, are of more relevance to a feminist theory than the maternal space of production space, which Silverman claims can only ever be a theoretical fantasy (102, 119).

Due to its popularity and influence, one of the most important interpretations of Kristeva is by Elizabeth Grosz in *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists* (1989). Grosz's book is written as an introduction to Kristeva's work and is largely consistent with the feminist critiques of Kristeva by Silverman and Moi. As I will discuss later, Grosz's reading of Kristeva has also come under some critical scrutiny. Like Silverman and Moi, Grosz criticizes Kristeva's traditional relegation of the feminine to the maternal space of the semiotic which, insofar as it is outside the symbolic and social order, leaves women excluded from truly revolutionary practice (1989: 67). Grosz is emphatic that her criticism 'does not mean that [Kristeva's] work is not useful to feminist researches; nor that it is antifeminist' (63). Nevertheless, Grosz finds that Kristeva 'advocates an ironically phallogocentric program whereby women's cultural and representational specificity is neutralised by a universal model based on men's specificity' (66). Grosz's conclusion is that Kristeva's theory of the semiotic is 'hostile' towards feminism because it relies on the misogynist and phallogocentric theories of Freud and Lacan for a conception of femininity as symbolically castrated (93, 63). Kristeva's

adherence to psychoanalysis is considered by Grosz to be the reason for the inconsistency in the theory where

[w]omen ... represent a semiotic, negative dialectical movement, a transgressive challenge to the symbolic; but they, it seems are not the most powerful or effective agents in subverting the symbolic. Ironically, this is reserved ... for the texts of the (male) avant-garde (65).

Here Grosz places Kristeva's theory in a direct line with the Freudian Oedipus complex, in which man 'is positioned in the symbolic with the attributes of active, subject and phallic, and she [woman] is positioned as object, passive and castrated' (67). Grosz's critique concerns the apparent discrepancy between the socially transformative aspect of the semiotic and its less attractive maternal underworld of chaos and drives. By comparison, for Moi the problem is with the lack of a theoretical connection between the semiotic as a subjective process and its social effects. And for Silverman, Kristeva's theory maintains a conventional division of paternal language and maternal silence. Grosz combines both criticisms to assert that the problem of Kristeva's theory is a sexual bias, where women remain 'a blank term, a formula for a locus of resistance to symbolisation', while men who are not 'beyond the phallus', are on the side of intellect and representation (93).

Grosz's reading of the semiotic supports her thesis that there are two phases in Kristeva's work. The first, until the 1980s, is where Kristeva 'adheres closely to an Althusserian framework, whereby the subject is a function and effect of the socio-symbolic order' (41). In the second phase, during the 1980s, Kristeva's 'critique of individualism and humanism remains powerful' (62). However there is a new emphasis on psychoanalysis which belies the revolutionary intent of Kristeva's work (62). Grosz's argument is that although Kristeva's work has consistently criticized humanism, it is at odds with Kristeva's conception of the male subject as an 'active' 'agent' in the subversion of the dominant order (aesthetic, social, or political). This inconsistency Grosz explains as due to Kristeva's increasing adherence to the psychoanalytic (read, phallogentric) framework which subsumed the earlier anti-humanist Marxism. As I will discuss next, later studies of Kristeva, such as those by Anna Smith and Anne-Marie Smith, address these particular criticisms of Kristeva's theory of revolutionary language. For Grosz it is clear that Kristeva's theory restricts revolutionary practices to men who, because they hold the position of power in society, are in the only possible position able to subvert the dominant power structure or the phallic order (68-9). From this perspective Kristeva's project is 'fundamentally negative', in that it "struggles against the very notion of identity' rather than taking up the feminist 'struggle for women's attainment of identity' (98).

Grosz's interpretation of Kristeva's theory has been questioned by Anna Smith who proposes that Grosz has misunderstood Kristeva's conception of negativity which is, most importantly, a 'constant denial of fixed positionality and identity' (1996: 127). This conception of negativity is most obvious in the modern text that deploys a questioning and critical practice where ambivalence is privileged over the logic of definition and identity (128). Smith points out that such a practice is understood by 'certain men' and is 'probably the only practice that Kristeva could conceivably support as a feminist' (128). For Smith, Grosz's interpretation ignores the ethical side to the semiotic, which as a practice of negativity resists any symbolic and social reduction of signification and identity. Identity is for Grosz the privileged term, both in her criticism that Kristeva privileges the male avant-garde artist, and in her support for women's struggle to attain identity. Smith's reading is different and finds that the negativity of the semiotic is a feminist concept and practice for it makes us 'aware of another voice, speaking quietly from a distance, changing the place of things' (129).

Another commentator to address these important criticisms of Kristeva is Anna-Marie Smith, in *Julia Kristeva: Speaking the Unspeakable* (1998). A-M. Smith's study of Kristeva is specifically concerned with the relationship between the semiotic and the symbolic, the mother's position within this relationship, and the different conceptions of femininity developed by Kristeva. According to A-M. Smith, Grosz's criticism of Kristeva's dependence on psychoanalysis is a mistaken view of the psychoanalytic account of sexual difference. Psychoanalysis does not view sexual difference as an adherence to inflexible laws; instead sexuality involves 'a loose set of rules which individuals may use as borders' (Smith, 1998: 35-7). The point here is that it is Grosz's conception of sexual difference, rather than Kristeva's, which refuses the alterity of the semiotic and femininity. In her explanation of Kristeva's theory of the semiotic and the symbolic, A-M. Smith points out that the 'mother is a double figure' because she represents 'language as well as representing the body' (23, 35). That is, the mother mediates between the child, nature and culture, and this mediation characterises the practices of the avant-garde, that 'enacts and embodies the passage between .... the heterogeneous forces of the semiotic and the cultural structures of the symbolic' (22). With regard to certain objections to Kristeva's theory, Anna Smith and Anne-Marie Smith have each argued that these objections are based on misconceptions about the effects of the semiotic processes within symbolic structures, particularly that of the dismantling of identity. The theoretical point of contention for Kristeva's critics and adherents alike is that the relation between the semiotic and the symbolic is both connective and discontinuous.

## The (Dis)junction of the Semiotic and the Symbolic

In the first pages of *Revolution in Poetic Language* Kristeva outlines the crucial relationship in her theory, a relationship of

*two modalities* of what is, for us, the same signifying process. We shall call the first "*the semiotic*" and the second "*the symbolic*." These two modalities are inseparable, and furthermore, the subject is always *both* semiotic *and* symbolic, no signifying system he produces can be either "exclusively" semiotic or "exclusively" symbolic, and is instead necessarily marked by an indebtedness to both (1974: 23-4).

If the symbolic is not adequately instituted then subjecthood is also threatened, and schizophrenia is an example of the dominance of the semiotic, which Kristeva describes as the dissolution of the social connectivity of the signifying process. On the other hand, without the semiotic there is no signification. The process of signification depends upon the fullness of the child's relationship with the mother *before* the break or split of language acquisition (29, 48-9). For the speaking subject, the semiotic enables signification in terms of an affective connection to the signifying process and, further, in the renewal of a signifying practice where 'a new disposition may be articulated' (51). The semiotic is necessary to the symbolic because it both enables and modifies signification.

In its first stage, which can be called the primary semiotic, the semiotic can only ever be a 'theoretical supposition' extrapolated from the evidence of the second where the 'semiotic chora acquires a more precise status' within signifying practices (68). The primary semiotic is the answer to the question of what occurs before the acquisition of language and before the subject holds a symbolic position - a formal enunciative position - in a social context. Thus the primary semiotic is a generative process within subjectivity and symbolisation. The pre-symbolic is where drives are organised and therefore where the body takes on a coherency and an identity through the restriction and facilitation of the drive charges. Unity and identity are 'a structurally necessary protection' against the loss of meaning and signification and this, for Kristeva, is the function of semiotic negativity (69).

While the primary semiotic is a 'place of production for a subject', the secondary semiotic 'introduces into the symbolic order an asocial drive' which, 'challenging any stoppage, comes up, in its turn, against the produced object' (61, 71). Kristeva describes this asocial drive as a negativity and a transgression of the symbolic order, because it brings about a 'reversed reactivation' of the primary semiotic, and reveals both the loss and production of meaning

and signification (69-70). According to Kristeva, the reactivated, primary semiotic - now the secondary semiotic - is most noticeable in psychoanalysis and in art, as signifying practices which privilege the semiotic operations of displacement, condensation and intertextuality.

It is the interchange between the symbolic and the semiotic that determines the transformative possibilities, in psychoanalysis and art, for both the subject and the social formation. A radical change occurs when the semiotic operates so as to replace fixed positions in the symbolic with a productive transposition. The criticisms of Kristeva's theory of revolutionary signifying practices have been challenged for misunderstanding Kristeva's psychoanalytic model and concepts, but what has not yet been addressed is the theoretical contribution of Althusser to Kristeva's conception of the semiotic transposition of symbolic ordering. Kristeva conceives of the semiotic as productive of a revolutionary practice; that is where the signifying process or 'art joins revolution' by disturbing the conventions of language and meaning (Kristeva, 1974: 61). My argument in this chapter is that this conception of revolution in the signifying process is founded upon Althusser's social theory, and, in particular, his concept of structural causality.

### **The Semiotic as Structural Contradiction**

On structural causality, Althusser tells us that, 'Marx states unambiguously the principles of this quite different concept of scientific practice in the *1857 Introduction*', and that he puts this concept into practice in *Capital* (1968d: 192). Althusser's essays 'Contradiction and Overdetermination' (1962) and 'On the Materialist Dialectic' (1963) had initially discussed this 'different concept', which is finally termed structural causality in *Reading Capital* (1970). In the earlier essays, Althusser emphasizes Marx's innovative, yet often ignored, conception of the social formation to which Althusser adds his own structuralist and psychoanalytic framework. For Althusser, it is important to recognize that Marx's model of society is not 'the radical reduction of the dialectic of history to the dialectic generating the successive *modes of production*, that is, in the last analysis, the different production *techniques*' (Althusser, 1965: 108). Rather than a society and its structures being directly determined by the economic, the superstructures are unevenly determined by and have relative autonomy from the economy, and they are therefore overdetermined (112). This model of society has much affinity with structuralism, where the social is only knowable as a complex unity of relations between structures and not through the isolated elements (Jameson, 1981: 36). Marx's social model also prefigures the psychoanalytic concept of overdetermination where unconscious forms, such as the dream or the symptom, are determined by a number of unconscious elements 'each having its own specific coherence at a particular level of interpretation' and, consequently, these 'various chains of meanings intersect at more than

one “nodal point” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988: 292-3). The dream or the symptom presents us with a nodal point - a site of conflict with a repressed desire - that is overdetermined (by the processes of displacement and condensation) and is thus able to be interpreted through its many effects and manifestations.

Althusser explains that the psychoanalytic concept of overdetermination was in fact already present in the earlier Marxist concept, which

*implies a real struggle, real confrontations, precisely located within the structure of the complex whole; ... that the locus of confrontation may vary according to the relation of the contradictions in the structure in dominance in any given situation; ... that the condensation of the struggle in a strategic locus is inseparable from the displacement of the dominant among these contradictions (Althusser, 1965: 215-6).*

For Althusser, psychic structures and social structures are overdetermined and, while there is no single or simple causal relationship between the various structures, in the last instance the determining factor in society is the economy, whereas in terms of the unconscious, sexuality is the determining factor. Kristeva's semiotic is a site of contradiction between culture and nature, of struggle between the loss and the generation of meaning, and thus it is 'inseparable from the displacement of the dominant among these contradictions' (216).

Michael Payne's reading of *Revolution in Poetic Language* makes brief but telling references to Althusser's influence on Kristeva's work. According to Payne, Althusser is never mentioned by name in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, but Marxism and ideology are implied in her theory (1993: 200). He speculates that the term 'ideological apparatuses', used by Kristeva in the section on signifying practices, may be a reference to Althusser's ideas (Payne, 1993: 200) (Kristeva, 1974: 96). Payne again notes that, '[a]lthough Kristeva does not refer to the writings of Louis Althusser, there are several veiled allusions to his thought in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (e.g. pages 96 and 105)' (Payne, 1993: 208n41). In these cited instances, Kristeva explains the signifying process as an 'infinite totality' of different practices. Different because there are different restrictions upon them that are 'ultimately sociopolitical ... the tracings of various social constraints that obliterate the infinity of the process' (Kristeva, 1974: 88). In the English edition of *Revolution in Poetic Language*, the translator Margaret Waller notes a further two allusions to Althusser. Firstly, where Kristeva refers to Althusser's development of Marx's critique of Hegel and, secondly, where Kristeva refers to 'structures in dominance' in relation to signifying practices (17, 94). It is in this section on signifying practices that Kristeva elaborates the distinction between the semiotic

and the symbolic in what are, fundamentally, Althusserian terms. For example, Kristeva discovers and analyses four signifying practices or modalities (narrative, metalanguage, theory and text-practice) that 'give rise to different practices and are, as a consequence, more or less coded in modes of production' (89). In other words, Kristeva envisages society as a structure in dominance where a signifying practice, such as an artwork, can either be validated by certain social structures, or disruptive of the signifying process, with corresponding effects in the social ensemble.

We shall therefore say that the explosions set off by practice-process within the social field and the strictly linguistic field are logically (if not chronologically) contemporaneous and respond to the same principle of unstoppable breakthrough; they differ only in their field of application (104).

Kristeva's essay 'Signifying Practice and Mode of Production' (1975), which was published soon after *Revolution in Poetic Language*, again takes up Althusser's concept of contradiction in relation to the semiotic and the symbolic (1975: 68ff). The contradiction between the semiotic and symbolic is defined in this essay as another level to be added to the Marxist concept of 'a social formation ... riven by the contradiction between forces and relations of production' (68). Semiotic practice, a heterogeneous contradiction of drive charges registered in signification, 'makes every agent of the structure an element of potential mutation and which introduces the signifying dimension without which no linkages between "base" and "superstructure" can exist' (68). Kristeva presents her theory of the semiotic as one, necessary, mediating element in the structure in dominance, 'a contradiction which is determined by the relation to the other and which as such is an essential factor in any transformation of a socio-economic formation' (69).

Having established the crucial influence of Althusser's social theory upon Kristeva's theory of revolution in language, in the next chapter I will investigate how this Althusserian foundation has further contributed to Kristeva's deployment of the philosophical concept of negativity in her theory of the semiotic.

## II

### The Use and Misuse of Hegelian Negativity

Although Kristeva's interpreters have underestimated Althusser's influence on her early theories of intertextuality and the semiotic, this has not been the case with Hegel who is, however, relevant to Althusserian thinking. It is clear that Hegel's philosophy is important to Kristeva's work, and the following discussion is concerned with the Hegelian concept of negativity and how it functions in relation to the theory of the semiotic. Hegel's importance to *Revolution in Poetic Language* has been discussed by Kristeva's commentators. However her specific reading of Hegel remains unexamined. As I will argue, Kristeva employs an Althusserian criticism of Hegel, while also taking up and developing Hegel's concept of negativity for her own purposes. My central question is, with regard to the theory of the semiotic, in what way has Kristeva's Althusserian reading of Hegel positioned and delimited her interpretation of Hegelian negativity?

#### 1. Althusser's Critique of Hegel

The concept of the 'totality' is a very popular concept today; no passport is required to cross from Hegel to Marx .... The word stays the same, but the concept changes, sometimes radically, from one author to another (Althusser, 1965: 203).<sup>16</sup>

The distinction that Althusser makes between Marx and Hegel is one that continually turns on the conception of totality which, according to Althusser, is a simple and essential unity in Hegel, whereas Marx's conception of unity is a complex structure. For Althusser, Hegel's philosophy conceives of historical and social events as processes culminating in a single, overarching understanding or Consciousness; the ultimate reality is not those concrete events but the simple unity of the Absolute Idea. In other words, Hegel's conception of determination is founded in Absolute idealism. By comparison, Althusser claims that Marx's materialism considers production to be the ultimate tendency or determination of socio-historical events. Althusser shows that the complexity of Marx's conception of unity is due to its structure-superstructure model, which is not a 'reduction of *all* the elements that make up the concrete life of a historical epoch ... to *one* principle of internal unity' (1965: 103). The overall argument of *For Marx* and *Reading Capital* is that Hegel's conception of totality, as a spiritual, inner unity, is reductive and requires a Marxist reassessment. Marxism allows for

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<sup>16</sup> Althusser's claim for 'totality' as a 'popular concept' has not lost its relevance and reveals an important distinction between structuralist and poststructuralist philosophies, whereby the latter, as Jameson has stated, 'explicitly repudiate such "totalizations" in the name of difference, flux, dissemination, and heterogeneity' (1981: 53).

concepts such as contradiction, immediate identity, phenomenon and essence, expressive totality, and negativity, to be critically analysed from a structural and materialist perspective.

### **Contradiction in Totality**

In Althusser's reading, the Hegelian concept of totality does not include a true contradiction, rather it has only the appearance of contradiction, and there are consequently further defects in Hegel's theory of social history. (Althusser, 1965: 101). Firstly, it is not a true contradiction, since at each moment contradiction is overcome as 'superseded essences' in the 'suppressed-conserved (*aufgehoben*) past' of the dialectic of consciousness, which culminates in 'Absolute Knowledge' (101). Due to the apparent simplicity of Hegelian contradiction, in which there is a reduction of material reality to abstract ideology, Althusser concludes that Hegelian philosophy is socially oppressive. According to Althusser, Hegel's 'stupefying conception is only defensible from the Spirit's topmost peak. From that vantage point what does it matter if a people die once it has embodied the determinate principle of a moment of the Idea' (103). Hegelian contradiction is unacceptable to Althusser for its treatment of the difference and diversity of history as merely external aspects of the inner principle (103). Consequently, contradiction is not maintained in the Hegelian system, nor is it valued for itself. It is only a materialist dialectic which for Althusser can provide the possibility to conceive of a sustained contradiction in the social and historical formation. A materialist dialectic takes an oppositional position to the Hegelian dialectic, where the elements of the totality are defined as *expressions* of a single principle (such as the economy or an idea). By comparison, the materialist dialectic defines the elements as equal to the structure. That is to say, the elements are no longer secondary to the principle, rather each is its own principle, because 'each contradiction reflects in itself ... the structure in dominance of the complex whole' (207-8).

According to Althusser, Hegel denies the uneven determination of each element in the structure, and instead conceives of the element or phenomenon as exterior, secondary and expressive in contrast to its inner, primary essence (Althusser, 1968d: 190). To exemplify this, Althusser refers to Hegel's triadic 'theme of *phenomenon-essence-truth-of*', where each element of society is an exterior expression of the State as society's essential determination, and thus the relationship between phenomenon and essence is 'sublimated in the concept of the "*truth of ...*"' (Althusser, 1965: 111). The criticism is that such a conception has confused the transformative moments of process with the raw materials or phenomenon of the process, with the result that each element in society is already, can only ever be, 'the essence and motor of the transformation process itself' (188). The Hegelian principle of totality subsumes the difference and contradiction that only Marxism brings to light. In

Althusser's reading, the Hegelian ternary dialectic does not achieve its purpose and remains embedded in dualism. Hegel's concept of determination neglects the moment of transformation and production, while privileging the product-essence in its relation to the material-phenomenon. Althusser's Marxism has a different emphasis and claims there is a mediation between essence and phenomenon, described as 'the "moment" or "element" of the labour of transformation itself which is "determinant"' (Benton, 1984: 36). Revolutionary theory and practice necessitates that the moment of transformation has a determinant role in the structure. There is no possibility of revolution in Hegelian philosophy, which provides only causal relation of phenomenon and essence, and therefore 'there is not and cannot be a Hegelian politics' (Althusser, 1965: 204). Althusser's critique asserts that Hegelian totality relies on an immediate identity of terms rather than the 'complexly-structurally-unevenly-determined' relationship of terms in the Marxist totality (209).

### **Negativity and Negation**

I have discussed how in Althusser's reading of Hegel there is an underlying identity between the phenomenon and the essence. Although the phenomenon is secondary, this does not disturb its identity with essence, of which the phenomena are parts of an 'expressive totality'. Althusser describes expressive totality as

a totality all of whose parts are so many '*total parts*', each expressing the others, and each expressing the social totality that contains them, because each in itself contains in the immediate forms of its expression the essence of the totality itself (1968b: 94).

For Althusser, Hegelian totality as the Consciousness or Idea of a historical epoch, is like a container immediately identical with its contents. Benton tells us that Althusser's critique is founded on the concern with how 'knowledge is an intellectual construct not a receptacle of imprints of what lies outside it' (Benton, 1984: 38). To ignore the process of this construction is to reduce theoretical practice to an immediate identity between knowledge and its object (Althusser, 1968d: 186-7). Marx's conception of totality avoids reduction since the 'superstructure is not the pure phenomenon of the structure', but rather 'its condition of existence' (Althusser, 1965: 205). Hegelian totality is reductive in asserting a

type of unity in which all the differences are only posed to be negated, that is, they are indifferent, in which they never exist for themselves, in which they only have a semblance of an independent existence, and in which, since they never manifest anything but the unity of the simple internal principle alienated in them,

they are practically equal among themselves as the alienated phenomena of this principle (207).

The Althusserian reading of Hegelian social theory is that the socio-historical formation is determined through an immediate identity, which reduces the potential of negativity. Hegelian negativity is, therefore, always already in the service of, and contained by, the single principle of unity.

Althusser's critique of Hegel's misuse of negativity necessarily includes the criticism of negation since the negative is the opposition of the positive, and negation is the determinate relation of that opposition. In other words, 'the positive negates the negative as much as the negative negates the positive, and is as much negative as positive' (Inwood, 1992: 202). The main objection Althusser has to Hegel's use of negativity and negation is that the characteristics of each are always reduced to a simple, original unity.

The Hegelian logical categories of negativity and negation are defined by Althusser as difference, fragmentation, alienation, contradiction, plurality, and complexity, and in the Hegelian dialectic, each is subsumed by their role in restoring original unity (Althusser, 1965: 197-8, 203, 214). This original unity of Hegel is not unevenly determined by dynamic negative processes, rather it is 'enriched by its fragmentation, by its alienation' (197). The transformative processes in the Hegelian 'labour of ... negation' are completely bounded by the 'simple internal principle alienated in them', and thus, 'all the differences are only posed to be negated ... they never exist for themselves' (197, 204). On the basis of this reading, Althusser understands Hegel's dialectic in terms of an 'autodevelopment', where each element of the social formation, or the logical process, reproduces the simple and original unity (198).

That is why the End is in action in every Hegelian beginning; that is why the origin does no more than grow by itself and produce in itself its own end, in its alienation. So the Hegelian concept of '*what maintains itself in being-other-than-itself*' is the existence of negativity' (214).

### **Framing the Hegelian Critique**

It is important to explain that Althusser's criticism of Hegel is aligned both to his Marxist legacy and to a specific 20th century French Hegelianism, one which Judith Butler describes in *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France*. Butler's discussion of the two generations of French Hegelianism can be used to further examine Althusser's

critique. According to Butler, the first generation followed the interpretations of Hegel by Kojève and Hyppolite, who defined the-- 'subject in terms of finitude, corporeal boundaries, and temporality' (Butler, 1987: 175). This first generation begins with Kojève, who changed the Hegelian subject from one of pure consciousness to an embodied historical actor. Yet Kojève's materialist revision relies on the concept of an agent of an heroic narrative, which Hyppolite, like Althusser, found untenable. Butler explains that for Hyppolite, time not human agency constitutes human reality because, with the knowledge of temporality and finitude, the 'subject becomes even less sure of its place ... its "place" turns out to be its "time," the temporal basis of its identity, the necessary anxiety of its life' (80). In questioning the status of the Hegelian subject, the first generation prepared the way for the following generation to completely reject the Hegelian subject. The second generation of French Hegelianism is comprised of students of Kojève and Hyppolite, for whom the key concepts are Lacan's split subject, Derrida's displacement of the subject, and the death of the Hegelian subject in the work of Foucault and Deleuze (175). With regard to Kristeva's theory of the semiotic body, Butler suggests that it has similarities with Foucault's historical study of the body, since both procedures are 'a departure from Hegelian discourse on desire and a turn, instead, to a discourse on bodies' (234).

The French philosophical relationship with Hegel is not only defined by a refusal of the Hegelian subject. Jameson argues that the 'prime target' for Lyotard's post-Marxism, 'on the philosophical level is the Hegel/Lukács concept of "totality"' (1988: x). In discussing universities and the legitimation of knowledge, Lyotard names Hegel's philosophy as an attempt 'to realize this project of totalization', where each of the different disciplines are 'as moments in the becoming of spirit' (1988: 33-34). Lyotard is critical of what he sees as Hegel's idealism which constructs a metanarrative about knowledge, while neglecting the materialist elements of knowledge. In this sense, Lyotard reads Hegel in the same way as Althusser, in that Hegelian causality is understood in terms of transcendence and domination, in which 'the story's narrator must not be a people mired in the particular positivity of its traditional knowledge' (34). The same materialist critique of Hegel's notion of history is found in Foucault. Although distancing himself from structuralism ('I don't see who could be more of an anti-structuralist than myself'), Foucault is like Althusser and is critical of the Hegelian reduction of negativity as the 'always open and hazardous reality of conflict' (Foucault, 1980: 114-5). The suppression of conflict in Hegelian philosophy underlines Cixous' critique. According to Cixous, the Hegelian dialectic is a hierarchically organised

system where, as with racism and class oppression, the self-same (identity) is given ultimate privilege over the other.

With the dreadful simplicity that orders the movement Hegel erected as a system, society trots along before my eyes reproducing to perfection the mechanism of the death struggle: the reduction of a 'person' to a 'nobody' to the position of 'other .... The paradox of otherness is that, at no moment in History is it tolerated or possible as such. The other is there only to be reappropriated, recaptured, and destroyed as other (Cixous & Clément, 1986: 71).

Cixous belongs to Butler's second generation of French Hegelianism, for whom Hegel's system denies the particularity of the other, subsuming it within a socio-historical totality. This group of thinkers reject Hegel's theory of history for its apparent inexorability or, in Althusserian terms, the autodevelopment of movement towards a unified social concept, which necessarily involves the circumscribing of difference and negativity. It is in the context of this traditional criticism of Hegel that I position Kristeva's particular rendering of Hegelian negativity. My initial point is that Kristeva proposes a new reading of negativity on the basis of a certain materialist critique of Hegel.

## **2. From Hegel's Negativity to Kristeva's Semiotic**

Beyond the ordeal of the Revolution, the Enlightenment's moral universalism discovered its masterly discourse in Kant's reasoned longing for universal peace. In contrapuntal fashion, the Romantic inversion, the emergence of German nationalism and most particularly Herder's notion of *Volksgeist*, but especially the Hegelian Negativity - which at the same time restored and systematized, unleashed and bound the power of the Other, against and within the consciousness of the Same - might be thought of as stages on the way to the 'Copernican revolution' that the discovery of the Freudian unconscious amounted to (Kristeva, 1988: 169).

In *Revolution in Poetic Language* Kristeva formulates the semiotic through an examination of Hegel in conjunction, and disjunction, with Freud. Over a decade later, in *Strangers to Ourselves* (1988), the link between her critical reading of Hegelian negativity and the Freudian unconscious remains central to Kristeva's thought. Notwithstanding the difference in subject matter of the two texts, a consistency throughout Kristeva's work is an emphasis on the movement of negativity operating in the unconscious, the drives and in language. Specifically, there are three key aspects of the semiotic which Kristeva has developed from

her reading of Hegel. These are, the relationship of the subject with the socio-historical totality, the movement of the dialectic, and the negativity integral to the dialectical process. Kristeva re-works the Hegelian concepts in the context of a literary and psychoanalytic investigation of the non-symbolic, semiotic disposition that dislocates certain socio-symbolic structures and related subject positions. The question of interest to me is, to what extent is Kristeva's interpretation of Hegelian negativity situated in the French philosophical tradition of the rejection of Hegel? And, further, in what way does it differ from that tradition and become a distinctive part of her psychoanalytic theory of the semiotic?

### **Against Hegelian Closure**

Throughout the seventies, the semiotic is established as the foremost concept in Kristeva's theory of the subject and society. In her early texts, Kristeva draws contrasts between her endeavour and Hegel's theories. For example, Kristeva's theory of intertextuality is formulated through an oppositional reading of Hegel. Following Bakhtin, Kristeva proposes that the modern novel is distinct from the epic tradition of a causally determined narrative, where the dominant ideology of society is confirmed, as with 'the narrator's absolute point of view, which coincides with the wholeness of a god or community' (Kristeva, 1967: 48). Kristeva finds there is a logical association with this form of narrative, the monologic narrative, and Aristotelian logic which asserts a fundamental connection between causal process and identity. Narrative that is determined by the monologic provides a central causal line of events which determine the identity of the characters, allowing the interpretation of the text as an ordered whole. In contrast, Bakhtin's theory of literature subverts social codes and questions the subject of fixed identity. For these reasons, there is an emphasis that Bakhtin's theory 'must not be confused with Hegelian dialectics' (58). According to Kristeva, the difference lies with the Hegelian dialectic which is a 'movement of transcendence', and therefore conforms to the Aristotelian logic of causality and identity (58).

If the Hegelian dialectic suppresses difference and negativity, it is that very moment of negativity, before its suppression, to which Bakhtin and Kristeva look for an alternative to the logic of transcendence. Bakhtin's debt to Hegel is situated in the 'idea of rupture (of opposition and analogy) as a modality of transformation' (58). Dialogism celebrates a rebellion against fixed meaning, be it social law or the rules of language, but its characteristic is to maintain both meaning and its negation, rather than dissolve either into resolution or nihilism (36). Kristeva refers to the novels of Dostoevsky and Proust as examples of the dependence of representation, not only on the rules of monologism, but also on 'their transgression (dream, body, "dialogism")' (49). Dialogism is thus defined as the overdetermination of 'realist representation' by subjective 'lived experience' (40, 58). It is

because lived experience involves the semiotic drive charges which underly all forms of representation, that the dialogical aesthetic experience does not lead to objectivity, but rather to a practice. In opposition to the Hegelian dialectic which would reduce the space between subjectivity and objectivity, Kristeva claims that modern art reveals and intensifies the possibility for contradiction arising from relations of subject and object.

Kristeva's alternative is to establish a theory of signifying structures or semiotics able to account for the way social practices are not adequately defined by a monologic system of representation. For these purposes, Kristeva contrasts Hegel's conceptual structures in the *Science of Logic* with a different theory of signification (Kristeva, 1969c: 78). Semiotics is defined as a practice, as distinct from an internal, self-sufficient system as found in Hegel. As a practice, semiotics is a system open to its externality, for instance ideology, which is capable of providing semiotics with its necessary self-criticism (78). Kristeva points out that such a critique of the closed conceptual system was initiated by Marx in his response to traditional philosophy, of which the culmination is Hegel's *Science of Logic*. To exemplify this conceptual system, Kristeva refers to Hegel's final statements in the *Science of Logic* on the "circle of justification". In Hegel's logic

science exhibits itself as a *circle* returning upon itself, the end being wound back into the beginning, the simple ground, by the mediation; the circle is moreover a *circle of circles*, for each individual member as ensouled by the method is reflected into itself, so that in returning into the beginning it is at the same time the beginning of a new member. Links of this chain are the individual sciences (of logic, nature and spirit), each of which has as *antecedent* and a *successor* - or, expressed more accurately, *has* only the *antecedent* and *indicates* its *successor* in its conclusion (Hegel quoted in Kristeva, 1969c: 78).

Kristeva interprets this passage from an Althusserian perspective. That is, Hegel's conceptual system is an expressive causality because 'each individual member' is 'ensouled by the method.' Like Althusser and the second generation of French Hegelianism, the reading Kristeva has of Hegel is of a system which is ideologically closed.

Kristeva's essay 'The Bounded Text' is in part an argument against Hegel's conceptual system. The term "bounded text" refers to the structural finitude of Hegel's philosophical system where the product is valued over the 'process of its productivity' (1969a: 55). Hegel's system is represented as monological and closed, which is a characteristic of certain narrative forms that are determined by the "ideologeme" of the system. The concept of the ideologeme comes from structuralism and Marxism, and refers to the materiality of the

minimal unit of a cultural or philosophical belief system, comprised of 'the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes' (Jameson, 1981: 87,76). For Kristeva, the text's structural finitude is organised around a bounded ideologeme which is logically equivalent to the Hegelian circle of justification. In describing the bounded text, Kristeva outlines the convergence of the text with Hegelian logic.

The initial programming of the book is already its structural finitude. Within the figures described above [pseudo oppositions of life-death, love-hate, virtue-vice, good-bad, being-nothingness], the trajectories close upon themselves, return to their point of departure or are confirmed by a censoring element in such a way as to outline the limits of a closed discourse.... The story can be considered finished as soon as there is completion of one of the loops (resolution of one of the oppositional dyads) the series of which was opened by the initial programming (Kristeva, 1969a: 56).

The monological text is seen to equate to the Hegelian system in which the processes of production are apparently effaced by the effect and value of the product. The alternative for Kristeva is a theory of writing as a practice where the writer produces 'his text through and across a permutation of *other* utterances' (46). If an ideologeme of a given text is the minimal material expression of a system in contradiction, then the text's structure is intertextual and not finite. Intertextuality is 'the intersection of a given textual arrangement (a semiotic practice) with the utterances (sequences) that it either assimilates into its own space or to which it refers in the space of exterior texts (semiotic practices)' (37). Kristeva's emphasis on the process of production aims to theorize art in terms which endeavour to break with Hegel's logic and to construct other 'logical categories' relevant to the 'redistributive' or intertextual operations of semiotic practices (37). Hegelian logic is therefore understood as suppressive of intertextuality within an authoritative 'bounded (cultural) text', while the meaning of a text is defined in the terms of totality, of the 'oeuvre, the Author, and the literary artifact' (58-9). Kristeva's theory of semiotics aims to confound the perceived hermeneutic circle of Hegelian logic. Textual productivity or intertextuality undermines any possibility of aesthetic totality because, by the transposition of one text into another, the author is no longer 'an objective "witness"' and becomes a 'reader or listener, structuring his text through and across a permutation of *other* utterances' (46).

## Resuscitating Negativity with Materiality

Kristeva's theory of art and semiotics is integral to her psychoanalytic theory of the semiotic, which is defined as the non-symbolic and contradictory operation of signification. Hegel is important to Kristeva's theory of signification, as is shown by the essay, 'How Does One Speak to Literature?' (1971). Consistent with the approach in the later *Revolution in Poetic Language*, this earlier essay considers the text and other semiotic practices alongside Hegelian negativity. Here the problem is that negativity has been diminished in its capacity by 'Hegelian transcendence', and its 'subject of understanding' (Kristeva, 1971: 99, 111). My argument is that any analysis of Kristeva's work needs to take into account the semiotic operation as negativity and, of equal importance, to consider how Kristeva has read Hegelian negativity. Does Kristeva's critical reading provide a re-conceptualisation of Hegelian negativity, in order to articulate negativity proper as that which exceeds or remains unassimilated by the totality?

Kristeva begins her argument against Hegel by claiming that the experience of literature is a negativity in relation to the subject and history; if literature disrupts ideology and language conventions it necessarily bears upon the subject and society (93). Any change in signifying practices, such as a cultural and critical intervention, modifies the relationship between the subject and its object (93). Kristeva accepts that certain signifying systems such as history and language, construct and restrict the subject with their laws. However, the arts may expose and even subvert these laws (96-97). Moreover, art creates the paradox of the objectification of the self because it is 'an essential specificity of the "arts", by which an asserted "ego" becomes outside-of-self, objectivized, or better, neither objective nor subjective, but both at the same time, and consequently their "other"' (97). According to Kristeva, Hegel was the first to approach the question of subjectivity and objectivity on the basis of the convergence of subject and history, as an 'interplay between limit and infinity, rationale and objectivity' (99). Kristeva quite clearly rejects the idealism of Hegelian transcendence, which she interprets as an avoidance of 'contradiction within the material element of language as the generator of ideas or meaning through the biological and historical body of a concrete subject' (99).

Contemporary commentators of Hegel can help to understand Kristeva's specific reading of Hegel. These commentaries show that Kristeva's interpretation of the dialectic and negativity can be aligned with the orthodox interpretation of Hegel. As an example, Kristeva's interpretation of the Hegelian dialectic is in agreement with *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, which states that Hegel's concept of thought, or the rational notion, has historical precedence over materiality and practice.

[Hegel] maintained that history was essentially concerned with the development of what he termed 'spirit' (*Geist*); the essence of spirit - here contrasted with physical nature or 'matter' - was freedom, and the historical process should consequently be seen as comprising a stage-by-stage realization of that rational notion within a social setting (Honderich, 1995: 362).

Likewise, Terry Pinkard's commentary on the dialectic in the *Science of Logic* presents this conventional interpretation of Hegel. According to Pinkard, Hegel draws a distinction between the mechanical system of objects and a conceptual mapping - or an ideal representation. In this reading, the distinction between object and concept is collapsed when the former is ultimately integrated into the concept (Pinkard, 1988: 87, 90). Like Butler's second generation of French Hegelianism, Pinkard interprets the Hegelian dialectic as attempting to overcome the barrier separating the unity of concept from the diversity of the mechanical, objective system (90). This interpretation of the Hegelian dialectic is further exemplified by Michael Inwood's dictionary of Hegel. According to Inwood's definition, Hegelian contradictions emerge as 'the stage of dialectic proper, or of dialectical or negative reason', however these contradictions are eventually resolved by 'a new, higher category' (Inwood, 1992: 81-82).

Kristeva claims she is indebted to Hegel for the process of contradiction and the logic of negativity. Nevertheless, Kristeva rejects Hegelian transcendence in which contradiction is resolved and eradicated, for this leads to a social theory inadequate to the actual material processes of social production. Kristeva argues that, while social practices and production do consist of ideas and meaning, these ideas are overdetermined by the materiality of language and 'the biological and historical body of a concrete subject' (Kristeva, 1971: 99). Kristeva's materialist critique of Hegel is important for her theory of art as a contradictory practice, where negativity traverses signification and the subject. To reinforce the argument against the Hegelian 'totality of One homonomic Meaning', Kristeva replaces the term negativity with her own concept of the "heterogeneous" (112). Insofar as the materiality of language, history and subjectivity is 'heteronomous in relation to Hegelian Law ...[it is] not a beyond of representation, but a transfusing and renewal of it' (113).

Kristeva's conception of signifying practice is one where a cultural production brings about new representational capacities. As a result of reworking Hegelian negativity into material heterogeneity, Kristeva proposes that a divided subject must replace Hegel's coherent subject of understanding (111). Practice transforms representation, since practice is 'heterogeneous to the system of meaning', and brings with it a subject of the signifying

process. By comparison, Hegel's transcendent subject is an expressive subject, one who is determined by a coherent system of meaning (Kristeva, 1973b: 31). Kristeva's interpretation is supported by Inwood for whom the Hegelian subject is 'constituted by conceptual thought', which, in its development towards unity, 'requires the cognitive and practical activity of human subjects' (1992: 281-282). In this particular reading of Hegel, the third and final stage of the development of the concept is where the subject elevates or sublates the object-other, and its characteristics of diversity and disunity, within the structure of the conceptual system (282).

In the early, formative essays, Kristeva's theory of signification and of the semiotic involves the development of the heterogeneous from Hegelian negativity, through certain associations with the Freudian unconscious and the divided subject (Kristeva, 1973b: 28). For Kristeva, the unconscious is constituted on the basis of the interplay of the body and its drives with signs and social laws (28). Moving away from a semiotic theory of literature, Kristeva replaces it with "semanalysis" where the emphasis is on an analysis of the material processes of signification as opposed to a totalising system of meaning. Kristeva's semanalysis aims to account for the diverse, material and semiotic 'operations' which are '*pre-meaning and pre-sign*' (29).

*Revolution in Poetic Language* includes Kristeva's most detailed discussion of Hegel, in the section 'Negativity: Rejection', where Hegelian concepts are considered alongside psychoanalysis and other philosophies. Yet the overall critique of Hegel is consistent with the previous arguments. As with the earlier essays, *Revolution in Poetic Language* gives emphasis to Hegelian negativity and its mediation of the substantial and the conceptual, the objective and the subjective. Within the conjunction of opposites which is negativity, the subject is 'opened out onto and by objectivity', that is, the material conditions (Kristeva, 1974: 110-1). By this subversion of Hegelian transcendence, Kristeva re-defines negativity as 'the *very movement of heterogeneous matter*', because this 'subject submerged in negativity is no longer "outside" objective negativity as a transcendent unity' (111). Hegelian negativity is only properly conceived of in dialectical materialism, 'where it becomes both the concept of *human activity* as revolutionary activity and that of the *social and natural laws* this activity shows to be objective' (111). It is clear that, for Kristeva, the 'dead ends of Hegelian negativity' are due to Hegelian idealism, which aims to 'reestablish this (subjective and political) unity, riveted to it, and proceeding with that end in mind, the dialectic closes up the movement of negativity within unity' (112, 135). As opposed to the closure of Hegelian negativity, Kristeva takes an Althusserian approach, where the emphasis on practice and sensuous activity is 'already a first step in removing the notion of practice from its subordination to a consciousness present to itself' (199). The critical reading of Hegel in

*Revolution in Poetic Language* is consistent with Kristeva's previous essays and underscores her affiliation to the orthodox criticism of Hegel, of which, as I have shown, the critique by Althusser is an influential example. Two related questions arise here with regard to Kristeva's re-conception of Hegelian negativity as semiotic contradiction. Firstly, is the Althusserian interpretation of Hegel a valid critique, and, secondly, what are the effects of this critical interpretation of Hegel for Kristeva's psychoanalytic project?

### **3. Reading Hegel Otherwise**

I have examined how Kristeva's critical reading of Hegel maintains both Althusser's critique and the conventional interpretations of Hegel. Notwithstanding that prevailing critique, its reading of Hegel has been questioned by a number of theorists who detect a certain blind spot in Althusser's critique. Benton, Jameson and Žižek each conduct their own symptomatic reading of Althusser, by identifying a repressed Hegelianism in specific Althusserian concepts.

#### **Symptomatically Reading Althusser on Hegel**

In *The Rise and Fall of Structural Marxism*, Benton points out that Althusser's structuralism subsumes the individual subject 'under the agency of external structures', with the outcome being that the subject is 'strictly irrelevant to the onward march of the conceptual movement' (Benton, 1984: 44-5). In Benton's words, 'there is more than a hint of Hegelianism in this supposedly anti-Hegelian position' (45). Benton argues that structural determinism does not account for a Marxist conception of action in relation to social conditions. Instead, structural causality is Hegelian by virtue of its 'conclusion that action is *no more than* its structural conditions' (45). This underlying Hegelianism in Althusser obscures the Marxist distinction between the formal and the real subordination to the conditions of production, or the distinction between the empty, formal social role and the real individual who assumes that role (44-5). Benton's critique of structural causality is that Althusser's model of the subject in relation to the social structure is no more than an expressive causality, for all elements in the structure are expressions of one another. In other words, in structural and expressive causality the subject is completely identified in and through the social structure.

Benton's argument for Althusser's hidden Hegelianism concerns the same conceptual problematic as discussed by Jameson in *The Political Unconscious*. Jameson explains how both expressive causality and structural causality employ the very same Hegelian concept of mediation. Mediation is the relationship between different levels and involves the possibility of adapting theories from one level to another (Jameson, 1981: 39). Jameson's argument is

that, although Althusser's 'attack on mediation is central', in that it is equated to expressive causality, however, the 'Althusserian structural causality is ... just as fundamentally a practice of mediation as is the "expressive causality"' (39-41). The basis for the blind spot is that Althusser's attack on mediation and expressive causality belongs to an understanding of mediation 'as the establishment of symbolic identities between the various levels, as a process whereby each level is folded into the next, thereby losing its constitutive autonomy and functioning as an expression of homologues' (39). According to Jameson, Althusser's definition of mediation ignores the fact that mediation is inherent to dialectics and Marxism in which the endeavour is to 'make connections among seemingly disparate phenomena of social life' (40). In terms of mediation, expressive causality makes links between the different levels and, equally, the semi-autonomy of the levels within structural causality depends upon the relationships between the levels as much as the distinctions (41).

The conclusion that I take from Jameson and Benton is that Althusser's social theory of society, as overdetermined and in contradiction, is subverted by his own unrecognized (unconscious) Hegelianism. This conclusion is substantiated by Slavoj Žižek who, like Benton and Jameson, recognizes both the insights and the problems in Althusser's work. The two main points of Žižek's argument are, first, that Althusser's criticism of Hegel is misdirected because Althusser's structural causality *is* the Hegelian concept of concrete universality (Žižek, 1999: 102-3). Secondly, and contrary to Althusser's critique of Hegelian totality, the Absolute Idea *does not* control or determine the processes of that totality (Žižek, 1996: 128). Žižek's argument has relevance to my analysis of Kristeva's semiotic, because Althusserian structural causality is the theoretical basis for the semiotic, which operates in contradiction to the symbolic, and is thus inherent to the revolutionary effects of certain signifying practices. As we have seen, Kristeva supports Althusser's critique of Hegelian totality (read as a simple unity where contradiction is overcome in the moment of the Idea) and of Hegelian transcendence (read as the resolution of contradiction). It is for these reasons that I wish to look more closely at Žižek's argument concerning Althusser's misreading of Hegel, particularly with regard to concrete universality and the Absolute Idea.

### **The Materiality of Negativity**

Žižek's discussion of concrete universality begins with a definition of the Hegelian universal which 'is not the neutral frame of the multitude of particular contents, but [is] inherently divisive, splitting up its particular content' (1999: 101). In the *Science of Logic* Hegel does indeed formulate the universal in accordance with the dialectic proper, in which the universal

finds itself only in its opposite, its absolute negativity, which is its concrete, particular contents.

[W]e cannot speak of the universal apart from determinateness which to be more precise is particularity and individuality, for the universal, in its absolute negativity, contains determinateness in and for itself.... As negativity in general or in accordance with the *first, immediate* negation, the universal contains determinateness generally as *particularity*; as the *second* negation, that is, as negation of the negation, it is *absolute determinateness* or *individuality* and *concreteness*. The universal is thus the totality of the Notion; it is concrete, and far from being empty, it has through its Notion a *content* (Hegel, 1812-1816: 603-4).

Žižek's emphasis upon negation of negation and concrete universality elucidates areas that have gone unnoticed in materialist interpretations of Hegel. The orthodox interpretation of negation of negation, as found in Pinkard, is that the first negation 'is the specific "other" of a conception', while the negation of the negation 'is the category that *resolves* the contradictions found at the lower level' (Pinkard, 1988: 33, italics added). Referring to the *Science of Logic*, Pinkard finds at least two versions of his interpretation of negation of negation, in one, the second negation shows the apparently dissimilar categories 'to be compatible and not really contradictory', while the other version shows that the second negation does not result in a 'third conception but is the original conception with which one began' (61). Inwood's dictionary of Hegel also provides this interpretation of negation of negation, as 'the something's affirmation, by its negation of the other, of its own intrinsic nature' (Inwood, 1992: 200).

Žižek departs from these conventional critiques, and the French materialist critique of Hegel by paying specific attention to the logic of negation in the dialectic. Distinct from the standard or materialist interpretation, which reads the Hegelian dialectic as fixed within a 'standard two-valued logic', Žižek finds that the negation of the negation 'is not the magic return to identity which follows the painful experience of splitting and alienation' - it is not a transcendence that resolves contradiction. Instead, in Žižek's reading, dialectical negativity accounts for the undermining of identity by material conditions. Negativity 'simply signals the unavoidable displacement or thwartedness of the subject's teleological activity' (1999: 76-7).

There are, then, two very different interpretations of negativity and negation. The prevailing reading is found in Kristeva, for example in her theory of the carnivalesque. The standard reading of the negation of negation - as 'the magic return to identity' - is revealed in

Kristeva's concept of the carnivalesque which disrupts the lawful order of society. In 'Word, Dialogue and Novel', Kristeva proposes a literary theory to account for another logic than that of the Hegelian causality of identity, one instead that disrupts identity and substance and, where, as in a dream or a game, the subject 'splits into a subject of the spectacle and an object of the game' (Kristeva, 1967: 49). Kristeva is here reacting against the Hegel typified in the standard criticisms, where the negativity of the carnival activity is subdued in its return to the social order. Žižek's more radical explanation of negation of negation provides another reading of the carnivalesque, in which the disruptive aspect of carnival may gradually be absorbed by the social order, and eventually become an object of consumption for advertising and mainstream entertainment. That the carnival subject, such as the song-writer or the dancer, can benefit financially from his "sell-out", is an example of Žižek's description of negation of negation, as 'nothing but the *revenge of the Substance*' (1999: 76). This substance may be social, in this case the encompassing commercialism of capitalism, or psychoanalytical, in terms of the return of a repressed desire of the subject which, in my example of the carnival, indicates how the subject might actually rely upon the oppressive order against which it overtly rebels against (76-7).

### **Althusser's Repressed Hegelianism**

Žižek's explanation of negation of negation helps to understand the previous passage on negativity from the *Science of Logic*. The first negation is where 'the universal contains determinateness generally as *particularity*', and thus the universal (the subject's rejection of society, the operations of repression, artistic activity), can only be understood in terms of a multitude of particular cases which are situated in a certain type of relation with the universal. Again, the orthodox criticism is to conceive of the Hegelian universal as wholly explaining the particulars, as evident in Althusser's criticism of Hegelian expressive causality, and also in Pinkard's commentary (Pinkard, 1988: 77-8). But Žižek's explanation provides a far more interesting reading of the universal and particular. It is not that the universal is 'all-encompassing' and 'comprehensive', with the power to encompass all the particular contents (Pinkard, 1988: 303). Rather, the universal is inadequate to fully explaining the particulars. Or, as Žižek puts it, the universal exists in relation to 'its "species" or "stages" as so many attempts to grasp - to determine, to give form to, to struggle with - the very universality of the concept' (1999: 101). Further to this, Žižek's explanation helps us to understand the second negation (in the above passage) where the universal is defined 'as negation of the negation, it is *absolute determinateness* or *individuality* and *concreteness*'. That is, the universal is only

ever found in its particular, concrete contents which are, by their very nature, never completely the universal. Hegel refers to this as the relationship of absolute negativity.

The universality becomes form in so far as the difference is present as the essential moment, just as, on the contrary, in the pure universal it is present only as absolute negativity and *not* as difference *posited* as such.... Because it is not *posited*, the unity of the *abstract* universality has the form of immediacy, and the content has the form of indifference to its universality, for the content is not present as the totality which is the universality of absolute negativity (Hegel, 1812-1816: 608-9).

The universal as absolute negativity means that there is no particular content which successfully gives body to the universal, which therefore undermines Althusser's critique of Hegel's philosophy as based on an insufficient expressive causality. For as Žižek shows, the notion that the universal can only ever be achieved through the incompleteness of particular contents - that is, concrete universality - confirms that Hegel had already formulated the notion of overdetermination.

in each particular constellation, the universality in question is "overdetermined", given a specific flavour or spin, by the unique set of concrete conditions - that is to say, in the Marxist dialectic, *the exception is the rule*, we never encounter the appropriate embodiment of universality as such (Žižek, 1999: 103).

The universal is overdetermined by its concrete conditions. For example, in the genus of painting each particular painting can never wholly equate to any universal notion of painting. On these terms, Hegel's concrete universality 'involves the Real of some central impossibility', the impossibility that there is no 'species that would adequately embody the genus itself' (Žižek, 1999:103). The outcome is that Hegel anticipates Althusser's conception of the structure as an absent cause, that is, the structure is only present in its effects and as a cause it is absent.

The absent cause is the key feature of Althusser's structural causality, which for Žižek is already theorized in Hegel's notion of the universal as concrete, because the Hegelian universal is defined in terms of a lack of correspondence to any particular content.

In the material world it is the *central body* that is the *genus*, but it is the *individual* universality of the single objects and their mechanical process.... Their identity with the central body is, therefore, rather rest, namely, the *being in their centre*;

this unity is their absolute Notion. It remains, however, merely an *ought-to-be*, since the externality of the objects which is still also posited does not correspond to that unity (Hegel, 1812-1816: 722).

The dialectic of concrete universality brings into doubt the validity of Althusser's critique of Hegelian expressive causality. Althusser's critique is integral to his arguments against Hegel's subjective Idea, that which allegedly subsumes (sublates) all external negativity and fragmentation. With respect to this, Žižek argues to the contrary, that there was no need for Marxism to radicalise the Hegelian dialectic because it was, in fact, already a dialectic of alienation and negativity. As Žižek emphasizes, 'Hegel's whole point is that the subject *does NOT survive* the ordeal of negativity: he *effectively* loses his very essence, and passes over into his Other' (1996: 126). Žižek's reading of Hegel manages to retain the proper interpretation of negativity as the fourth term of the dialectic and, therefore, it logically exceeds the closure of a triadic synthesis.

In his book *For They Know Not What They Do*, Žižek supports his reading of Hegel by referring to the final passages of the *Science of Logic* (Žižek, 1991: 180). In these final passages, Hegel outlines how the double negation leads to a third term being immediately created out of the first duality, thus, the third term can now only 'be reckoned as fourth ... in this way, the negative or difference is counted as a duality' (Hegel, 1812-1816: 836). Any term is always already split by negativity and so any identity is 'an identity that exists only as the negation of the former negation' (770-1). This logic continually exceeds closure, just as the Hegelian particular always undermines or exceeds its universal.

### **The Return of the Repressed in Kristeva's Critique of Althusser**

At this stage it becomes possible to assess the previous questions with regard to Kristeva's re-conception of Hegelian negativity as semiotic contradiction. Is the Althusserian interpretation of Hegel a valid critique, and what are the effects of this critical interpretation of Hegel for Kristeva's psychoanalytic position? As Žižek, Jameson and Benton have concluded, Hegel does formulate the very concepts that Althusser developed in his materialist critique of Hegel. Consequently the second question, as to the effect of Kristeva's reading of Hegel, becomes the more relevant with respect to Kristeva's claims that the semiotic is a critical and psychoanalytical revision of Hegelian negativity.

As Žižek does, Kristeva aims to emphasize negativity as the fourth term of the dialectic, as in a subtitle in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, 'The Fourth "Term" of the Dialectic'. In this section Kristeva refers to the *Science of Logic*, where Hegel 'defines this negativity as the

*fourth term* of the true dialectic', which for Kristeva is that which 'splits and prevents the closing up of Being' (Kristeva, 1974: 113). So far this does not appear to be different from Žižek's interpretation of Hegelian negativity. Like Žižek, Kristeva also sees the materialist dialectic as retaining Hegelian negativity, which itself 'prepared the way for the very possibility of thinking a materialist process' (110). Further, Žižek's central point is that the Hegelian cause is absent as it is in Althusser's structural causality and, in regard to my argument in these first two chapters, the Hegelian absent cause is therefore integral – via Althusser - to Kristeva's notion of the subject in process. According to Žižek, the Hegelian subject 'passes over into its Other', while its Other is only realized in the processes and effects, and never in its pure universal form (Žižek, 1996: 126). Similarly the conception that the subject is only realized in its processes and effects belongs to Kristeva's explanation of the subject in process.

As the logical expression of the objective process, negativity can only produce a subject in process/on trial. In other words, the subject, constituted by the law of negativity and thus by the law of an objective reality, is necessarily suffused by negativity - opened onto and by objectivity, he is mobile, nonsubjected, free (1974: 110-1).

Nevertheless for all these comparisons, Kristeva does not arrive at the same conclusions as Žižek's with regard to negativity, instead, as I have discussed, for Kristeva Hegelian negativity only leads to 'dead ends' (111). Kristeva's stated reason for rejecting Hegelian negativity is that the movement of supersession, or *Aufhebung*, 'amounts to the erasing of heterogeneity within the Hegelian dialectic', and that such a teleology of Becoming 'subordinates, indeed erases, the moment of rupture' (112-3). My point is that, although Kristeva recognizes negativity as the fourth term of the dialectic, she preserves the Althusserian (mis)reading of Hegel which, like the standard interpretation, suppresses the radical nature of Hegelian negativity as 'the thinking of contradiction is the essential moment of the Notion' (Hegel, 1812-1816: 835).

Kristeva's Althusserian misreading of Hegel has important effects for her psychoanalytic theory of the semiotic. Whereas both Žižek and Kristeva bring a psychoanalytic approach to Hegel, each arrives at a very different position, particularly in relation to Lacan. Kristeva's semiotic is formulated with the aim of providing a materialist movement to the logic of negativity, where 'with the help of Freud's discovery, one dares to think negativity as the *very movement of heterogeneous matter*' (Kristeva, 1974: 113). For Kristeva, it is this material

aspect of the Freudian unconscious that is not accounted for in Lacan's Hegelian theory of desire, where

*desire* also designates the process of the subject's advent in the signifier through and beyond needs or drives. As the crossroad between "the being of language" and "the non-being of objects," desire takes up the logic of Hegelian negativity through the notions of the first Freudian topography, *but raises them out* of their biological and material entrenchment into the domain of social praxis where "social" means "signifying" (130-1, italics added).

For Kristeva, Lacan uses Hegel uncritically in that he too easily accepts sublation as the moment in the dialectic of desire and, as a consequence, Lacanian psychoanalysis erases the negativity of the semiotic within the realm of the symbolic order. Kristeva argues against Lacanian desire as 'the subjugation of the subject to lack', for in that subjugation the heterogeneous process of drives are 'dismissed and forgotten' through castration, and instead pleasure is invested and ordered in the 'Law of the Signifier', where 'language is not mixed with drives' (131-2). Yet, if Kristeva has mistakenly criticized Hegel vis-à-vis the Althusserian critique, might not her related arguments against Lacan involve similar blind spots? For this purpose, in the next chapter on Kristeva and Lacan I will consider the later Kristevan texts, that are more insistently concerned with developing a theory of psychoanalysis which differentiates from and improves upon Lacanian psychoanalysis.

### III

#### Psychoanalytical Differences in Kristeva and Lacan

To speak of revolt does not call to mind integration, inclusion, an unchanging social idyll but underscores that economic, psychological, and spiritual contradictions exist and also that these contradictions are permanent: they are not solvable. When one recognises that the contradictions of thought and society are not soluble, then revolt - with its risks - appears as a continuous necessity for keeping alive the psyche, thought, and the social link itself (Kristeva, 1996: 144).

#### 1. Theoretical Dispositions

Central to Kristeva's social theory is the notion of culture as a revolutionary force. In 1996 in *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt: The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis* the concern is again with the 'culture of revolt' which, as with her previous texts, is examined 'through the not socially irrelevant perspectives of private life, psychological life, art, and literature' (7). Similarly, Kristeva's earlier texts on love, on abjection and on melancholy have envisioned social and subjective renewal in terms of a complex relationship between symbolic law and semiotic affect.

In line with the early texts of the seventies, *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt* retains the notion of contradiction as an interpretive concept for the social relationship and for its revolutionary capacities. In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, the semiotic is connected with the movement of heterogeneous matter within the subject and language. The semiotic is most apparent in poetic language where the codes of identity and signification are questioned and even transgressed. A signifying practice such as literature draws attention to the processes of meaning within a society and its language, and in doing so exemplifies the way the subject of this aesthetic experience is materially connected with the processes of signification. Kristeva's argument throughout has been that sense-meaning is not solely abstract, conceptual meaning, rather it is embedded in sensations and affects that can never be entirely subsumed by the social ordering of body and identity. The material processes of affective states are inherent to any signifying system, either by enabling the subject to identify with certain codes or, more importantly for Kristeva's revolutionary purposes, to enable the subject to take an interventionist position towards those codes. In Kristeva's theory of a culture of revolt, art production participates in the transformation of society and subjectivity, which is dependent on a conception of the social ensemble as unevenly determined. Since the different structural levels of society are each overdetermined, the

relations and productions of culture are not an effect determined by an overarching principle, i.e. the economy, but at times become a determinative principle.

In theorising the semiotic Kristeva has relied upon certain Althusserian concepts of contradiction, practice, and the overdetermination of the social structure (see Chapter 1). These concepts have been fertile ground for Kristeva's overarching aim to examine how cultural production has revolutionary effects in society. For these purposes Kristeva uses an Althusserian and materialist critique of the Hegelian dialectic and, specifically, in a revision of the concept of negativity (see Chapter 2). Kristeva reads the Hegelian dialectic as a closed system, in which negativity and alterity are subordinated to the resolution of contradictions. In initially equating negativity with the semiotic, as that which is necessarily heteronomous in relation to the law, Kristeva endeavours to redefine negativity through the Freudian unconscious and drive processes. These material processes of signification are, according to Kristeva, inadequately understood in Hegelian idealism, which apparently subsumes the particular and the material within the universal and the conceptual. Althusser and Kristeva contend that Hegelian negativity in Hegel is not a true, proper negativity because it is continually integrated within a final conceptual totality.

Kristeva's materialist critique of Hegel is drawn from Althusser, and generally from French Marxist criticisms which are consistent with the orthodox reading of Hegel (Chapter 2). Central to Kristeva's critique is the rejection of the Hegelian dialectic for its teleological movement towards a unified social concept, with the concomitant suppression of difference and negativity. If Hegel's dialectic of desire denies the materiality of the body, Lacan's Hegelian theory of desire is for Kristeva implicated in the same critique. That is, Lacanian desire ignores the pre-verbal semiotic body and leaves unexamined the interaction of language with drives. The law of the signifier is read as a subjugation of the subject to a universal symbolic lack, which denies the body and is merely an abstract and delimited negativity. In Kristeva's reading, Lacan conceives of pleasure only within the realms of the signifier, which is phallic pleasure, whereas the material negativity of drives involve transgressive pleasures left unaccounted for by Lacan.

As I have discussed, Žižek's reading of Hegel invalidates Althusser's critique by explaining how Hegel did not conceive of process as entirely determined within the final term, and that the concept of concrete universality reveals Hegel's understanding of society as unevenly determined. By using this same interpretive procedure, I have argued that Kristeva's critical revision of Hegelian concepts is also misdirected since it is founded on Althusserian thinking. In developing the concept of the semiotic as a revolutionary operation of signification, Kristeva positioned her theory in relation and opposition to other thinkers such as Hegel.

Notably Hegel does not appear in Kristeva's more recent psychoanalytically oriented texts. Understandably Lacan is a more prominent figure in Kristeva's later texts, specifically with regard to the unconscious and signification, which remains at the centre of Kristeva's contemporary writings. As I will discuss in this chapter, Kristeva's critique of Lacan remains consistent with her first interpretation of Lacanian psychoanalysis as promoting the dominance of signification over drives. This is conceived of as a materialist account of signification, which Kristeva further develops in opposition to Lacanian psychoanalysis. A question I address in this chapter is whether Kristeva's reading of Lacan reduces the complexity of his work. In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva makes a theoretical connection between her Althusserian reading of Hegel and the Lacanian theory of signification as suppressive of the movement of heterogeneous matter. Is it possible that Kristeva's aim to develop a materialist theory of signification already exists in Lacan's theory which she positions critically against her own? As in Žižek's symptomatic reading of Althusser's critique of Hegel, does Kristeva reveal her own blind spot in her critique of Lacan?

### **Lacan and Language**

Kristeva has always acknowledged the influence of Lacan on her own cultural milieu. In a 1984 interview with Elaine Baruch, Kristeva refers to Lacan's work when asked about the possible future for psychoanalysis in treating the borderline personality.<sup>17</sup>

And then another direction that we might take to understand these patients is to pay attention to discourse - and it's here that the contribution of Lacan is important. He taught us to listen to what he calls, following linguistics, the signifier. So, one would have to try to follow these patients on the level of their speech, with all the unconscious implications that their speaking may have - implications inscribed in their speech at the level of the signifier (1984b: 121).

Kristeva points out that psychoanalysis is enriched by Lacan's 'contribution', which she identifies with the work of structuralist linguistics, and which is therefore centred on the signifier. Kristeva's emphasis on Lacan's contribution clearly refers to his early works in the 1950s, such as 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis'

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<sup>17</sup> Laplanche and Pontalis define the borderline case as 'lying on the frontier between neurosis and psychosis', that is, where 'the neurotic symptoms carry out a defensive function against the outbreak of the psychosis' (1988: 54).

(1953)<sup>18</sup>, and 'The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud' (1957). It is in these texts that Lacan discusses Saussurean linguistics in his reading of Freud.

While Lacan does employ certain findings of structuralist linguistics, even in the early texts, his project is already distinguished from Saussure's in important ways. In 'The Function and Field', Lacan explains that language is based on the movement in the network of signifiers rather than on signs:

For in its symbolizing function speech is moving towards nothing less than a transformation of the subject to whom it is addressed by means of the link that it establishes with the one who emits it - in other words, by the effect of the signifier. This is why it is necessary for us to return once more to the structure of communication in language and to dissipate once and for all the mistaken notion of 'language as a sign' (1953a: 83)

For Saussure language is a system of signs with the emphasis on decoding those signs and arriving at the privileged signified. However for Lacan language is a network of signifiers and not an ensemble of fixed signs. Further on in his essay Lacan explains this distinction by asking whether a system of signaling, such as code, is the same as a language.

We can say that it is distinguished from language precisely by the fixed correlation of its signs to the reality that they signify. For in a language signs take on their value from their relations to each other ... in sharp contrast to the fixity of the coding used by bees. And the diversity of human languages takes on its full value from this enlightening discovery (84).

In his notes to Lacan's text, Anthony Wilden includes Lacan's verbal clarification of this point in a discussion of the same text. In this discussion, Lacan explains that the conception that language is a system of signs 'aims at basing itself only on its "reference" to the object' (1953b: 144). Consequently the signified is defined as the object, which 'misses the point that it is constituted of signifiers and not signs' (144). Clearly Lacan is working with Saussurean structural linguistics. However, in questioning Saussure's conclusions Lacan does not support certain principles of semiotics.

In an autobiographical essay, 'My Memory's Hyperbole' (1983), Kristeva further refers to the influence of Lacan upon French intellectual and cultural life. The Lacanian concept of the

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<sup>18</sup> 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis' or the *Rome Discourse* was first delivered in 1953 and first published in 1956 (Wilden in Lacan, 1953b: vii, ix).

Other, which is related to his theory of the signifier, has had, according to Kristeva, an important influence upon her intellectual generation from the mid-sixties to the seventies. In Kristeva's account, Lacan provides a concept that advances the inquiry by this generation, and specifically *Tel Quel*, into the subject and meaning.

[I]t was Lacan's insolence in daring to introduce the "great Other" into the very heart of the speaking structure that propelled us on this course. We were attempting, in our own fashion, to circumscribe the unavoidable necessity of this Other and to analyze its crisis, which determine the transformations, the life, and the history of discourses. That there is meaning, which is "One" and polyphonic nevertheless; that it exists but only in the irreducible multiplicities, that it follows the whims and desires and games of languages - these are surely views common to the artists and analysts. In holding these views, we necessarily felt far removed from both the anti-oedipals and the "deconstructionists" (1983a: 270).

One way to explain the 'great Other' is that it is an association of the network of signifiers with the unconscious. This is expressed in Lacan's title for his essay, 'The Agency [Insistence] of the Letter in the Unconscious'. A key point in this essay is that the insistence of the letter, in other words the Other, gives rise to the discourse of the unconscious, and therefore any theory of the subject necessitates a theory of language (Nancy & Lacoue-Labarthe, 1992: 30-31). In the above passage Kristeva makes two points about the Other in relation to her work. First, Kristeva employs the concept of the Other - 'in our own fashion' - for her work on the crises in the symbolic order and in the subject. Secondly, the nature of this project is tied to the interpretation that the Lacanian Other is both 'One' Law and 'polyphonic' with regard to meaning. And although Kristeva implies that her project modifies the Lacanian Other, it is made explicit that her work is closely affiliated with 'artists and analysts' and is 'far removed from' poststructuralism. In 'My Memory's Hyperbole' Kristeva does not further explain these alliances and differences, yet other Kristevan texts do provide extensive discussions on Lacan.

How has Kristeva presented her work as extending upon and diverging from Lacan's psychoanalysis? Kristeva's intention with regard to Lacan is to critically examine his concepts and to provide better alternatives. In what ways do Kristeva's texts support those intentions?

## The Semiotic Corrective

*Revolution in Poetic Language* is Kristeva's first extensive discussion of psychoanalysis. Early in the first chapter 'The Semiotic and the Symbolic', Kristeva explains the connection between her newly developed concept of the semiotic and the drive theories of Freud and Lacan. Beginning with Freud's theory, Kristeva defines the drive as charges of energy characterized by movement or stasis of which the dominant drive is the death drive (1974: 28). To support this interpretation, Kristeva's notes refer to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), explaining how the semiotic is linked to Freud's drive theory (241n23). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is Freud's most mature work on the drive theory and included his newly developed concept of repetition compulsion, in which a certain action, memory, or feeling is repeated in such a way so as to involve, paradoxically, both the erotic drive (the pleasure principle) and beyond it, the death drive. Kristeva's reference to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* positions the semiotic as integral to the movement or stasis of the death drive; for Kristeva, the semiotic converts, delays, and realizes the death drive (241n23). This aligns the semiotic with Freud's primary processes which, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, is referred to as 'processes in the unconscious systems', through which 'cathexis can easily be completely transferred, displaced and condensed' (1920: 34). The primary processes are fundamental to Kristeva's statements in *Revolution in Poetic Language* that the semiotic 'is obviously inseparable from a theory of the subject that takes into account the Freudian positing of the unconscious' (1974: 30). Kristeva is here referring to Freud's discovery that there is a desire which cannot be consciously expressed because it is in conflict with the ego, and as a result remains in the unconscious, and which will necessarily find expression through the primary process of displacement. The subject of unconscious desire is a divided subject, between an unknown enjoyment and the network of signifiers. Freud discovered that the pleasure principle aims not for satisfaction, but rather aims for the continual displacement of desire, which is expressed in the repetition of signifiers and representation.

In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva positions her psychoanalytic social theory in relation to the Freudian discoveries of desire, the unconscious and signification, and also in relation to Lacan's development of Freud's work.

We view the subject in language as decentering the transcendental ego, cutting through it, and opening it up to a dialectic in which its syntactic and categorical understanding is merely the liminary moment of the process, which is always acted upon by the relation of the other dominated by the death drive and its productive reiteration of the "signifier." We will be attempting to formulate the distinction between *semiotic* and *symbolic* within this perspective, which was

introduced by Lacanian analysis, but also within the constraints of a practice - the *text* - which is only of secondary interest to psychoanalysis (30).

For Kristeva, both Freud and Lacan have made important contributions to understanding signification, yet her own approach will be different in its concern with something other than the law of language, that is to say, with 'the liminary moment of the process' (30). Kristeva's project pays attention to the Freudian-Lacanian theory of the death drive, but also modifies it by equating the death drive to the productivity of the semiotic, which is the condition for the 'reiteration of the "signifier"' (30). It is understandable, then, that in the later chapter on negativity, the focus of Kristeva's criticism of Freud and Lacan is their conception of the drive.

The main point of Kristeva's critique is that Freud and Lacan have not adequately theorized the drive, instead they both centre on the symbolic and systematic in meaning, which neglects the materiality of the heterogeneous drives. For Kristeva, the problem with Lacan's theory of desire is that the subject is positioned or installed within language only through desire, and the subject is only conceived of 'through and beyond needs or drives' (1974: 130). Kristeva's interpretation is that Lacanian desire relies upon the three systems of Freud's first topography (unconscious, preconscious, conscious), 'but raises them out of their biological and material entrenchment into the domain of social praxis where "social" means "signifying"' (130-1). Referring mainly to Lacan's essay, 'The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power' (1958) in *Écrits*<sup>19</sup> Kristeva reads Lacanian desire as a 'movement', which 'leaps over the boundaries of the pleasure principle and invests an already signifying reality' (131).

It is important to point out that Lacan's essay, 'The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power', is a criticism of post-Freudian drive theories, with an emphasis on a return to the Freudian text, in order to correct the post-Freudian interpretations. One of Lacan's points in this essay is that Freud distinguished the instinct from drive because the latter 'implies in itself the advent of the signifier' (1958: 236). For Lacan, drives are never inseparable from language because they are cultural and dependent upon social structures. Lacan agrees with Freud that drives are both pleasurable and painful, and develops this finding to argue for the effect of the drive as a *jouissance*. Desire enacts the drive but only through a displacement, that is as the drive's partial or surplus representative, because desire cannot completely satisfy the demand for love. The aim of the drive is satisfaction, which is why the object (a) is not an actual object but the cause of desire, and since in the

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<sup>19</sup> 'The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power' has been published in both French and English editions of *Écrits* (1966/77), and was initially delivered as a speech in 1958 (Muller & Richardson, 1985: 263).

realm of the signifier, complete satisfaction is impossible (or deathly), the displacement of desire via the signifier is the condition for life.

Desire is produced in the beyond of the demand, in that, in articulating the life of the subject according to its conditions, demand cuts off the need for that life. But desire is also hollowed within the demand, as an unconditional demand of presence and absence ... In this embodied aporia, of which one might say that it borrows, as it were, its heavy soul from the hardy shoots of the wounded drive, and its subtle body from the death actualized in the signifying sequence, desire is affirmed as the absolute condition (265).

For Kristeva, Lacanian desire entails a subject position that is 'both solid and active' (1974: 131), that is, a want-to-be which is determined by the chain of material signifiers. The specific target for Kristeva's critique is the notion that the subject's position is determined by the Other's desire, because this position is constituted 'to the detriment of an "objectivity," called "the real," from which the subject will forever be cut off' (131). According to Kristeva, Lacan's notion of desire beyond the drive has the result that

drives will thus be dismissed and forgotten so that attention may be focused on *desire itself* ... the drives' status as articulation - will be replaced by a nothingness - the "lack" that brings about the unitary *being* of the subject (131).

Lack entirely defines the Lacanian divided subject and, for Kristeva, this serves 'to demonstrate only the development of the signifier, never the heterogeneous process' of the drives (131). In opposition to the Lacanian subject's complete subjugation to the law of the signifier, Kristeva claims that poetic language reveals the 'intermingling of drives in language', and consequently, 'the unitary subject can no longer find his place' (132).

### **Drives in the Signifying Process**

In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva locates the basis for Lacan's oversights in Freud's silence as to how the drive is involved in the symbolic function. Referring to Freud's essay 'Negation' (1925), Kristeva claims that the movement of expulsion/rejection, which is a condition of negation, is neglected by Freud in favour of the position of negation in language (148). At the end of the essay Freud summarizes negation as

that recognition of the unconscious on the part of the ego [which] is expressed in a negative formula. There is no stronger evidence that we have been successful

in our efforts to uncover the unconscious than when the patient reacts to it with the words 'I didn't think that', or 'I didn't (ever) think of that' (1925: 239).

When referring to Freud's essay in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva is concerned with the way Freud describes this conscious refusal of an idea as a 'rejection' by which, Freud writes, the 'repressed image or idea can make its way into consciousness, on the condition that it is negated' (235).

Kristeva's analysis of Freud's essay, 'Negation', further emphasizes her critique of Lacan, who has also discussed the essay in Seminar I (Lacan, 1953-54: 52-61). In the seminar Lacan is concerned, like Kristeva, with the transition of the child into the symbolic order, and his conclusions are further addressed in Kristeva's later critique. In Lacan's discussion of negation in Seminar I, the affective is defined in relation to signification.

The affective is not like a special density which would escape an intellectual accounting. It is not to be found in a mythical beyond of the production of the symbol which would precede the discursive formulation. Only this can allow us from the start, I won't say to locate, but to apprehend what the full realisation of speech consists (57).

In formulating the semiotic Kristeva accepts Lacan's point that the affective is not beyond the symbol, for, as she states in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, the semiotic 'exists in practice only within the symbolic' (1974: 68). Yet where Kristeva breaks with Lacanian theory is in her claim that the semiotic is 'originally a *precondition* of the symbolic .... symbolization makes possible the complexity of the semiotic combinatorial system, which only theory can isolate as a "preliminary" in order to specify its functioning' (68, italics added). For Lacan, as we can see above, the unconscious and its processes do not precede the production of the symbolic.

Kristeva's criticism of Freud's theory of negation is along similar lines to her arguments against Lacan. For example, Kristeva contends that both Lacan and Freud separate out the drive processes from the subject through the institution of the Other's desire. In Kristeva's reading, the 'drive bases' of expulsion/rejection are the condition for the symbolic function of denial, 'but [Freud] says nothing' about the drives or rejection inherent to negation (1974: 148-9). Since the Freudian drive aims at both life and inertia, Kristeva argues that the repression in negation involves the sexual and the death drives. According to Kristeva, Freud does not develop the relation of drive to negation, and instead, by neglecting the drive bases of rejection, Freud separates pleasure from the symbolic function of the ego's double act of

recognition and denial (149). The result of Freud's omission for psychoanalysis is a 'silence about the way the literary function subverts the symbolic function and puts the subject in process/on trial' (149).

Kristeva's subject in process is the subject of the semiotic. That is to say, the aesthetic experience involves the semiotic mode of rejection in the 'jouissance of destruction' which 'perpetuates tension and life' (150). *Revolution in Poetic Language* is in part a dual critique of Freud and Lacan in relation to a psychoanalytic account of semiotic drive charges. For Kristeva, Freud's silence on the process of rejection 'in the genesis of the subject's symbolic functioning', is concomitant to the Lacanian theory of desire, in which the subject is cut off from the real of the drives (154). Neither Freudian nor Lacanian psychoanalytic theory can account for 'the way the literary function subverts the symbolic function', because both neglect rejection, as that which 'reconstitutes real objects, "creates" new ones, reinvents the real, and re-symbolizes it' (149, 155). Rejection changes signification by installing drive processes within signification.

[W]hen rejection is brought back to its essential motor functions, when it necessarily becomes, whether unconsciously or voluntarily, the maintained and reinforced agent of the signifying process, it produces new cultural and social formations which are innovative and - under specific conditions ... - subversive (161-2).

Kristeva contends that, by neglecting the drive process working within and against the signifying realm, Freud and Lacan have nothing to say about aesthetic production and its subject. At this stage in her work, Kristeva's subject of art is not the Freudian subject of the unconscious (164). Aesthetic production does not rely on bringing repressed ideas into a consciously constructed work; rather, in Kristeva's work, art is thought to be constructed in liaison with the repressed and the unconscious. The Kristevan aesthetic subject does not lift the denial in negation and there is no emphasis on the conscious and intellectual acceptance of an idea; instead repressed drives condition the stylistic aspects of the work which are integral to the constitution of meaning (164).

### **Before the Object**

In *Powers of Horror* (1980), Kristeva's next major text after *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Lacan and Freud are again presented as inattentive to the importance and nature of the drive. And as with *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva's procedure is to discuss certain Freudian notions and to show how certain aspects of the theories remain unexplored by both

Freud and Lacan. In *Powers of Horror* Kristeva discusses the case study of Little Hans and *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* as Freudian texts which deal with key notions in Kristeva's theory of abjection - phobia, anxiety and the role of the mother.

The theory of abjection is presented as one possible solution to the question of the object which remains to be resolved because according to Kristeva, psychoanalysis has overlooked the pre-object. Freud places too much emphasis on the Oedipus complex to the detriment of the maternal and the preoedipal, while in the same fashion Lacan's object of desire is based in the Oedipus complex, which neglects the primal drive object (Kristeva, 1980: 32). Kristeva calls the unaccounted for pre-object the abject, to indicate that it is a drive object and distinct from the subject's relationship with objects when alienated in language. Moreover, the abject non-object both precedes and produces the subject's relationships with objects. Due to the psychoanalytic oversight Kristeva pays attention to the role of the mother in regard to the constitution of an object, prior to the Oedipus complex and the paternal function, which are overemphasized in the object-centred psychoanalysis of Freud and Lacan. As a consequence, the sense-making function of the Freudian and Lacanian symbolic father provides a signifier, a symbolic substitute, that will fill the gap of *jouissance*, or 'the sudden irruption of *affect*' (53). Conversely, Kristeva argues that 'jouissance alone causes the abject to exist', and therefore the abject is in the real and beyond signification (9, 11). Abjection's primal instability lays the ground for the laws and rules of signification; as pre-object, abjection takes place within signification as its other side. On the other side of sense, abjection is aligned with non-sense, 'which runs through signs and sense ... a desperate attempt to hold on to the ultimate obstacles of a pure signifier that has been abandoned by the paternal metaphor' (50-1).

Language and the paternal metaphor allows for the regulation of difference, whereas the realm of affect is nonverbal, pre-signification and without an object. Abjection and affect are without an object, and as such are conceptually aligned with Kristeva's investigation of the 'heterogeneity of signifiante' (51). Affect is beyond language and belongs instead to the maternal space where subject and object are not yet distinct. In theorizing the pre-object Kristeva proposes important interventions to the apparent psychoanalytic predominance of the father in the role of instituting difference and division.

To provide an alternative to the Freudian theory of phobia, Kristeva begins by equating phobia to abjection in order to place new emphasis on the infant's relationship with the mother. On one level, Kristeva agrees with Freud and Lacan, in arguing that abjection and

phobia are related to the mother's presence to and absence from the child. This presence and absence is experienced by the child as a deprivation and results in the affect of anxiety.

Out of the daze that has petrified him before the untouchable, impossible, absent body of the mother, a daze that has cut off his impulses from their objects, that is, from their representations, out of such a daze he causes, along with loathing, one word to crop up - fear (6).

Kristeva's description of anxiety points the reader to the previous theories by Freud and Lacan. For Freud, anxiety emerges in the context of the infant's feelings of helplessness in relation to the mother.

The reason why the infant in arms wants to perceive the presence of its mother is only because it already knows by experience that she satisfies all its needs without delay. The situation, then, which it regards as a 'danger' and against which it wants to be safeguarded is that of non-satisfaction, of a *growing tension due to need*, against which it is helpless (Freud, 1926a: 137).

Anxiety is a signal warning against the danger of the absence of the mother. And, as such, anxiety is also a transitional phase from a lack of individuation or fusion, to the separation and abstraction inherent to signification. In Freud's account, the signal of anxiety allows the child to transform the spontaneous, drive-ridden 'automatic and involuntary fresh appearance of anxiety', into the sense-making operation of signifiers, which provide for 'the intentional reproduction of anxiety as a signal of danger' (138). For Kristeva, the phobic object or rather abjection, is constructed in order to dam up the drives that are inexpressible in language (Smith, 1996: 158). While Freud positions primary anxiety on the outside of language, Kristeva interprets anxiety in terms of abjection where identity is undermined and loses its determinacy of meaning. As Kristeva explains:

when the condensation function that constitutes the sign collapses (and in that case one always discovers a collapse of the Oedipal triangulation that supports it), once the sound image/sight image solidarity is undone, such a splitting allows one to detect an attempt at direct semantization ... the sudden irruption of affect (1980: 53).

Drive processes and affect are associated with the lack of differentiation from the maternal body, a state in which the infant's identity has not yet been determined and in which the abject, maternal body is not yet a separate object.

From this point in Kristeva's discussion on abjection, she begins to diverge from Freud's account of anxiety and phobia (specifically in the case of Little Hans). Kristeva's criticism is that Freud "oedipalises" the metaphorical nature of anxiety and thus leaves unexamined the affective aspect to anxiety which underlies the metaphorical function. Freud's oversight is repeated in Lacan's interpretation of the Little Hans case, where, according to Kristeva, affect is untheorized by Lacan due to the predominance of the paternal function. In this reading, insofar as the Lacanian Name-of-the-Father only accounts for the subject in language, it overlooks the maternal, drive-ridden body, which provides the basis for what is heterogeneous to signification.

### **Abjection and Anxiety**

Lacan's discussion of the case of Little Hans can be read, not merely as a confirmation, but as a re-examination and development of Freud's interpretation. As I will discuss, Kristeva would appear to be echoing this procedure in her own reading of Lacan's theory of anxiety. To begin with, Lacan's reading of the case differs from Freud in saying that Little Hans' phobic object - the horse - does not, as Freud thought, represent the threatening father of the Oedipal triangle. Instead the phobic object represents an even greater threat, that of the mother as the first Other. When Freud talks to Little Hans, he tells Hans the meaning of his phobia, 'that he was afraid of his father because he himself nourished jealousy and hostile wishes against him .... the horse must be his father' (1909: 123). To support his interpretation, Freud explains to Hans the similarities and substitutions that are involved in the creation of his phobic object.

Certain details of which Hans had shown he was afraid, the black on the horses' mouths and the things in front of their eyes (the moustaches and eyeglasses which are the privilege of a grown-up man), seemed to me to have been directly transposed from his father on to the horses (123).

Now, although Freud's conclusive interpretation of phobia is that of the key role of the father, the mother's role is also a necessary factor in Freud's case study. This is exemplified by the fact that, later, in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926), Freud elaborates how the loss and longing for the mother is inherent to the affect of anxiety. Through the earlier Little Hans case study (1909), Freud had discovered a series of features belonging to the preoedipal mother, and these Lacan develops in his work on *jouissance* and desire of the first Other. Lacan shows that, in Freud's analysis, the excessive love between Hans and his mother is the context for Hans' phobia. This is a relationship which is too close, and Hans's anxiety is

made more overwhelming since he is unable to find a distance or separation from the mother via a third term, the symbolic father. The separation brought about by difference has not been available to Hans whose mother has allowed him to believe that she too has a penis. The question of sexual difference is thus obscured for Little Hans and, in the face of uncertainty, he constructs a defensive phantasy against not seeing her penis, or, in Lacan's terms, against the lack in the omnipotent mother. In Freud's account of the question of sexual difference

[Hans'] father gave him his first piece of enlightenment, namely, that women have no widdlers. He reacted to this first effort at helping him by producing a phantasy that he had seen his mother showing her widdler.... The fact was that the threat of castration made to him by his mother some fifteen months earlier was now having a deferred effect upon him (120).

From a Lacanian perspective, Hans constructs a defensive phantasy against the lack in the omnipotent mother. Lacan's intervention in Freud's theory is in regard to this defensive phantasy of the phallic mother. According to Lacan the affect of anxiety is not, as Freud had theorized, a precipitate signal for the danger of losing the object, but rather it is a fear that the object *does not* lack, that it is too close and therefore capable of overwhelming the child (Lacan, 1962-63: 5.12.62).<sup>20</sup> The perception that the mother desires something else beyond the child is the cause of the child's anxiety, but 'this relation is all the more disturbed when there is no possibility of lack, when the mother is always on his back' (Lacan, 1962-63: 5.12.62). When this occurs the child cannot direct his desire 'along this path of the Other' towards objectal desires since, as Lacan points out, 'there is no lack in the real; the lack is only graspable through the mediation of the symbolic' (1962-63: 13.3.63, 30.1.63).

When the mother has the phallus she does not desire anything beyond herself and consequently her jouissance remains dominant in the child's experience of her. There is no lack of lack. The case study shows that Little Hans positions himself as the only possible object for his mother's desire, but since her omnipotence is overwhelming and there is no separation or lack in this dimension of the Other, Hans is at the mercy of maternal power. That is to say, Hans is positioned in the role of the passive object, and his anxiety with regard to this lack of lack is represented in the phobic object of the horse that falls down. In Hans' words, 'I'm afraid the horses will fall down when the cart turns' (Freud, 1909: 46). Just as the horses might fall down, so might Hans' mother let him fall, he is at her mercy. As he says:

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<sup>20</sup> Lacan's Seminar X: *L'Angoisse* has not been published but transcripts are available. I will refer to the transcript by the date of each session.

'I'm afraid of her letting go and my head going in' (67). Freud's case study makes reference to the child's passivity with regard to the mother, which Lacan develops in Seminar X.

But if you are dealing with someone who tells you that in the very measure itself that an object is most precious to her, inexplicably she will be appallingly tempted not to hold on to this object if it falls ... and that the most beloved child is precisely the one that one day she inexplicably lets drop' (1962-63: 23.2.63).

The intensely close relationship between Hans and his mother causes the child to be over-anxious, on the basis that the original experience of pleasurable fusion is now only ever available as a lost object, an impossible Thing. The imaginary, defensive fantasy of the phallic mother cannot be sustained, as Hans learns when he sees that his little sister has no 'widdler.' Confronted with this recognition of lack in the first Other, the entire situation changes.

Whereas Hans' was at first fixed in the dimension of the Other's *jouissance* as passive object, he now assumes the position of object of the Other's desire as its cause. Hans' phobic fear of the horse falling down represents his own fear which, as Lacan explains, 'indicated that the anxiety-provoking function of the desire of the Other was linked to the fact that I do not know what object *a* I am for this desire' (1962-63: 3.7.63).

Lacan's theory of passivity and the infant develops previously disregarded elements of Freud's case study, to the extent 'that for some people reading it becomes quasi-invisible' (Lacan, 1962-63: 23.1.63). In his book *Does the Woman Exist?: From Freud's Hysteric to Lacan's Feminine* (1997), psychoanalyst Paul Verhaeghe is specifically concerned with Lacan's theoretical development of Freud's work. Verhaeghe helps to explain Lacan's innovations with anxiety and the Little Hans case. He points out that the distinction in Lacan's theory from Freud's rests on the question of passivity and the child's fear of being dropped by the mother, of being (at) the mother's disposal, which reveals a 'primal anxiety' that precedes the actual phobia (1997: 182).

The child's primary anxiety concerns the mother's rejection of the child for something else, for something outside the mother which Lacan calls the desire of the mother. Hans is now caught between the lack of the Other - the phallic mother who would let him go - and the previous dimension of the Other's *jouissance* where there is no lack, the Lacanian real. In the place of the mother's desire, Hans sets himself up as the object of her desire; in other words her object (*a*), which 'is constituted as a remainder in the relationship of the subject to the Other' (Lacan, 1962-63: 23.1.63). Verhaeghe explains that Hans takes up the position of

object (a) to fill in the lack, but this results in the disappearance of Hans as a subject and he 'is changed into her abject object' - the one who is dropped and rejected (1997: 182). In other words, abjection is a problematic solution to lack in the mother, and the subsequent phobia is constructed in the place of a father figure to protect the child against, or differentiate the child from, the Other's enjoyment (183).

Although Kristeva does not refer explicitly to Lacan's seminar on anxiety in *Powers of Horror*, there is evidence it is implicit in Kristeva's project. In discussing abjection as the prerequisite of signification, Kristeva makes an equation between language acquisition and passivity.

Syntactical passivation, which heralds the subject's ability to put himself in the place of the object, is a radical stage on the constitution of subjectivity.... the logic of the constitution of the phobic object also requires such a procedure of passivation (1980: 39).

While Kristeva is relying upon Lacan's connection between passivity and phobia, this is also where she wants to distinguish her theory from Lacan's. According to Kristeva, the Lacanian object (a), as the re-conceptualisation of the Freudian phobic object, is still defined in terms of a determinate object. As such, the Lacanian object (a) is 'the object of sexual drive: the mother, or her parts, or her representatives' (44). Kristeva's criticism is that Lacan's theory of anxiety maintains the distinction between object and subject, whereas the theory of abjection accounts for the indeterminacy of borders and limits within phobia and anxiety. That is to say, the ability to substitute a symbol for an object is dependent on abjection or the instability of identity boundaries.

Lacan's phobic object is not Kristevan abjection, in that, for Kristeva, the phobia does not represent 'the "a" objects of the desiring quest', and instead it is a 'metaphor that is taxed with representing *want itself*' (35). To explain, the object (a) is a reminder of the realm beyond the signifier, posited retrospectively as the lost object of complete satisfaction from which the subject is forever barred, and therefore this unsatisfied desire is endlessly repeated. Kristeva argues otherwise, that phobia is an answer to demand rather than desire, and as such 'calls attention to a *drive economy in want of an object*' (35). Phobia is symptomatic of the failure of desire because it is impeded with regard to its objects, and instead there is a non-object, which Kristeva describes as an hallucinatory metaphor of drive and sight, insecurely tied to words. There is therefore the possibility here for the symbolic law to be under permanent threat from the indeterminacy of drives and the primary processes, as in the function of condensation in metaphor. In contrast to the permanence of metaphorical indeterminacy, Lacan's concept of the object (a) is only ever a supplementary reminder of an

unattainable *jouissance* in the real. *Powers of Horror* is like many of Kristeva's texts which are, in part, a critique of Lacan's theory of desire, which, it is interpreted, neglects the body and the drive processes as the material heterogeneity in signification.

### **Metaphor and Primary Identification**

Kristeva's texts after *Powers of Horror*, such as *Tales of Love* (1983) and *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt* (1996), are consistent with the earlier texts in the criticisms of Lacanian psychoanalysis and its emphasis on desire. Kristeva's approach is to identify certain oversights in Lacan's theory and to provide alternatives. In *Tales of Love* Kristeva is concerned with the psychological processes of identification and idealisation which are traditionally understood as object-oriented processes. Kristeva's central argument is that the crucial issue of idealisation (of a loved object or the identification of the self with a narcissistic object-choice), is not dependent upon the constitution of a unity. Rather, idealising identification or love takes its initial shape within the drive-laden and non-objectal preoedipal relationship (Kristeva, 1983b: 29-30).

In discussing identification, Kristeva refers to the objectless structure of narcissism where the subject takes himself as his own love object. Infantile narcissism precedes the constitution of the ego, and properly belongs to the preoedipal stage which is characterized by a lack of differentiation. Narcissism, however, does involve a certain kind of object-choice but one that does not relate to an outside world. Kristeva describes this as the 'preliminary condition', which is necessary for an idealising identification (36). As a preliminary condition, narcissism is the precedent of, firstly, alienation and separation of the Lacanian mirror stage, and secondly, the subsequent solution to this loss in fantasy and desire. Because it lacks an external object, the narcissistic structure is, for Kristeva, the condition for the subject's ability to construct fantasies around which desire is expressed.

Kristeva's criticism of Lacan in *Tales of Love* concerns the connection he makes between fantasy and desire by which both are determined on the basis of a lost object or the loss of satisfaction. Lacan's emphasis on loss and division in desire does not account for the precondition of desire which is the imaginary, fusional structure of narcissism. Kristeva finds that Lacanian psychoanalysis does not adequately consider the imaginary and fusional experience of 'belonging that causes him to be subject to love and death [so] that he will be able to set up for himself imaginary objects of desire' (36). Metaphor enables the imaginary in the combination and transferral of meaning, which is an integral process of the narcissistic structure, and precedes the subject's positioning in the metonymical chain of desire. In *Tales of Love*, Kristeva aims to establish a crucial difference between her own work and Lacan's. If

metaphor is not entirely dependent on the signifier, then the unconscious and its primary processes (of condensation and displacement) are not solely effects of the subject's division in language.

The problem with Lacan's theory, according to Kristeva, is that it does not allow for a subjective experience outside of the signifier. Kristeva's *Tales of Love* contains a criticism of Lacan's theory of metaphor and metonymy, which will help to further examine Kristeva's interpretive procedure towards Lacan. As I have discussed, Kristeva's central theory is that poetic language and its tropes are generated by the semiotic drive processes which modify signification and its subject. By comparison, the argument against Lacan is that he confers motivation, or agency, to the letter which cancels out the being of drives.

According to Lacan ... being is neither the real nor something immediate in the Hegelian sense. In all the references to being in Lacan's text, it is seen as something mediated by the letter, by the agency of the letter, which implies that we have to look for it from the perspective of metaphor and metonymy (Palomera, 1994: 18).

Of relevance here is that Palomera indicates how Lacan, like Kristeva, places metaphor in the context of the subject's constitution. However Kristeva maintains that the subject and metaphor are not reducible to language. My counterargument here is that Lacan's theory of signification does address the question of the other of language.

In the essay 'The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious' (1957), Lacan defines metaphor as 'one word for another' where one signifier 'has taken the place of the other in the signifying chain' (1957: 157). The signifier, which is then replaced by another, is therefore only 'present through its (metonymic) connexion with the rest of the chain' (157). Metonymical displacement occurs within metaphorical combinations. Russell Grigg explains how Lacan includes metonymy within metaphor, because in 'all cases the metonymic relations may maintain the latent signifier "underneath" the manifest chain, but the metaphoric effect ... depends upon the (semantic) relation between the latent, "eclipsed" signifier and the manifest, metaphoric signifier' (1989: 73). Metonymy functions according to the contiguous relation between signifiers, insofar as the absent signifier remains connected to the present signifier. Metaphor includes this metonymical function and also creates a proliferation of meaning by disconnecting the latent and manifest signifiers. Metaphors are complex because 'there are no specifiable semantic relations involved in metaphor as there are in metonymy' (63). In other words, the effect of metaphorical meaning can be developed and elaborated indefinitely (71). For Lacan, metaphor and metonymy demonstrate how the

structure of the signifying chain always entails the possibility of signifying '*something quite other* than what it says', and moreover this otherness is the place of the subject 'in the search of the true' (Lacan, 1957: 155).

Lacan's theory of metaphor defines the subject as an effect of signification, where 'a signifier is that which represents a subject for another signifier' (Lacan, 1964: 207). Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe provide a useful explanation of the Lacanian subject as a metaphorical effect of signification:

if the subject is the possibility of speech, and if this speech is actualized as a signifying chain, then the relation of a signifier to another signifier, or that which a signifier 'represents,' as Lacan says, for another signifier - namely, the very structure of the chain - is what must be named 'subject' (1992: 69).

The Lacanian subject is constituted through the transference of meaning from latent to manifest signifiers, and to this extent the truth of the subject is how these unconscious desires motivate certain metaphorical effects in signification. The reference here is to the Freudian primary and unconscious processes, in that the metaphor mediates between the real of the unconscious and the social structure of language. For Lacan, metaphorical transference occurs when the subject is divided by language and the unconscious, for it is at this stage that signifiers are substituted for drives in order for the child to represent his/her desire in/for the Other. This substitution enables the child to represent his/her desire for the (m)Other and in the symbolic Other.

It is at this point in Lacan's theory that Kristeva positions her intervention in relation to the preoedipal relationship. According to Kristeva, primary identification is the child's first identification with what is most like itself but is not yet an object-other, it is an "incorporated model" (1983b: 25). The incorporative model of primary identification is the basis for language acquisition, whereby the child's incorporation of the mother necessarily includes the mother's attachment to something beyond the child. The child's incorporation of a not yet separate object includes a third figure intimately connected with the mother. This figure Kristeva describes as immediate and imaginary which, as a third term, foreshadows the symbolic father and is termed the imaginary father in prehistory (27). The operation of metaphor is, according to Kristeva, founded in the incorporating experience of primary identification, in which metaphor function as a 'unifying guideline within an objectality in the process of being established' (30). With regard to subjectivity, Kristeva theorizes the constitutive aspect of metaphor against Lacanian psychoanalysis which, according to Kristeva, situates metaphor within 'the absolute of the reference to the Phallus' (30). Kristeva

underlines her critique by referring to Lacan's Seminar XI, in which metaphor's 'unary feature is not "in the first field of narcissistic identification" where we have witnessed the emergence of the imaginary Father; instead Lacan sees it straight off "in the field of desire ... in the reign of the signifier"' (1983b: 387n18). As with *Powers of Horror* and *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva's criticism of Lacan in *Tales of Love* is consistent in rejecting the 'Lacanian notions of an always-already-there of language that would be revealed as such in the subject of the unconscious' (44). Consistently, too, Kristeva proposes an alternative of an 'evolutionary postulate' of 'various dispositions giving access' to the symbolic function (44). The overall argument is that Lacan's language-centred psychoanalysis cannot account for the dynamic and subversive operations of these various dispositions within a framework of a totalising structure of language and its laws (379).

### **Kristeva's Return to Freud**

Kristeva's recent work, *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt: The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis* (1996) enacts a return to Freud in order to discover the basis for another psychoanalytic theory of sense and sensation, one which has specifically been neglected in Lacan. In her return to Freud, Kristeva states that, contrary to Lacan, the Freudian subject 'is the subject of the drive, and not the subject of language. I must emphasize this point' (1996: 46). Kristeva's argument here is central to *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt*, in which Lacan's work is viewed as a selective and narrow reading of Freud that does not attend to the changes Freud made in his work.

Kristeva reads Freud according to various stages of which Kristeva finds three, and these three Freudian stages are specifically relevant to her critique of Lacan. The first and third are defined as the Freud of the drives and the non-linguistic, while the second is the Lacanian Freud of the unconscious manifested in language, as in Freud's writings from 1900-1914 (42-3). In Kristeva's approach to Freud's theoretical developments, the first stage of Freud's theory is defined as the precursor of the third stage, for in both Freud is concerned with the contradiction or heterogeneity of affective processes and language or signification. Kristeva explains that the early Freud makes the distinction between thing and word presentation. However 'language is certainly the organizer, but one must also consider the representation of things, which, while linked to words, are not part of the same domain of representation (34). The domain outside of representation is 'the instinctual domain as well as the primary processes' and it is 'irreducible to the secondary processes' (43). The semiotic processes reveal that meaning is not solely dependent on language.

The second stage in Freud's theory is where he moves away from a heterogeneous conception of meaning, and instead supports the later Lacanian reading of 'the domination of the unconscious by language and the conscious' (43). For Kristeva, the outcome of the Lacan's language centred theory is that the drive is no longer necessary in the analysis of the unconscious. With regard to Lacan, Kristeva writes that,

[t]he drive is a myth, adherents to this view are basically telling us, because we do not have access to it except through language. It is therefore useless to talk about drives; we should be content to talk about language (43).

Kristeva's approach to Freud has changed over the years. Almost three decades ago, in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva argued against Freud and Lacan for not sufficiently theorizing the drive processes and related affective states. More recently, in *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt*, Kristeva reads Freud in opposition to Lacan, while consistent to Kristevan psychoanalysis is the opposition to the Lacanian emphasis on language. It is possible to say that Kristeva's work is generated in opposition to Lacanian and post-Lacanian, and to substantiate this reading of Kristeva, I propose to examine Kristeva's oppositional reading of Lacan in more detail. With the aim of clarifying Kristeva's theoretical position I will first discuss how the major interpretations of Kristevan psychoanalysis have understood Kristeva's critical relationship to Lacan. Then, on the basis on those interpretations, I will discuss Kristeva's reading of Lacan with regard to its oppositional strategy.

## **2. The Critical Divide: For and Against**

There are a number of significant interpretations of Kristeva's work which find that Kristeva's project succeeds where Lacan's fails. The most prevalent view is that Kristeva remedies the Lacanian overemphasis on language and the symbolic order. John Lechte, in his book *Julia Kristeva* (1990) acknowledges Kristeva's use of the Lacanian registers of the Imaginary, Symbolic and Real, yet points out that that Lacan does not deal with the pre-discursive domain. (1990: 55-56). The opposition between Kristeva and Lacan is unambiguous for Lechte who is in agreement with Kristeva's reading of Lacan.

In brief, while Lacan was concerned to trace the limits of the signifiable and bring it under the auspices of the symbolic order, Kristeva, by contrast, has been concerned to extend the limits of the signifiable, perhaps to the extent of relativizing the role of the symbolic order (56).

Lechte's interpretation of Kristeva is advanced by Kelly Oliver in *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-Bind* (1993). Oliver's view is that Kristeva's psychoanalytic work is important in giving new attention to the preoedipal relationship, which has been given little consideration due specifically to the Lacanian emphasis on the mirror stage (1993: 36). Along with Lechte, Oliver claims that Kristeva's work successfully revises certain psychoanalytic concepts and therefore undermines Lacan's interpretation of Freud. For example, Kristeva's theory of the imaginary father of prehistory 'breaks down the traditional emphasis put on the Father of the Law' - Lacan's symbolic father of prohibition - and instead theorizes a third term prior to language and castration (177, 179). Anne-Marie Smith's more recent book on Kristeva, *Julia Kristeva: Speaking the Unspeakable* (1998), is also largely indebted to Lechte's analysis of Kristevan psychoanalysis. That is to say, for Smith the semiotic both improves upon and breaks with the dominance of the symbolic in Lacan's psychoanalysis (1998: 15).

Kristeva's revision of Lacan is widely accepted in interpretations of her work. For example, Tilottama Rajan finds that Kristeva subverts the opposition between the imaginary and the symbolic, allowing for a more dialectical relationship where the primary, imaginary identification relativises signification (1993: 226). Another critic, Shuli Barzilai, agrees with Kristeva's criticism of Lacan's 'linguistic interpretation of the unconscious' because such an interpretation - as Kristeva emphasizes in *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt* - limits Lacan's 'voyage of discovery (the return to Freud)' (Barzilai, 1999: 227). In Barzilai's view, Kristeva's psychoanalytic innovation is two-fold. Firstly, it undermines the dominance of the symbolic function in the subject, and secondly it provides a more faithful return to Freud than Lacan's reading (245).

The view that Kristeva remains faithful to Freud while challenging certain important Lacanian concepts is held also by Anna Smith, in *Julia Kristeva: Readings of Exile and Estrangement* (1996). As Smith explains, Kristeva's concept of the imaginary father returns to certain texts by Freud; in particular, 'On Narcissism', *The Ego and the Id*, and *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. In interpreting these texts, Kristeva arrives at a psychoanalytic theory of love that is intended to correct the Lacanian approach (Smith, 1996: 171). According to this reading Lacanian ideal identification is in the realm of desire and therefore 'in submission to the symbolic and the object *a*', whereas the Kristevan imaginary father, 'redefines the object [of identification] as one of transference and love rather than desire and fantasy' (171-172). The conclusion both Smith and Barzilai arrive at is that Kristeva's theory of primary identification is counteractive to the problems of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Smith clearly draws a contrast between Kristeva's theory of primary identification, which precedes desire, and Lacan's conception of love, characterized by 'sexual conquest' and an 'aggressive

capture of one by the other' (1996: 175). Similarly, for Barzilai, the Lacanian aim to 'reestablish the paternal function' can not provide the possibilities of Kristevan psychoanalysis, where the analyst enters into a metaphorical play of words with the analysand (1999: 241). Such verbal connections and condensations provide meaning where there is none and also set up the possibility for symbolic protection. Metaphorical discourse or poetic language is an effect of primary (identification) processes, and thus, prompts 'the reemergence of presymbolic, infantile organization' (241). As with primary identification, this 'enables the patient to experience a fusion or "death-in-the-mother", and, then, a second birth' (241).

As I have shown, many critics accept Kristeva's intentions with regard to her interpretation of and opposition to Lacanian psychoanalysis. The interpretive literature is, however, divided in its reception of Kristeva's arguments against Lacan. An equally significant group of critics have interpreted Kristeva's approach to Lacan to a degree which could be said to nullify the first group of critics, and therefore Kristeva's psychoanalytic project. For the first group of readers Kristeva subverts the dominance of the Lacanian symbolic by uncovering its necessary foundations in the semiotic drive processes of the maternal body and in primary identification. For the second, dissenting, group of readers the very Kristevan concepts considered by the first group to be subversive are understood instead as inherently Lacanian. In this interpretation Kristeva's critical reading of Lacan is ironically undermined by a fundamental allegiance to a paternal, psychoanalytic law.

Kaja Silverman's critique of Kristevan psychoanalysis, in *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (1988), is centred on the question of whether Kristeva breaks with or merely confirms Lacanian thinking. Referring to the later psychoanalytic work in *Powers of Horror* and *Tales of Love*, Silverman argues that the imaginary father of prehistory has replaced Kristeva's earlier emphasis on the semiotic, maternal body. Silverman's point is that the semiotic chora becomes of less importance in Kristeva's later psychoanalytic theory, in favour of the later concept of primary identification, where there is a third term which institutes difference within the enclosure of semiotic unity (Silverman, 1988: 105). From this perspective, Kristeva's theory moves away from the child's incorporation of the mother towards the figure of the father, with the result that the mother is eventually positioned alongside abjection, while the father becomes the model of incorporation for the child's ideal identification (116-117).

It is Silverman's contention that the underlying reason Kristeva does not succeed in making a connection between, on the one side, the change and disruption of the social, and on the other side, the maternal body of the preoedipal stage, is due to the theory only taking that

stage into account from an Oedipal perspective. In conclusion, Kristeva does not provide any other scene to that of the psychoanalytic paternal law, and her theory remains determined by the Oedipus complex. As Silverman states, Kristevan psychoanalysis establishes 'the father within the pre-Oedipal scene, thereby guaranteeing that everything that happens within the development of subjectivity has a phallic imprimatur' (119). The dominance of the father in Kristeva's theory is evidenced for Silverman in the implicit reliance upon the Lacanian notion that the feminine does not exist in the symbolic order. In Silverman's critique, Kristeva's work semiotic supports the Lacanian exile of femininity, which is understood as ultimately a 'refusal to assign the female subject a viable place within the symbolic order' (105).

Silverman's argument can be compared to Elizabeth Grosz's in *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists* (1989) and *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction* (1990). Grosz identifies a contradiction between Kristevan psychoanalysis and feminism, by virtue of the theory of the semiotic which assigns women a passive and subordinate role in the preoedipal, and which therefore points to the overriding influence of Freud and Lacan in her work (Grosz, 1990: 166-167). As I have already discussed, Grosz criticizes Kristeva's theory of revolutionary language for being available only to men, and claims that the reason for this bias is an allegiance to Lacanian psychoanalysis where women are defined 'as castrated and men as phallic, women are not *inside* the symbolic in the same way as men' (Grosz, 1989: 98; 1990: 166-167). The key point of contention for Grosz and Silverman is Kristeva's conception of the preoedipal which is seen to enclose the mother within a non-discursive, unrepresentable stage that occurs during the child's development. The phallogentrism that Grosz equates with Lacanian psychoanalysis - its 'conception of an unknowable feminine jouissance' - is for Grosz inherent to Kristeva's theory of motherhood and femininity (163). These critical readings by Grosz and Silverman show that Kristeva's manifest subversion of Lacan is undermined by a latent and intrinsic Lacanianism.

Judith Butler takes the same line as Grosz and Silverman in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990). Butler finds that Kristeva's theory has a heterosexual bias in that it relies on Lacan's account of the Oedipal phase, where the symbolic order is dominant (Butler, 1990: 80). There is limited space for homosexuality in Kristeva's theory, where homosexuality would seem to be restricted to the pre-discursive semiotic, in which the subject verges on psychosis (84). Although Kristeva claims to expose the limits of Lacanian concepts 'and to offer a specifically feminine locus of subversion of the paternal law', it is a strategy which 'proves doubtful' for Butler (79-80). Kristeva's theory does not subvert the paternal law since it is this very law that the semiotic chora depends upon for its articulation. Butler concludes with the proposal that Kristeva's notion of the preoedipal semiotic serves the symbolic, paternal law, and thus is merely 'the illusion of its inevitability' (93).

### **A Third Position**

The conclusion from these readings is that Kristeva's project is undermined by the very theory it seeks to subvert. This group of critics contradict the first group who defend Kristeva's project, in particular for the way it seeks to undertake a critical and oppositional reading of Lacan. Tangential to these two major groups in the critical literature there is one quite different interpretation which can help to explain this interpretive division.

One reading of Kristeva to take a different position from the previously discussed interpretive divide, is by Juliet Flower MacCannell, in *Figuring Lacan: Criticism and the Cultural Unconscious* (1986) and 'Kristeva's Horror' (1986). MacCannell claims there is a central ambivalence in Kristeva's relationship to Lacan's work. The ambivalence is related to Kristeva's approach to the Oedipus complex and the symbolic order which, for Kristeva, are 'absolutely necessary for the normalization of existence - but she sympathizes with those who fall through the cracks' (MacCannell, 1986b: 328). According to MacCannell, this theoretical impasse is due to Kristeva's misunderstanding of the Lacanian symbolic and, specifically, the process of symbolization (1986a: 135). In misreading the symbolic, Kristeva adheres to a certain particular feminist reading of Lacan which defines the symbolic as a coercive rather than a mediatory structure. On the basis of this misconception, Kristeva's project is founded on nostalgia for the realm before the symbolic, in which lies the possibility for disruption of its hegemony.

The inconsistency MacCannell locates in Kristeva's work is that while it claims to oppose phallic representation with another logic of the feminine and maternal, it neglects a more general and effective analysis of the symbolic function. In Kristeva's theory, the Lacanian symbolic is a closed system where the semiotic operates solely within its horizon. MacCannell points out that this interpretation is quite different to Lacan's conception of the symbolic which is not defined in terms of a simplistic opposition between subject and social Other, or between feminine other and masculine norm. Rather, the Lacanian symbolic occupies a third position to self and other, or to the Kristevan symbolic/paternal and semiotic/maternal division. Further, this third position allows for the subject's form of reference to the symbolic Other to be modified and changed (135-6). In this reading, our relationship to the Lacanian symbolic order is malleable; signifiers do not inherently provide certainty, as neither is our relationship to that network one of certainty. The difference between the Kristevan symbolic and the Lacanian symbolic is that, for Kristeva, there is only one way to resist the symbolic Other, and that way leads to a dangerous refusal of the social law. For, according to MacCannell, although Kristeva is manifestly 'opposed to fascism she

remains deeply sympathetic with those who, as borderline patients, would confront the maternal by refusing the normalizing operations of symbolic spatializations (inside/outside)' (1986b: 342). The argument from this critic is that Kristevan psychoanalysis defines the symbolic order as a prison, from which the only possible escape is the chaos of drives and the rejection of order.

For my purposes here, MacCannell's crucial point is that, rather than Kristeva's work articulating an improvement on Lacanian psychoanalysis, the theory of the semiotic does not have the critical and practical scope of Lacan's theory. That is to say, in Lacan, the master signifiers of the symbolic are alterable and, therefore, our relationship with the Other is open to change (MacCannell, 1986a: 29-30).

It would seem there is no possible resolution to the interpretive division over whether Kristevan psychoanalysis improves upon Lacanian theory or whether it remains within Lacanian parameters. Nevertheless, MacCannell's reading provides an alternative to those seemingly irreconcilable interpretations of Kristeva's reliance upon or dissension from Lacan. The question can now be modified from whether Kristeva reads against certain Lacanian failings or falls into them, to the question of whether Kristevan psychoanalysis might be more constraining, offering less resistance for the subject, than Lacanian psychoanalysis. In this sense, MacCannell's reading moves away from the standard critical impasse and investigates the more fundamental question of how Kristeva interprets Lacanian psychoanalysis, and how this interpretation shapes Kristeva's work. It is for these reasons that I am interested in furthering MacCannell's interpretative procedure in relation to Kristeva's work.

MacCannell's reading is concerned with the psychoanalytic texts, such as *Powers of Horror*, whereas here I am concerned with the later work, *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt*, since it is Kristeva's most extensive critical analysis of Lacan's reading of Freud. According to MacCannell's interpretive procedure, it is necessary to question Kristeva's interpretation of Lacan's theory. As previously demonstrated in this chapter, Kristeva's Lacan is very much the Lacan of the symbolic order, that is, of signification, desire and the Other. As I have discussed, it is this reading which divides the critics. On one side, there are those who support Kristeva's criticisms of Lacan, and on the other side, those who contend that those criticisms are ineffectual and, therefore, Kristeva provides no alternative to Lacan's patriarchal symbolic order. The question that MacCannell has raised is whether Kristeva's interpretation of Lacan's theory of the symbolic and signification is limited, and misunderstand the Other as a closed totality to which the subject is utterly subjugated. The implications of MacCannell's argument is that, by misinterpreting the symbolic as a closed

system, Kristeva overlooks the potential for social and psychological change in Lacan's theory. A provisional conclusion is that certain aspects of Lacan's work have been disregarded in Kristeva's critique and that this presents specific theoretical problems in Kristevan psychoanalysis.

In order to discuss this proposition, my argument is that Kristeva's reading of Lacan relies upon the same critical resistance that Žižek identifies in Althusser's reading of Hegel. Žižek neutralizes Althusser's critique of Hegel by showing how the conceptual oversight is not on the side of Hegel but rather with Althusser's own interpretation. As I have emphasized throughout the previous chapters, Kristeva's criticism is that Lacan neglects the real of the drives and instead only accounts for, and thus establishes, the primacy of the signifying order. And yet it is possible to find in Kristeva's rejection a resistance towards those concepts in Lacan which would in fact subvert her critical position. Taking my position from MacCannell's critique, I propose that Kristeva's misreading of the Lacanian symbolic is integral to that resistance. My point is that any consideration of the symbolic as incomplete would lead to the question of Lacan's conception of that inconsistency: that is, the notion of the failure of the symbolic order to (make) complete sense. Has Kristeva's interpretation suppressed certain aspects of Lacan, those which do not conform to her reading of the Lacanian dominance of the signifier?

### **3. Missed/Hidden/Obscured: Reading for Lacan**

This is the tendency of a certain current in French Lacanian and post-Lacanian psychoanalysis that considers the notion of the drive useless. The drive is a myth, adherents of this point of view are basically telling us, because we do not have access to it except through language. It is therefore useless to talk about drives; we should be content to talk about language (Kristeva, 1996: 43).

Sometimes, people even go so far as to invoke it against my doctrine of the unconscious, which they see as some kind of intellectualization - if they knew what I think of intelligence, they would certainly retract this criticism - as if I were ignoring what any analyst knows from experience, namely the domain of the drives (Lacan, 1964: 161-162).

In the 1964 Seminar XI, Lacan discusses the drive as one of the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis and explicitly links the drives to the unconscious (69). In doing so he remains faithful to Freud's conception of the drive as a 'basic concept' in the development of

psychoanalysis (Freud, 1915: 117). Yet, by comparison, Kristeva argues in *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt* that Lacan's theory of language is inadequate to Freud's vision of language which is of a 'narrative activated by drives and sensations' (1996: 65). In this text, Kristeva re-emphasizes the importance of Barthes's work for understanding narrative and writing in terms of a depth structure, in which language 'is the horizon, while style refers to a biological verticality' (195). This concept of a depth structure is inclusive of the drives, and is therefore different to Lacan's notion of language which 'has a flatter dimension, that of linguistic categories that organize the linearity of the signifying chain' (195). In Kristeva's conception of language drives operate vertically in contrast to the linear articulation of language. In this way Kristeva is able to theorize the process of meaning in terms of the generation and transgression of language.

### **Signifiante in Kristeva and Lacan**

In many ways Kristeva's conceptual framework in *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt* is consistent with her previous writings. There is the emphasis on the unrepresentable, along with a re-examination of Kristeva's earlier theories on narcissism, the imaginary father of prehistory, the heterogeneous, and "signifiante." Kristeva's endeavour is also consistent in terms of developing a psychoanalytic theory, not only attuned to, but almost equivalent to, a certain experience of art; in particular, art that challenges the identity and its related social structures. A key feature of Kristeva's endeavour is the concern both with a return to Freud's drive theory and with the development of that theory. For Kristeva, the radical aspect of Freud's drive theory has been lost, particularly in Lacanian psychoanalysis, which has excluded the non-linguistic and the unrepresentable.

Throughout Kristeva's work from 1974 to 1996, there is a consistent critique directed at Lacan's theory of desire. In *Revolution in Poetic Language* Kristeva makes a connection between the semiotic disruption of the symbolic and the death drive, defining both as a heterogeneity, which is replaced in Lacan's work with a subject of desire who is known only through the signifier. In *Powers of Horror* the abject is presented as the true and original non-object, which serves to expose the Lacanian object (a) of desire as limited in its reliance on the separation of object from subject. In *Tales of Love*, Kristeva is concerned with the fusion and the transference qualities of metaphor which, she claims, provides the ground for the displacement (metonymy) of desire and signification that is central to Lacan's work. And most recently, in *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt*, Kristeva is critical of Lacan for the very innovation for which he is most famous - his return to Freud. Now Kristeva's argument is that Lacan's reading of Freud overlooks the important and most revolutionary aspects, resulting in a limited approach which deals only with a portion of Freud's work and, moreover, one that

Freud later corrected. Kristeva contends that Lacan's emphasis on the signifier has led him to overlook the final innovation in Freud's work, which was a psychoanalytic model responsive to the functioning of drives in signification. For Kristeva, then, Lacan does not account for "signifiante" or the production of the effect of signification.

Signifiante might seem to be a concept specific to Kristeva's theory. However the term was first coined by Lacan in 1957 in 'The Agency of the Letter'.<sup>21</sup> Kristeva's discussion of signifiante makes no reference to how Lacan used it but, as I have discussed, 'The Agency of the Letter' is directly implicated in Kristeva's critique of Lacan.<sup>22</sup> In their detailed commentary on 'The Agency of the Letter', Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe make an important point which is of relevance to my analysis of Kristeva's critique. These authors explain how Lacan first introduces signifiante in his study of Freud's dream interpretation, where Lacan gives attention to the operations of meaning rather than meaning itself. At this stage in Lacan's work, in 1957, signifiante is important as an entirely new concept, which 'touches on what until now has been excluded from the signifying order by Lacan' (Nancy & Lacoue-Labarthe, 1992: 62). In other words, Lacan formulated a new concept in 1957 in order to account for the operations of signification, and this new concept has its roots in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). Conversely, in Kristeva's discussion of signifiante in *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt*, the argument is that Freud could only be seen to have approached a concept such as signifiante in the final stage of his work, after 1914. Lacan discovered signifiante in Freud's famous work of 1900, yet Kristeva claims that such a concept only occurs four years later in Freud. What then is the difference between these two conceptions of signifiante, based as they are on two very different readings of Freud? Does Kristeva's theory of signification oppose and improve upon Lacan's, or does it, as MacCannell has shown, overlook certain key elements of Lacan's theory?

Interpretations by Anna Smith and Kelly Oliver help to explain Kristeva's use of signifiante in the context of how it differs from Lacan's conception. The specific reference for both writers is a passage in *Revolution in Poetic Language* where Kristeva defines the Freudian drive 'as a transition from the psychical to the somatic' (Kristeva, 1974: 167). For Kristeva it is this process from psyche to soma which reveals a materialist dialectic in Freud's theory, in which there is 'the biological and the symbolic within the dialectic of the signifying body invested in

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<sup>21</sup> In their Translators' Preface to *The Title of the Letter*, Raffoul and Pettigrew note that signifiante is a Lacanian neologism (Nancy & Lacoue-Labarthe, 1992: xxii).

<sup>22</sup> Kristeva's silence on the theoretical origins of signifiante is reflected in the critical literature. Lechte points out that Kristeva used signifiante as early as 1969 in *Séméiotiké*, but Lacan is unmentioned in Lechte's explanation of the concept (1990: 100-1, 129). Neither is Lacan's introduction of the concept examined in a number of other interpretations of Kristeva's use of signifiante, see (Payne, 1993: 165, 194), (Smith, 1996: 109-110), (Oliver, 1993: 32, 100), (Smith, 1998: 18). This critical neglect can perhaps be further explained by the omission of the term from the English translation of *Écrits* where signifiante is translated as 'significance' (Lacan, 1957: 159).

a practice' (167). Signification only functions on the basis of the materiality of drives, described by Kristeva as 'the repeated scission of matter that generates signifiante, the place where an always absent subject is produced' (167). When discussing this passage, Oliver identifies the subject of signifiante with an absence, in that the stable boundaries of meaning and identity are traversed in the processes of signification (1993: 32). Oliver's reading is also concerned with Kristeva's critique of Lacan's neglect of the drives. Oliver agrees with Kristeva that the subject in Lacan is founded on a complete repression of the drives, which are therefore relegated to the inaccessible realm of the real (32). Notwithstanding Oliver's general agreement with Kristeva, there are some reservations and she questions whether, 'Kristeva may be oversimplifying Lacan's theory of drives', and noting that, 'Lacan does have a theory of drives that induces presymbolic psychic elements' (33). Unfortunately, Oliver does not discuss any further the differences between Kristeva's and Lacan's drive theory.

Anna Smith, like Oliver, distinguishes between Kristeva's and Lacan's reading of the Freudian drive theory, and in this discussion, Smith draws attention to Kristeva's conception of signifiante. With regard to Kristeva's definition of the drive as the transition from psyche to soma, Smith explains how the drives 'articulate a pattern of psychical marks across the body, thus investing it in a dialectical signifying practice' (1996: 110). These psychical marks of the body concern pleasure and desire, and therefore drives generate 'signifiante, the production of meaning in excess of consciousness' (110). That is to say, the drives divide the body and undermine the authority of consciousness, placing emphasis instead upon the generative pleasure of signifiante which is prior to the order of signification. The concept of signifiante operates in Kristeva's work as a compromise between the Freudian biological drive and the Lacanian drive as that which is solely realized through the effect of signification (110). These critics help to understand Kristeva's concept of signifiante and how it might differ from Lacan's conception. With regard to that theoretical divergence it is equally helpful to more fully understand Lacan's concept of signifiante in 'The Agency of the Letter'.

In my previous discussion in this chapter on 'The Agency of the Letter' I showed that Lacan does not adhere to Saussure's emphasis on the meaning of language. Rather than considering language in terms of communication, the signified and the referent, Lacan pays attention to the signifier. Nevertheless, it is not only the signifier which interests Lacan in this essay, but it is also the relationship of the signifiers to each other. Lacan privileges the signifier because it is where meaning is generated - that is through the movement or operation of the chain of signifiers. Lacan, however, is not concerned merely with the material operations of the signifier, for this is inadequate to his definition of signifiante. When Lacan defines signifiante as the 'pure function of the signifier', the important point is that

signifiante concerns its relationship with the bar separating a signifier from a signified (Lacan, 1957: 152). The operation of signifiante is located in the bar which represents the gap between signifier and signified.

In their reading of 'The Agency of the Letter', Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe explain this important function of the bar in the operation of the signifier, or signifiante. The bar is the representative of the operations of the signifier which can either cross over the bar or slide along the bar (Nancy & Lacoue-Labarthe, 1992: 63). That is, in the movement of passing over to the signified, the signifier retains its dynamic aspect while the signified is its limit. Therefore, the production of meaning is determined through the crossing over of the signifier to the limit of the signified. In this way, the movement or operation of the signifier is autonomous since it does not depend on the signified for its productivity, instead the signifier produces meaning through its play or its differential relation with other signifiers.

### **The Symbolic, Real and Imaginary in Lacan and Kristeva**

For Lacan, the play of signifiante displays the detachment of the signifier from some thing. The signifier is not attached to any thing, or, the signifier is not adequate to its signified; rather the signifier refers to some other which resists signification. Lacan's discussion of the production of meaning does not concern the 'letter being adequate to something ... it is a question of the adequation (truth) of the letter to a permanent and radical gesture of in-adequation' (Nancy & Lacoue-Labarthe, 1992: 62, 69). Through the inadequate relationship between the signifier and signified - where the operation of signifiante occurs - meaning is able to be generated and altered.

What this structure of the signifying chain discloses is the possibility I have, precisely in so far as I have this language in common with other subjects, that is to say, in so far as it exists as a language, to use it in order to signify *something quite other* than what it says (Lacan, 1957: 155).

The point is that language and signification are not merely prohibitive laws, just as system does not necessarily negate freedom, and therefore systems of signification provide the basis for connotations which continually break with the rules. Lacanian signifiante attests to the incompleteness of the symbolic order, showing that the signifier is not necessarily tied to a signified. As Dany Nobus explains with regard to the Lacanian symbolic 'a particular series of signifiers can spark off a whole range of subsequent signifiers ... and there is a continuous effect of "retro-version" (feedback) whereby every signifier is simultaneously the cause and effect of another signifier' (2000: 86-7).

Even though Lacan's concept of signifiante shows that the symbolic is open-ended, Kristeva consistently claims that it privileges language and the unifying signifiers of identity (the Lacanian paternal function), while also failing to account for nonverbal elements in language such as gesture and affect. Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory is faithful to her earlier version of dialectical materialism which emphasized '*process* over identification, *rejection* over desire, *heterogeneity* over signifier, *struggle* over structure' (Kristeva, 1974: 179). Those concepts which Kristeva gives a secondary status are, in Kristeva's materialist psychoanalysis, used in the later texts to define Lacan's theory, which has 'located idealization solely within the field of the signifier and of desire; he clearly if not drastically separated it from ... drive heterogeneity and its archaic hold on the maternal vessel' (Kristeva, 1983b: 38). This is the argument in the essay 'Within the Microcosm of "The Talking Cure"'. Lacanian psychoanalysis, and specifically the three registers, is interpreted as a closed structure which cannot encompass an other side of signification. On this perceived deficiency in Lacanian theory Kristeva writes:

although the realm of meaning is never totalizable and is continually perforated by nonsense, it is nevertheless *homogeneous* with the realm of signification, even going so far as to assimilate what the dualism in Freudian thought regarded as strangely irreducible: instinctual drive, affect. No matter how impossible the *real* might be ... it finally becomes part of a topology with the *imaginary* and the *symbolic*, a part of that trinary hold from which nothing escapes, not even the "hole," since it too is part of the structure (1981b: 35).

In this closed structure the real as the Lacanian register of the body and affect becomes merely a fantasy which is constructed 'from a desire to integrate, within a language ... a supposed concreteness' (36). To recuperate the real, Kristeva finds that language 'as any analyst can hear, is the very process of abstraction and logic which gives us access to the most essential, the most hidden concreteness' (37). This brings us to Kristeva's elaboration of signifiante in an essay directly critical of Lacan. When Kristeva first refers to signifiante in this essay it is in order to distinguish her theory of the semiotic, which bridges the real of the drives and the symbolic, from Lacanian theory where affect and heterogeneity are seen to be excluded from the discursive order (34). The disadvantage Lacan's theory has for psychoanalytic practice is, according to Kristeva, that the analyst focuses on the content of the analysand's speech, on signification, and neglects the dynamics of the sign or the play of signifiers as signifiante (46, 48).

Taking account of Kristeva's arguments against Lacan, does the concept of signifiante, which is formulated in 'The Agency of the Letter', support Kristeva's critique? In Lacan's essay the defining function of signifiante is the operation of signification by which the signifier insists and by doing so resists signification. Kristeva's concept of signifiante involves the same dynamics of insistence and resistance, where there is 'the constitution not of "symbols" ... but of symbolic equivalences'; the 'attachment to the signifier, and the manipulation of meaning'; 'the uncertainty of negation and the release of meaning' (43, 45). Kristeva's definition of signifiante in 1981 derives from *Revolution in Poetic Language* and is a predecessor of the later *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt* where, in both texts, the emphasis is on the potential of the drive to disrupt and renew the symbolic. *Revolution in Poetic Language* defines the movement of the semiotic as a rejection, where the pulsative movement of the drive between the psyche and the soma creates material divisions in the subject and in systems of signification.

Rejection is Kristeva's term for Freud's concept of the repetition compulsion, that which is beyond the pleasure principle and 'sends the signifying body back to biological a-signifiante and finally to death' (1974: 160). In *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt* Kristeva also emphasizes the notion of repetition compulsion as a key element in psychic and cultural revolution, although the term Kristeva now uses is revolt rather than rejection. Revolt encompasses rejection and also includes, etymologically, the notion of a return (1996: 1-3). Kristeva explains the importance of repetition to the analysis of psychological and cultural revolt in *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt*.

The logic of the analytical pact (the transference) is not that of a transgression ... but a displacement of the traumatism, a progressive, incessant, and perhaps even interminable displacement .... And to what will this displacement lead the analysand? To the possibility of working-out, working-through, and therefore to the construction of a veritable culture where displacement constitutes its source and essence (29).

Trauma is the cause of repetition, according to this passage, an 'interminable displacement'. The displacement is necessary in order to represent the unrepresentable of trauma, for it enables the working through of the traumatic experience within the analytic transference. Repetition and displacement are productive in the analytic setting and also, according to Kristeva, in the artistic work which like 'analysis is an invitation to become the narrator, the novelist, of one's own story' (29). Both art and psychoanalysis are determined by a subject who tells a story, in which trauma or the 'non-symbolized form as negativity tears up the domestic space of the body and inserts paragrams and glossolalia into the signifying chain'

(Smith, 1996: 112). For Kristeva, therefore, thought and signification are necessarily embodied and work through the negativity of drives and trauma 'as return, displacement, plasticity of the proper' (Kristeva, 1974: 29). The negativity of semiotic drives and its process is signaled in repetition, in a displacement of signification and of the body. In displacement and repetition the body and signification are returned to the condition of meaning and identity, to the chaos of semiotic negativity.

One particular interpretation of Kristeva's drive theory, by Anna Smith, includes an important critique of Kristeva's conception of the relationship between drives and language. According to Smith, the movement between the corporeal and the linguistic is articulated in Kristeva as an unmediated and 'consistent causative relation' (Smith, 1996: 118). The semiotic processes are intended to be mediatory. However, with the emphasis on the disruptive force of the semiotic, they cannot provide the basis for a negotiation between drives - all of which ultimately follow the death drive - and signification. In Kristeva's theory, imagination or the aesthetic experience is only renewed, and is entirely contained, by the drives. In Smith's words, '[t]here is no exterior reservoir which may wash the imagination with an unexpected freshness, no surprise, wonder, or even estrangement that drive theory cannot account for' (187). Smith explains how this shortcoming is due, in part, to a certain emphasis in Kristevan psychoanalysis which 'assumes the primary importance of the drives' (187). In Kristeva's approach, the dichotomy of chaos and order is inherent to the theory of the semiotic, which, according to Smith, 'allows the imagination *no room* to negotiate the path between drives and sign' (187). Smith's critique is relevant to Kristeva's larger psychoanalytic project. After *Revolution in Poetic Language*, in *Tales of Love* and in later writings on art and imagination, Kristeva does indeed address the problem of semiotic destruction in relation to its opposition to symbolic ordering. Yet, as I will discuss, Kristeva's drive theory continues to be of primary importance in her work, and therefore Smith's critique retains its relevance.

Kristeva's drive theory is necessary to her concept of significance as the production of signification, and yet the Kristevan theory of the drive and the symbolic are theoretical stumbling blocks, as outlined by Juliet Flower MacCannell and Anna Smith. In order to extend upon the questions raised by those critics, I am proposing that, in rejecting Lacan's theory of desire and signification, Kristevan psychoanalysis is unable to provide the necessary intersection between the real of the drive and the effects of signification. To begin this inquiry, which will be continued in the following chapter on education, I will discuss desire and drive in Lacan, specifically in relation to Lacan's return to Freud.

## Lacan's Return to Freud

We have seen that for both Kristeva and Lacan the concept of signifiante is closely connected to Freud's work on repetition in signification. From Kristeva's standpoint, the distinction is that signifiante is where the drives are embedded in signification, while Lacan's notion of signifiante would reject drives in favour of language. In making this distinction, Kristeva considers her theory of signifiante to be more faithful to Freudian thought than Lacan's language-centred theory, since the 'major difference between Lacan and Freud resides in the postulate according to which the heterogeneity of the drive would be impossible to enunciate in the field of free association' (Kristeva, 1996: 61). From another perspective, Verhaeghe has argued that Lacan's theory of desire and fantasy pursues the necessary developments of Freud's incomplete theory of drive and desire (Verhaeghe, 1997: 123, 145). For my concerns here, Verhaeghe's discussion on the changes in Freud's work helps to show how Kristeva has overlooked certain complexities in the Freudian theory of drives, and in its development by Lacan. Repetition is a key issue in this discussion and will inform my reading of Kristeva and Lacan.

Verhaeghe's study of Freud's drive theory traces the change Freud made from the first theory of the pleasure principle to the second more complex one, which proved the first to be inadequate. The first theory is that the human being 'strives for pleasure, for satisfaction' and 'keeps as far away as possible from unpleasure' (Verhaeghe, 1997: 126). At this stage of Freud's work pleasure is defined as the relief of tension, while unpleasure is an increase of tension. The break from this position occurs around a series of conceptual changes which 'could not but give rise to a new theory of the drives' (135). Verhaeghe connects this second drive theory with a change in the understanding of the pleasure principle. It is no longer satisfaction that is sought after, but 'the desire for desire itself', and therefore, in contradiction to the first theory of the pleasure principle, '[a]ccumulation of tension can be pleasurable, discharge of tension disappointing' (135). The pleasure principle is connected to the sexual drive or Eros which, in Freud's second theory, becomes more complex with the discovery of 'a second kind of pleasure, a pleasure that went beyond the common sense of the first theory, because it was a pleasure that could include pain' (139). Eros strives not only for the release of tension but also for tension or desire to be sustained. And yet, as Verhaeghe explains, there is a further contradiction in the second theory of the pleasure principle. For although the sexual drive aims to maintain a certain level of excitation, all drives ultimately

aim for satisfaction, and for the pleasure principle this means the complete release of tension. Verhaeghe outlines the paradox of the pleasure principle, which

brings us to a very strange, indeed frightening conclusion. The zero point of total discharge of tension, aimed at by the pleasure principle, is nothing but death - 'la petite mort' foreshadows death proper. This implies that the pleasure principle operates in the service of Thanatos. At the opposite end of the spectrum we find Eros maintaining and enhancing tension in the service of life (138).

To go back to the question of repetition and drives in relation to signification. Verhaeghe explains Freud's first theory of the pleasure principle in terms of 'the endless shifting of desire' in neurotic symptoms, upon which only the interpretation of the psychoanalyst as 'the master could impose an end on the continuous displacement of desire' (145). The question which brought about a break with this masterful approach concerned the final term of the shifting of desire along the chain of signifiers. To simplify Verhaeghe's argument, Freud's second theory took up the problem of what lies behind the repetition compulsion. Part of this discovery led to the proposal that the displacement of desire is both a defence against and a longing for

the original fusion with the mother as first Other. This searched-for fusion, the striving for love and satisfaction, shows a strange affinity with death and the non-verbal. It necessitates a defence, the necessity and endless displacement of desire (147).

Verhaeghe explains how Freud's second theory (of the primary fantasy and the cause of desire) was left unfinished, and later finds its consistent development in Lacan's theory of desire. The endless displacement of desire is explained in Lacan's concept of the lack in the Other, where the repetition of signifiers represents 'an attempt at a psychical elaboration of something for which the words were originally lacking' (152). Verhaeghe's point is that in Freud's 'haste to reach the end,' that is the end point of desire, 'he skipped a certain step, the starting point. The lack in the symbolic is the lack in the Other, and thus concerns the *desire* of the Other' (173). As discussed above, with regard to the case study of Little Hans, the lack in the first Other is covered over and defended against by the neurotic fantasy (for Hans it is a phobia) and in which Hans becomes the object (a); the rejected object-object seemingly able to repair the lack. It is this relationship between the symbolic and the real which proved the obstacle in Freud's work. The lack in the symbolic is defended against by constructions in the imaginary and, as with Little Hans, the subject is then susceptible to engulfment in the real. The solution for Freud (and for Hans) was the 'step towards the

symbolic function of the father, the Name-of-the-father as a signifier, towards the mother as the first Other subject to the law of the Name-of-the-father' (150). That is to say, Freud did not make the connection between the separation of the child from the mother and a symbolic agency encompassed by language that cannot ever say it all, and which depends on the Name-of-the-Father to furnish some permanency of meaning for the subject. Insofar as Freud was unable to 'transcend the character of reality' his conception of the father and the phallus both remained in the real (150). The obstacle for Freud was the relationship of the real with the symbolic, which, as I have discussed, is the same problematic in Kristeva's theory of drives and signification. In Verhaeghe's terms Kristeva goes no further than Freud's second, half-finished theory, in which the 'step towards the symbolic function ... was never taken' (150).

Anna Smith has cast doubt on the efficacy of Kristeva's theory of imagination to mediate between the chaotic drives and the restraints of the symbolic order. It is as though the Kristevan interior space of imagination is not sufficient to withstand the 'very locus of Kristeva's theoretical argument ... a potentially Manichaeian opposition between anarchy and order, conscious and unconscious' (Smith, 1996: 118). As a result of the dualism at the centre of Kristeva's theory, repetition is identified with the repeated scissions brought about by the death drive. Repetition-rejection in Kristeva's theory is on the side of the real or beyond the pleasure principle. This is an interpretation of the pleasure principle which belongs to Verhaeghe's first Freud; that is, where unpleasure is defined as the increase of tension, as distinct from pleasure. In Freud's second theory, where two seemingly contradictory forms of pleasure are identified, beyond the pleasure principle does not mean it is in opposition to pleasure, but rather inclusive of the paradoxical spectrum of pleasure to the extent of pain and non-satisfaction. Since repetition attends the entire range of the pleasure principle it is not restricted to the other side of the symbolic, nor is it opposed to pleasure. Rather, as Lacan shows, repetition is the pleasure principle. It is, therefore, only Lacan who 'formulated the necessary conceptual extension' to Freud's concept of repetition compulsion (Verhaeghe, 1997: 146).

In excluding Lacan from her Freudian theory of cultural revolution, Kristeva is unable to theorize the possibility of changing the symbolic network of signifiers that are in Lacan equated with the pleasure principle. This is the very point Lacan makes in Seminar XI, that the 'real is beyond the *automaton*, the return, the coming-back, the insistence of the signs, by which we see ourselves governed by the pleasure principle' (1964: 53-4). For Lacan, the symbolic order is consistent with the pleasure principle and with repetition, while the real is inclusive of and beyond the pleasure principle.

Lacan's initial concept of signifiante gives emphasis to the operations of signification, such as insistence or repetition, by which the signifier never reaches its final term and along the way follows the paradoxes of the pleasure principle (the attainment and deferral of pleasure). In this conception, unconscious productions occur when something is hidden in relation to the signifier; that is, the loss of complete satisfaction or *jouissance* when language enters the subject. As Nobus explains, repetition 'appears not as an obscure unconscious mechanism ... but as an irreducible aspect of the symbolic embedment of the unconscious' (2000: 83). The finishing point of the endless slippage of desire lies in the real and not in reality; it is beyond the signifier and beyond the pleasure principle. Repetition is not, therefore, to be understood as beyond the pleasure principle, and is instead the signal of 'when a missed, traumatic encounter (beyond the pleasure principle) is integrated within the network of signifiers' (121). The insistence of the trauma is that which aims to defend against lack and lost *jouissance*. But because insistence is expressed in the repetition of signifiers, it is on the basis of the chain of signifiers that the subject's servitude to the repeated emergence of the trauma may be altered. Lacanian psychoanalysis aims 'to bring the endless circulation of traumatic events within the machine's memory to a halt by modifying the structure of the machinery itself' (85). Unlike the dualism inherent to the Kristevan semiotic and symbolic, Lacan's conception of the real and the symbolic maintains and develops the paradoxes of Freud's second theory of the pleasure principle.

The process of repetition, for Kristeva, is where signification and the subject return to the semiotic as the condition of meaning and identity. As with Freud's unfinished theory, the Kristevan conception of repetition is unable to properly theorize the relationship between the drives in the real and the symbolic system, and instead any creative, signifying practice threatens to unravel in the disruptions of semiotic negativity. Lacan's concept of repetition signifies the real lack in the symbolic; that is, in its symbolic forms such as repetition the insistence of the real conveys that language is itself traumatic and only ever offering provisional, ambiguous answers to our desires.

### **Subversion in Kristeva and Lacan**

My argument is that it is a misreading of the Lacanian symbolic to understand it as the determinant component of a language-centred theory which is, in turn, restrictive of any disruption of that symbolic order. As a consequence of this misreading, Kristeva's critique of Lacan has related limitations in its interpretation of the Lacanian nonverbal registers, and specifically, the real in relation to the symbolic. According to Verhaeghe the obstacle for Freud was the symbolic function and it is also a limitation, according to MacCannell, in Kristevan psychoanalysis specifically with regard to the possibility for change in the subject's

relationship with the symbolic Other. The non-dualistic relationship of the real and the symbolic in Lacanian theory enables the symptom, or the aesthetic work, to be understood as a symbolic reference to the ineffable or inassimilable. When there is a break in signification the subject may be able to question connections between unconscious desires and signifiers of identity. Throughout her work Kristeva has relied upon certain elements in Lacanian theory while ultimately rejecting its assumptions and outcomes. For Kristeva, Lacan's work overemphasizes the laws of language and eliminates 'the question of the maternal', the semiotic, as 'the singular experience that insufflates an irreducible sensibility into the communal use of language' (Kristeva, 1996: 79, 117). By employing Lacanian concepts Kristeva aims to then reconstruct those concepts in the context of a 'different preoedipal or transoedipal order ... above and beyond the oedipal barrier that constitutes the sign', for it is in this way that Freudian psychoanalysis will finally be able to reveal models of transgression and revolt in relation to the symbolic order (87). I have proposed that Kristeva does not succeed in subverting Lacanian theory for more revolutionary purposes. Instead Lacan's was already a radical theory with such concepts as signifiante, repetition and the real in relation to the symbolic.

Clearly, Kristeva and Lacan diverge in their conceptions of the symbolic. Kristeva's critique of Lacanian psychoanalysis is based on an interpretation of the symbolic as dominating and even invalidating the nonverbal registers. The Kristevan notion of the semiotic is an attempt to redress a perceived Lacanian bias for language and the laws of signification. For Kristeva, Lacanian psychoanalysis gives a limited account of the drives and of the preoedipal relationship that, conversely for Kristeva, are not annihilated through socialisation, and instead maintain a transgressive and transformative relationship with systems of signification. This interpretation fails to recognize that the Lacan's symbolic is, by definition, incommensurate with the real and the imaginary registers. The Lacanian symbolic is unable to achieve certainty or complete knowledge because it cannot encompass everything - signifiers cannot say it all.

Kristeva interprets Lacan's symbolic as closed to the heterogeneity of semiotic processes and therefore Lacan's psychoanalysis is read as precluding a theory of drives and the preoedipal. In my reading however, Lacan does theorize the drive, particularly in the post-1960s seminars, as that which is both a distinctive psychoanalytic concept and in terms of the irreducibility to the symbolic. This is exemplified in the concept of the object (a), which provides the conceptual intersection between the real of the preoedipal drives and desire in the symbolic order. Lacanian desire is founded in the real, generated in the symbolic and motivates (or fixates) the imaginary. The object (a) occurs as a remainder of the real, a rem(a)inder of the body before socialisation, for it reminds us that our desire is not our own,

and instead has its inceptive coordinates in the early relations with the first Other, the mother. The Lacanian subject's desire is the desire of the Other, and yet the Other is incomplete, lacking, in-desire. The Other is lacking because it cannot guarantee and fulfil the subject's desire; that is to say, in relation to the subject's desire, the Other does not have authority 'over a nonconflictual space in which all differences can harmoniously exist' (Copjec, 1994: 151). Lacan's symbolic Other is not an homogeneous or consistent structure to be set against an excluded alterity.

In contrast to an inherently inconsistent symbolic order, Kristeva's theory of semiotic negativity/rejection is presented as the polar opposite to the restraints of the symbolic order. Consequently the dualism of the semiotic-symbolic may not adequately theorize of the imaginative experience, one that would be able to protect against the subject being overwhelmed by the violence and chaos of the drives. It is, however, Kristeva's claim for the imaginary to successfully mediate between drives and signs which underpins her model of a parallel praxis between the psychoanalytic situation and the literary experience. In the following chapter I will address the question as to how Kristeva's theory of imagination is intended to perform this mediative function, specifically through a comparison with Lacan's approach to the psychoanalytic situation. The strategy and subject matter of Chapter 4 will be explicated with a further comparison of Kristeva and Lacan, focusing on the implications of these theories for educational theory and practice.

## IV

### Psychoanalysis and Education Ethics

The previous chapters have addressed certain theoretical positions and conclusions in Kristeva's work which are, I propose, problematical. Kristeva's concept of subjectivity in relation to signification has provoked questions which will have implications for a critical and social theory of education. In the introduction to this thesis I have discussed how Wexler brings together a social analysis of education with cultural theories of signification, in order to examine the production, distortion and transformation of knowledge in education. Wexler claims that Kristeva's theory of the semiotic is applicable to his purpose due to its accent on the interconnections of knowledge and meaning with the body and identity. Wexler and Elliot both agree that a Lacanian approach is not amenable to a critical social theory for it is determined by a linguistic-centred conception of the unconscious to which education and its relations of knowledge and power cannot be reduced.

This chapter will address the tensions and oppositions between Kristevan and Lacanian conceptions of the analytic relationship and the transference, and how these theories may be used to think about the pedagogical relationship. Of central concern will be how specific educational theorists have applied the work of Kristeva and, in particular, her conception of transference, which will be contrasted with the Lacanian conception of transference and pedagogical ethics. Throughout the chapter a set of conclusions will be arrived at concerning the differences between the two thinkers in relation to pedagogy.

#### 1. Transference

Freud said of transference that it 'is of the highest practical and theoretical importance' to the psychoanalytic treatment (1905: 70n2). Transferences are 'mental structures' whereby 'new editions or facsimiles of the impulses and phantasies are aroused and made conscious during the progress of the analysis', with the 'peculiarity ... that they replace some earlier person by the person of the physician'. In the transference, 'a whole series of psychological experiences are revived, not as belonging to the past, but as applying to the person of the physician at the present moment' (116).

Shoshana Felman's essay, 'Psychoanalysis and Education: Teaching Terminable and Interminable', claims that Freud did at times regard the transference as occurring outside the psychoanalytic setting, and specifically in the pedagogical and the medical relationship

(1982: 34-5).<sup>23</sup> Felman agrees with Freud's speculations, pointing out that the relationship between teacher and student, as with the analytic relationship, is the site 'of the compulsive unconscious reproduction of an archaic emotional pattern' in which past familial experiences come into play (35). Clearly it is important to acknowledge that the classroom is not the location for psychoanalytic treatment, and that each may utilize very different discourses. However the powerful presence of transference in the pedagogical relationship must nevertheless be addressed, while taking into account the differences and similarities of each relationship. Felman's essay explains that the educational implications of transference are ethical, and concern 'the functioning of authority in general: as essential, thus, not to just any pedagogic situation but to the problematics of knowledge as such' (35). Felman's essay asks us to look more closely at Freud's theory on transference in order to further consider the relationship of the transference to the ethics of knowledge and, therefore, to education.

### **Freud on Transference**

Freud considered the transference to be the key to the manifestation in analysis of a person's unconscious desires and conflicts that arise from repression. In transference 'all the patient's tendencies, including hostile ones, are aroused' (Freud, 1905: 117). It is specifically on these terms that transference is essential to psychoanalysis,

since use is made of it in setting up all the obstacles that make the material inaccessible to treatment, and since it is only after the transference has been resolved that a patient arrives at a sense of conviction of the validity of the connection which have been constructed during the analysis (116-7).

Transference is both 'the greatest obstacle to psychoanalysis' and 'its most powerful ally' (117). On the one hand, the transference involves both resistance and even hostility towards the analysis, yet on the other hand, it is the means by which unconscious patterns are made conscious during the treatment. For Freud, transference is crucial as both a motivating force for and a barrier to the treatment. Although the transference impedes psychoanalysis when it remains unconscious, it also allows for unconscious material to become conscious, 'and in this way the transference is constantly being destroyed' (117). In 'The Dynamics of Transference' Freud elaborates on resistance in transference by distinguishing between positive and negative transference, that is affectionate and hostile feelings, which may either be conscious or unconscious (1912: 105). With the transference the analyst's aim is to enable the analysand to 'fit these emotional impulses into the nexus of the treatment and of

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<sup>23</sup> For this point, Felman refers to Freud's essay 'Some Reflections on Schoolboy Psychology' (S.E. XIII, 241), also see the definition of transference in Laplanche and Pontalis (1988: 456).

his life-history, to submit them to intellectual consideration and to understand them in the light of their psychological value' (108). Through the transference and its analysis, unconscious desires become manifest and, most importantly, are made available for understanding and critical evaluation. Freud goes so far as to say that the analytic setting is determined by the transference, that the 'struggle between doctor and patient, between intellect and instinctual life, between understanding and seeking to act, is played out almost exclusively in the phenomena of transference' (108).

As Bruce Fink has pointed out, Freud's concept of transference consistently involves affective or libidinal conflicts which are reproduced in the conflict of transference (Fink, 1999: 41-2). The effect of transference is brought about by the analyst directing attention, not to the actual event of transference, but instead 'to the *content* (the ideational and affective content) of the projection, attempting to get the analysand to put *it* into words' (42). The content of the transference involves intense feelings and ideas connected to those significant others early in the analysand's life, and because of that connection the content of transference is comprised of important conflicts concerned with authority, identification, ideals, fantasies, the unconscious, drives and the ego. The unconscious desires which occur during transference have been a source of conflict for the analysand insofar as they are at variance with certain identifications or ideals.

Although Freud gave an important place to the analyst's handling of the transference contents, his conclusions on the role the analyst has in the emergence of transference are more ambiguous (Nobus, 2000: 110). In certain texts, Freud proposed that transference occurs in relations outside of psychoanalysis, while in others, he claims at times that transference feelings are brought about solely through the psychoanalytic situation and cannot be attributed to the analyst in any way (110). Both Lacan and Kristeva address the question of the analyst's role in transference and each insist on the importance of that role in the conception and handling of transference. I will begin by comparing their conceptions of transference in order to introduce the main discussion concerning specific educational applications of these psychoanalytic theories.

### **Kristeva's Aestheticized Psychoanalysis**

There are a number of texts by Kristeva from the post-1980s which are specifically concerned with transference. These are *Tales of Love* (1983), 'Transference Discourse' (1984), *In the Beginning was Love: Psychoanalysis and Faith* (1985), *Time and Sense: Proust and the Experience of Literature* (1994), *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt: The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis* (1996), and 'From Symbols to Flesh: The

Polymorphous Destiny of Narration' (2000). The titles in themselves give an indication of Kristeva's literary approach to psychoanalysis, which could be called an aestheticization of psychoanalysis. In agreement with Habermas, Žižek has described poststructuralism as a 'universalized aestheticization' where 'there is a continuity of an infinite literary text which is always already its own reading' (1989: 153). Kristeva's work in this sense is poststructuralist in relation to the aestheticization of the practice and theory of psychoanalysis. It should be noted that Althusser's structuralist influence in Kristeva's work is not cancelled out by a poststructuralist approach to psychoanalysis, for there is a continuum between the two theoretical areas in Kristeva's work in terms of a materialist critique of the concept of totality in social theory (see Chapter 2: Framing the Hegelian Critique). As I will discuss, Kristevan psychoanalysis is equivalent to the aesthetic experience and, especially in her writings on transference, the psychoanalytic is given shape by the literary. The Kristevan analyst's role in the transference is a combination of each parental figure and of the literary reader-writer. Concomitantly, the crucial site of transference outside the therapeutic relationship is the literary experience. According to Kristeva, the reception and production of literature is not merely reflective of psychoanalytic transference, but rather it is a model with which to inform psychoanalytic praxis.

The important role of literature and the arts in both the theory and training of psychoanalysis had already been recognized by Freud, who saw these areas of knowledge as necessary in the understanding and interpretation of analytic material (Freud, 1926b: 246). When discussing the training of analysts, Freud's educational directive is later underlined by Lacan, to whom it is 'abundantly clear that Freud regarded a study of languages and institutions ... of literature and of the significations involved in works of art as necessary to an understanding of the text of our experience' (Lacan, 1955: 144). Although this is Lacan's stated position, Kristeva's theory of literature and psychoanalysis is intended as a corrective, as previously discussed, to the supposed hegemony of the signifier in Lacan's work. Against Lacan, Kristeva contends that the literary experience gives preeminence to the drives and sensation which are foundational, yet also irreducible, to language.

*Tales of Love* introduces Kristeva's theory of metaphor in terms of a primary, pre-objectal identification, where there is a merging or 'reduplication' of mother and child before the separation and alienation of language and desire (Kristeva, 1983b: 25-6). The transference of meaning conveyed by metaphor is, according to Kristeva, a transference founded in the semiotic, maternal body where sensation and affect precede and exceed the order of language. Kristeva privileges the imaginary moment - of metaphor, of love, of transference - as an illusion to be turned to the benefit of 'a true process of self-organization' (381). In *Tales of Love*, analytic discourse is described in terms of identification and object relations where

the analyst takes up the maternal position of 'gratifying needs', and also the paternal position of 'differentiation' and 'prohibition that produces both meaning and absurdity' (28-9). Kristevan transference is marked by semiotic processes and allows access to the imaginary relations of primary identification. This conception of transference is consistent with Kristeva's theory of the semiotic processes as the condition of an ideal identification, rather than an identification which is solely determined by the symbolic realm of signs.

The later text *Time and Sense: Proust and the Experience of Literature* (1994) emphasizes the Kristevan aestheticization of psychoanalysis in turning again to the dual analytic roles of identification and naming. In order for the analyst to give a name to the unnameable semiotic, he/she must first identify with the analysand. A pre-symbolic identification is enabled on the basis of an identification with the sensations of the analysand, which are recollective of the completion of *jouissance*, or a 'paroxysmal intensity of identification' (1994b: 245). *Jouissance* occurs in primary identification due to a 'union of contradictories', 'the pleasure and pain of carnal identification', and the experience of 'fusion' (246-8). By identifying with the symptom's level, the analyst directs the analysand towards 'the process of naming the senses', which for Kristeva is a necessary violence (248). It is necessary because the violence of the analytic process is both a disruption of the analysand's memory in relation to sensation and depends upon the imposition of the analyst's desire on the analysand.

Indeed, how could we create a discontinuity, how could we break up a sign for an object that can only be constituted by becoming an object of desire, if we do not disturb the patient's continuous and analogical sensoriality or if we fail to impose on him our own desire for a name, for an object? (248)

The relationship of the sensorial to the signifier is inherent to Kristeva's aestheticization of psychoanalysis. In literature and in analysis there is a disruption and renewal of meaning in the encounter with affect, sensation and drive energies.

In my view, the experience of the novel is the only thing that can reveal the truth of meaning and the senses by discovering that the Absolute subsumes the interplay of plots, the ambiguity of characters, and the immersion of signs in sensations.... My aim is to draw the reader into the same alchemy. The world of reading, particularly where Proust is concerned, can inspire us to resuscitate this sensory experience (Kristeva, 1994a: 239-40).

The Proustian 'Absolute' or the 'true experience' of his writing is described by Kristeva as the infusion of discourse with sensation and the corporeal (Kristeva, 1994b: 235). For example, the analyst seeks to achieve the Proustian Absolute through the affective content of the transference and the ensuing interpretation.

Whether you are a writer or a therapist, if you seek to offer signs and style to this sensory cave, which is for the most part unnameable, you will encounter a true experience .... After you identify yourself with what is perceived and who is perceiving, you become not a "decoder" but an "encoder" ... a legislator, a creator of language able to describe a singular experience (232).

Kristeva's literary theory draws attention to a reading experience equivalent to the transference in the psychoanalytic setting. In both, the transference is determined by the primary identification with the parents before and during the acquisition of language. These dual positions of primary identification are used to define Kristeva's conception of transference, in which there is, initially, a fusional identification that becomes the condition for a position of provisional authority. The literary and psychoanalytic aim to encode 'new words and thoughts' is brought about on the basis of the sensorial return to a preoedipal, primary identification (239).

### **Understanding Transference in Lacan**

Kristeva has written explicitly on transference relations in the essay 'Transferential Discourse' (1984), later republished in *In the Beginning was Love* (1985). The essay relies upon the previous theory in *Tales of Love*, in which the semiotic body, as opposed to the symbolic order of signs, is the defining feature of the imaginary relations of primary identification. The essay 'Transferential Discourse' is also relevant to my discussion in that it critically addresses the Lacanian conception of transference and, in particular, the position of the Lacanian analyst. Kristeva's reading of Lacan's conception of transference is consistent with previous criticisms in which the Lacan of the signifier is emphasized over the later Lacan of the real, the drive, and the object (a). To extend upon the discussion in Chapter 3, I am interested here in Kristeva's interpretation of Lacanian transference, and how that interpretation can be understood in terms of the question of the ethics of psychoanalysis. If Kristeva's critical reading of transference in Lacan is limited to the early Lacan of the symbolic, how does this therefore sustain the position of the Kristevan analyst in comparison to the wider Lacanian conception of transference?

Kristeva's theory of transference most clearly engages with Lacan's work in its reliance on the three registers of the imaginary, the real and the symbolic. Kristeva's previous theory of transference, in *Tales of Love*, shows the imaginary to be central to Kristeva's conception of transference and the aesthetic experience. In 'Transferential Discourse' transference is described as an illusion, 'whose "historical reality" matters little and for which all that counts is the imaginary (and consequently, real and symbolic) meaning which is shared by the analyst and the analysand' (1984a: 9). Otto Kernberg's foreword to *In the Beginning was Love*, refers to Kristeva's use of the Lacanian registers and their dialectical relationship (Kernberg in Kristeva, 1985b: ix). Nevertheless, for Kernberg, the distinctive characteristic of Kristeva's psychoanalysis is that, in 'contrast to Lacan, she places affects rather than language at the center of the contents of the Unconscious' (ix). According to Kernberg, the emphasis on the imaginary and the drives in Kristeva's conception of transference is directly influenced by Freud's account of the affective content in the transference. Kernberg's argument implies that Lacan's development of Freud's conception of transference served only to privilege the linguistic over the affective in the analysis. In Chapter 3 I discussed the simplistic, yet widely accepted, distinction between Kristevan and Lacanian psychoanalysis (as exemplified here in Kernberg), which is founded on Kristeva's reading of Lacan as the Lacan of the signifier. In the context of the present chapter I find that this interpretation of Lacan does not take into account the developments in Lacan's work in general, and in particular the contribution he made to Freud's concept of transference.

Kristeva's theory of transference takes its coordinates from Lacan's three psychic registers. Nevertheless, for Kristeva, the imaginary mediates between symbolic prohibition and the real of the semiotic drive processes, and by this mediation the imaginary, as the realm of illusion, is renewed (Kristeva, 1984a: 8). It can be said that the principal functional of the Kristevan analyst in the transference is to revive the imaginary. According to Kristeva, if psychoanalysis addresses only the linguistic aspects in transference it will evade the connection of speech to the imaginary. Rather than an analytic discourse which finds the unconscious solely within signification, Kristeva defines the analytic discourse as an

imaginary discourse [which] can deploy its three registers: representation of words, representation of things, and the semiotic inscription of affects. The analytic discourse thereby acquires its bodily effectiveness, the real impact one hoped for.... By insisting upon this nutritive analytic "truth" we bring it closer to narrative fiction (8-9).

In this model of transference the working through of the real, of the drives and of affective contents, takes place in an imaginary discourse and thus the symbolic (the representation of

words and things), is similarly modified by imaginary fictions and illusions. Transference for Kristeva is the place from which the analyst restores 'all the therapeutic and epistemological powers to illusion' (9).

The non-symbolic register of the imaginary is of central importance to Kristeva's conception of the analytic relationship and the transference. How does this differ from Lacan's conception of transference? To begin with, Kristeva accepts the Lacanian precept of the subject presumed to know, and the connection Lacan makes between this subject and that of the subject presumed to love.

This invisible drama [of transference] ... supposes that I accord the analyst considerable power. But the confidence I have in him really implies the love I have for him and which I presume he has for me (3).

For Lacan, as with Kristeva, transference ensues from any relationship involving knowledge and authority. According to Felman, transference 'is further thought out by Lacan as what accounts for the functioning of authority in general: as essential, thus, not just to any pedagogic situation but to the problematics of knowledge as such' (Felman, 1982: 35). Not only does Kristeva retain Lacan's emphasis on the authority of knowledge in transference, but also the Lacanian association of this problematic with love. For Lacan, transference involves the illusion of completion which is invested in the subject supposed to know, and which corresponds to the illusions of the lover about the loved one. In the early 1970s, Lacan claimed that the transference, 'is love ... I insist: it is love directed toward, addressed to, knowledge' (Lacan quoted in Felman, 1982: 35). On one level, the two approaches to transference by Lacan and Kristeva are similar in that both recognize there is a loving illusion within the conception and handling of transference. However, taking into account my previous argument that Kristeva has overlooked the developments in Lacan, the two approaches to transference differ on the very question of the emphasis on the imaginary in relation to the symbolic and the real.

Kristeva's psychoanalytic technique employs the Lacanian registers in order to focus on affects and the imaginary as the contents of the unconscious, rather than language and the symbolic. As a critique of Lacanian psychoanalysis Kristeva's theory of transference is, however, addressed to a certain stage in Lacan's work, that of the 1950s. It was during that period that Lacan viewed the analytic relationship in terms of a conflict between the symbolic and the imaginary. Later, from the 1960s, Lacan substantially changed this approach to give greater attention to the real, which therefore required an entirely different position for the analyst to that of the earlier work. The shift in Lacan's work has been discussed by Nobus, in

*Jacques Lacan and the Freudian Practice of Psychoanalysis* (2000), who makes specific mention of Lacan's development of the conception of transference. Nobus's study supports my argument that Kristeva has focused on the early Lacan which neglects the developments to the early work. Lacan's post-1960s developments address certain problems in his earlier conception of the transference. It will be of use, therefore, to compare those changes by Lacan with Kristeva's critique of the early Lacan in order to examine the different conceptions arrived at by each.

### **Lacan's Ethics of Transference**

In the early work of the 1950s Lacan understood the transference as a symbolic relation consisting of an interaction between two speaking subjects (Nobus, 2000: 123). In Seminar I Lacan defines the value of transference in terms of the symbolic register, for in 'its essence, the efficacious transference which we're considering is quite simply the speech act' (1953-54: 109). Kristeva confirms the importance of speech in her essay on transference, stating that, 'the object of psychoanalysis is nothing other than the exchange of speech ... between two subjects' (1984a: 2). Kristeva's conception of transference is similar to Lacan's in the early seminars, where the symbolic and the imaginary are taken to be opposing poles of inter-subjective relations. An example of transference defined as the opposition between the symbolic and the imaginary occurs in Seminar II, where the imaginary denial of difference is contrasted with the ordering relations of the symbolic. According to Lacan, on the 'imaginary level, the objects only ever appear to man within relations which fade', while in the symbolic relation, the 'power of naming objects structures the perception itself' (1954-55: 169). Nobus explains that Lacan's distinction follows Freud, since for Freud there is a basic opposition in analysis between the analyst's comforting assurance and his refusal to satisfy those needs and demands.

Lacan's antagonism between the imaginary and the symbolic followed Freud's opposition between non-analytic image building and proper analytic abstinence. It can be summarized as an antagonism between the psychic register of insuperable, yet regulated difference and that of deceptive, yet fascinating resemblance (Nobus, 2000: 63).

With regard to transference, Freud warns against the analyst taking up the position of an ideal to which the patient aims to conform. Lacan explains how such an idealized position belongs to an analytic relationship of the imaginary order, where the analyst becomes an imaginary Other. For Lacan, the 'analysis consists in getting him [the analysand] to become conscious of his relations ... with all these Others who are his true interlocutors, whom he

hasn't recognised' (Lacan, 1954-55: 246). Mark Bracher explains that the Other, in Lacan's conception of transference, involves 'the analysand's attempts to get the analyst to function as a particular type of Other - Imaginary, Symbolic, or Real - in order to (re)produce a specific type of relationship from which the analysand derives profound satisfaction' (1999b: 130).

Lacan's imaginary order has similarities to Kristeva's as it is comprised of relations of identification and narcissistic gratification. Yet for Lacan this necessarily involves aggression and rivalry, which are defined by Kristeva as rejection and negativity. Lacan has consistently found that the imaginary order of aggression and identification is unavoidable in the transference, because the subject 'takes his bearings on the other's image, [and] what results is a regulation in which the roles are distributed within the situation as a whole, within the dyadic set-up' (Lacan, 1953-54: 282). Instead of suppressing the imaginary, Lacanian psychoanalysis 'involves helping the analysand recognize and understand her own internalized Others - Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real - which govern to a significant degree her relations with and even perceptions of external Others' (Bracher, 1999b: 130) Clearly Kristeva and Lacan agree that the imaginary Other is important in the handling of transference. Yet where they depart is on the question of the gratification of that register by the analyst, along with an emphasis on the imaginary over the symbolic.

In Lacan's early seminars it is proposed that the symbolic level of the desire to speak is the necessary intervention in the stasis of imaginary duality. Therefore, in both the early and in the later work, Lacan has consistently rejected a psychoanalysis which maintains the imaginary relation. In Seminar I, Lacan criticizes an overvaluation of imaginary relations in transference, stating that analysis 'is not the reconstitution of the narcissistic image to which it has so often been reduced' (Lacan, 1953-54: 271-2). Lacan goes on to say that analysis should not rely on 'the collaboration between two egos' to determine reality for the analysand, because, 'why should this reality be singled out above all others?' (272). It is not the analyst's reality that the analysand must look to for confirmation or recognition, rather the transference must be directed towards the analysand's 'spoken assumption of his history', in order to recognize his imaginary fixations (283). As Lacan explains in Seminar II, the gratification of the imaginary elements of the transference and the countertransference leads to the 'projecting on to the patient the different characteristics of his [the analyst's] analytic ego' (Lacan, 1954-55: 246). Lacanian analysis rejects this form of projection as unethical, aiming instead for the absence of the analyst's ego.

One trains analysts so that there are subjects in whom the ego is absent. That is the idea of analysis, which, of course, remains virtual. There is never a subject

without an ego, a fully realized subject, but that in fact is what one must aim to obtain from the subject in analysis (246).

Ten years later, when discussing transference in Seminar XI, Lacan reiterates the warning not to reduce transference to the imaginary, by which analysis neglects the Other of the unconscious as it is manifested in the discourse of the analysand. Lacan's later seminar explains the power of transference not merely in terms of an identification with an ideal model, but, more importantly, as an 'enactment of the reality of the unconscious' (Lacan, 1964: 146). The main point here is that the gratification of the analysand's identification in regard to the imaginary transference undermines the aim of transference. As we have seen in Freud, the aim of transference is to submit the unconscious desires 'to intellectual consideration and to understand them in the light of their psychological value' (Freud, 1912: 108). Bracher elaborates on how the psychoanalytic aim is impeded by the gratification of an imaginary Other.

If the Real, Imaginary, and Symbolic elements of the analysand's identity are to be integrated and their conflicts resolved .... [this entails] not gratifying the analysand in any register, because if a person's desires are gratified, they will remain unconscious, since there will be no motive to become aware of them (131).

This is not to say that the Lacanian analyst denies the imaginary in the transference, but rather that the analyst does not assume the position of an imaginary Other, which is given prominence in Kristevan psychoanalysis. Lacanian theory holds that the analyst, in assuming the role of the imaginary Other, gratifies the analysand's attempts 'to engage the analyst in a relation that offers the analysand's ego a familiar and reassuring Imaginary other' (131). Gratification by the analyst as an imaginary Other functions to reinforce the analysand's ego identity and its degree of repression.

At this stage in Lacan's work on the analytic relationship the imaginary is opposed to the symbolic, and the latter is considered to be the only register through which the unconscious is reached. Lacan, however, did not maintain this view of the analytic relationship, and in Seminar V (1957-8) he begins to question the efficacy of opposing the symbolic to the imaginary. As Nobus explains

Lacan acknowledged that a relationship between two subjects ... is as much open to reciprocal solidarity as an imaginary bond between two egos. Although

the result may be a symbolic instead of an imaginary identification, it is as much the same problem (Nobus, 2000: 70).

In the transference of the imaginary order the analysand seeks narcissistic gratification from the analyst as an imaginary Other. The problems in the imaginary order are not overcome by the transference in the symbolic order, where the analysand perceives the analyst as an authority figure, a symbolic Other, with the power to validate the analysand's ego ideal or symbolic identity. In both the symbolic and imaginary transference the analyst is positioned as an Other, who is able to fulfil the demands of the analysand. The transference of the symbolic and the imaginary does not sustain the play of the registers, insofar as each maintain the illusion of completion and full knowledge. In gratifying such desires the transference becomes an obstruction to the analytic aim to address the conflicts between the ego, with its internalized Others, and the subject's unconscious desire or enjoyment (Bracher, 1999b: 129-31). Lacan's approach to transference has therefore changed, as Nobus shows, and the later Lacan explicitly connects the problems of symbolic and imaginary relations in transference by defining them equally as an illusion of completion. Felman's essay on education and transference has likewise pointed out that, for Lacan, transference entails a love for and a belief in the analyst's knowledge.

By the 1960s, Lacan had radically changed his conception of transference from that of a symbolic interaction between two subjects to a relationship of 'insuperable inequity', and a 'subjective disparity' (Nobus, 2000: 123). In Seminar XI, Lacan revises his conception of transference from that of two subjects 'in a dual position', to that of 'the domain of possible deception' (1964: 133). Later in 1967 Lacan explicitly criticizes his earlier conception of transference:

I am astounded that no-one has ever thought of objecting to me, given certain of the terms in my doctrine, that the transference alone is an objection to intersubjectivity. I even regret it, seeing that nothing is more true: it refutes it, it is its stumbling block (Lacan, 1967: 4)

The inequality of the subjects in transference is determined by the analyst as the subject supposed to know, who, Lacan says, is 'the pivot on which everything to do with the transference is hinged' (5). Transference is constituted on the basis of a subject who is presumed to have the knowledge of full self-realization. It is the position that the analysand takes up toward the analyst, and which can also be equated to the position of the lover towards the beloved, or of the student to the teacher. Each perceives a lack in themselves to which the other is regarded as providing the solution. Therefore, if the situation entails

transference, it 'is in turn pervaded by love' which, as Lacan takes from Freud, 'entails everything but a harmonious interaction between two complementary subjects' (Nobus, 2000: 124). The relation of transference exposes the possibilities for deception in love and knowledge relations.

What better way of assuring oneself, on the point on which one is mistaken, than to persuade the other of the truth of what one says! .... In persuading the other that he has that which may complement us, we assure ourselves of being able to continue to misunderstand precisely what we lack (Lacan, 1964: 133).

Lacan called transference love a metaphor, in order to explain the illusion of resemblance and harmony between two disparate subjects. For Lacan the analyst should not give credence to the analysand's perception of the analyst as the subject of knowledge, nor as an object of love, for neither position can bring about an effect in the real of the unconscious.

If the unconscious is a knowledge without a knowing agency (a headless body so to speak) and the supposed subject of knowing correlates with the complete mastery over knowledge, it is clear why Lacan contended ... that transference involves a closure of the unconscious. In its striving for unity love favours the redemption of the absent subject of the unconscious or, to use Lacan's terms in *Encore*, it aims at being, to be understood here as self-fulfilment (Nobus, 2000: 128).

In Lacanian psychoanalysis the efficacy of analysis is not founded on the self-confirmation of the analysand in an identification with the analyst as an imaginary or symbolic Other. In Seminar VII on the ethics of psychoanalysis Lacan advises the analyst not to 'make oneself the guarantor of the possibility that a subject will in some way be able to find happiness' (Lacan, 1959-60: 303). Such an assurance on the analyst's part excludes any 'confrontation with the human condition', which is described as 'the function of desire in a fundamental relationship with death' (303). The direction of analysis must be grounded in an ethics where the analysand's demand for completion, via the knowledge of the Other, is given over to the *creative and critical* attention of the analysand. As Nobus explains, the direction Lacan promoted for analysis is

for analysands to relativize their own time-honoured answers to what the Other wants from them, that is to say to question the trust they had put in their fantasies.... that the distrust they have developed towards the old ones affects their attitudes towards the new versions (136).

For the analysand to take up this stance towards the analyst, the analyst must avoid the confirmation and fulfilment of transference love which functions according to symbolic and imaginary relations. The position of the analyst with respect to this aim is not one of identification, nor as the one who may satisfy the analysand's desire (for recognition, for love, for complete knowledge). The only position remaining for the analyst is one which cannot be identified with and which does not promise to satisfy desire. It is on these terms that the Lacanian analyst takes up the position of the object (a), as an object that causes desire.

In so far as the analyst is supposed to know, he is also supposed to set out in search of unconscious desire .... [and] that desire is the axis ... in the discourse of the patient, as demand, namely, the transference (Lacan, 1964: 235).

With regard to the subject's relation to knowledge, the analyst's desire as the object (a) is to enable the analysand to overcome 'a will not to know.... about the why and wherefore of his or her symptoms' (Fink, 1997: 7). In this respect the analyst finds support for her interpretations, not in her own ideals or knowledge systems, but instead by attending to the cause of the desire of the other. That is, by making manifest those elements in the analysand's discourse which have so far functioned as rejected and repressed elements, the analyst brings about recognition of the conflicts between the analysand's object (a) and the ego with its internalised Others (Bracher, 1999a: 138). The analyst's discourse aims to provide the means for the analysand to produce new ideals and fantasies which are less repressive of one's own subjective difference. It is on these terms that the Lacanian analyst's desire 'is a desire to obtain absolute difference' (Lacan, 1964: 276).

### **Questions to Kristevan Psychoanalysis**

Another way to explain the analyst as the object (a) is to compare this position with that of the Kristevan analyst. For Kristeva, the initial role to be assumed by the Kristevan analyst is one of a loving transference of primary identification. In the imaginary space of primary identification the not-yet subject learns the rudiments of language acquisition through reduplication, as distinct from the alienation and separation in the mirror stage. In contrast with the subject of the mirror stage, this space of primary identification is one of a confusion of self and other, where there is 'an endless series of creative illusions, redemptive works in progress constructed jointly by two loving, speaking subjects. He and she? Me and you? Ego and Ideal. Ultimately transference love renders such distinctions meaningless' (Smith, 1996: 183). In the analytic relationship transference love is a space for the nourishment of the

semiotic body and for the reconnection of language with the repressed, in order to provide new possibilities of meaning for the speaking subject.

The Kristevan conception of transference love does, however, present an ethical and psychoanalytic problem, which is articulated by Anna Smith. In the transference of primary identification

the analyst precipitates the *transference* in the analysand; metaphor is a transference of meaning and sensation from one place to another, and so on. Surely this incessant interchange of qualities is indistinguishable from the dazzling play of forms that characterise the narcissists and false selves of this world. What is to prevent Kristeva's plethora of correspondences becoming if not as "demonic" as Proust's, then as illusory and disappointing? (211).

By reading Smith's critique in relation to the later Lacan, I propose that Kristevan transference remains within the realm of the imaginary. Further, Kristeva's emphasis on the imaginary as opposed to the symbolic in the transference is akin to Lacan's early conception of transference which, as discussed, was radically altered. For the later Lacan, the curative effect of analytic discourse is not to be found in the imaginary nor in the symbolic, but in the real (Nobus, 2000: 95). In the analytic setting, and in general, Kristeva aims to give affective weight to the imaginary in order to remedy Lacan's ostensible sovereignty of the signifier. Kristeva's oppositional reading is problematic in that the Lacanian symbolic is not an omnipotent power able to sustain or provide full knowledge. As the developments in Lacan's work come to emphasize, the symbolic is (dys)functional, incomplete, and lacking. The symbolic production of meaning and sense, 'is always fleeting, elusive' (95).

The Lacanian symbolic is incomplete precisely because it does not eliminate the preoedipal relations, the drives, nor the fantasy of fusion with the first Other; rather the symbolic is a 'mediating function' vis-à-vis those real and imaginary registers (Verhaeghe, 1997: 214). The symbolic mediates between the real, where the Other overwhelms the subject, and the imaginary fantasy which is a defence against incompleteness. It is through the symbolic mediating function that 'lack is traced back to its origin: the signifier dividing the subject', and as such, it is a 'liberation from the obligation to be "complete" opens up the possibility of desire, creation and pleasure' (214). Rather than the illusion of harmony in transference love, Lacan's conception of transference is to direct the treatment towards the metonymy of desire. In recognizing that the gaps in the signifying chain maintain desire's incompleteness, the subject perceives her position to be within that very gap and thus a position of openness and limitless possibility.

Kristeva's conception of transference is developed as a corrective to the early Lacan where the imaginary had been opposed to the symbolic. If the Lacanian symbolic is interpreted as an omnipotent law, then the imaginary may seem to subvert that paternal rigidity. By comparison, the Lacanian analyst does not accept the position of a symbolic or imaginary other in the transference. In the alignment of the analyst with the analysand's rejected/repressed cause of desire, Lacan departs from a conception of transference which focuses on the analyst's own identity, knowledge or ideals.

## **2. Transference in Education**

Understandably, the educational applications of Lacanian and Kristevan psychoanalysis have addressed transference in the pedagogical relationship. As Felman has shown, a psychoanalytic critique of pedagogy is not directed at transference as such, since it is unavoidable in pedagogy, but rather at the unethical handling of transference. Felman's proposal for a psychoanalytic critique of pedagogy can be compared with the conception in critical pedagogy of knowledge as socially produced and ideological. As with Felman's proposals, a critical pedagogy is described as 'seeking to negate the "objective" nature of knowledge and forcing the educator to confront the relations between knowledge, power and control' (Simon in Wexler, 1987: 87). In order to ground such a critique within the cultural context, the educationist Philip Wexler turns to specific literary theories 'that can be directed toward social analyses of education' (125). For Wexler, literary theory produces social theory, 'because it analyzes the central social practice of signification .... when signification and knowledge processes are of crucial and growing social importance' (125-6). Wexler articulates the same concerns as certain educational writers who apply Kristevan or Lacanian psychoanalysis to education. In applying psychoanalysis to the teaching of writing and reading, the focus of these writers concerns questions of pedagogical ethics in relation to social practices of signification. I will concentrate on three authors - Grumet, Atwell-Vasey, Bracher - in order to illustrate how education theory engages with Lacanian and Kristevan psychoanalysis.

### **The Parenting of Education**

Madeleine Grumet's *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching* (1988) finds value in Kristeva's psychoanalysis for education theory. Theoretically, *Bitter Milk* is a combination of object relations and Kristevan psychoanalysis applied to an analysis of women teachers and the literary curriculum. Kristeva's concept of the semiotic is theorized as a nurturing alternative to the paternalistic academic realm which, for Grumet, denies the maternal project of the body

and primary identification. Of central concern to this text is the position of the teacher in the discourse of knowledge, and how the teacher handles the transference relationship in teaching and reading texts.

Grumet's study is of curriculum studies and proposes a new educational theory which includes the relations of reproduction, denied by the 'male discourse' of education. (Grumet, 1988: xvi-xix). The question of transference is central to Grumet's study of the relationship between parenting and pedagogy; that is, where 'the arguments concerning women's experiences of reproduction and nurture meet the forms and politics of curriculum' (xviii). Grumet's curriculum theory is not restricted to one particular educational level, and the student in Grumet's text may be a child learning to read, a student learning to interpret a literary text, or Grumet herself as a university student. Nevertheless, over all distinctions, the relationship of parent and child is translated on to the relationship of teacher and student.

The shift from student to teacher, from listener to speaker, from audience to actor, from child to parent, is not merely a developmental modulation....

Nevertheless, it is what I think reading and teaching are both about. In fact, I am arguing that the classroom and the text are the material through which this shift manifests itself. The shift is the dynamic movement within the form we call pedagogy (Grumet, 1988: 121).

Where Kristeva has conceived of the literary experience as a model for psychoanalytic praxis, Grumet utilizes aesthetic and psychoanalytic theories for a model of pedagogy. According to Grumet, a text has all the assumed epistemological authority of a teacher, and thus the reader or the student transfers what 'we bring from our infantile introduction to the symbolic order to our teachers' (122). For Grumet the problem of a pedagogical ethics is not located in the transference between the teacher/author and student/reader, but in the perceived alliance between the teacher and certain epistemological structures.

Grumet's larger argument is that epistemology is sexually overdetermined. From her reading of Freud and Lacan, Grumet argues that male subjectivity is constituted on the denial of the preoedipal, symbiotic relationship. The disadvantages of Freudian psychoanalysis are corrected by Kristeva and Nancy Chodorow, who both propose that female identification processes do not deny affective relations (Grumet, 1988: 185-6). An epistemology which is masculine is based on this denial as a compensation for the repression of primary identification. In the educational setting, the teacher's or the writer's authority is maintained through a similar denial of affective relations. In contrast to a masculine epistemology, Kristeva's thinking on maternal relations of the body and primary identification has positive

effects for education which has valued an epistemology that denies the realm of feelings, emotions, desires and enjoyment. In Kristeva's texts, Grumet finds an invitation 'to read the texts of educational experience and practice as semiotic as well as symbolic systems' (20). Traditional pedagogical relations have promoted the separation of private and public, emotion and reason, body and mind, maternal and paternal, whereas the theory of the semiotic enables the continuance of each repressed term.

In our culture and in preindustrial cultures as well, schooling has provided the context where the maternal influence over the child's development, so pervasive in the domestic setting where mothers have provided so much of the primary nurturance, is denied (Grumet, 1988: 110).

Grumet's educational theory asks for the curriculum to more closely reproduce the first experience of learning, using as its model the maternal function of fusion and differentiation, rather than the paternal function of domination and convention (111-2). In the maternal model the curriculum becomes the third term, which is not that of the Freudian-Lacanian masterful father, but is the desire of the first Other, enabling a mediation between the child and its first objects. Kristeva's critical reading of psychoanalysis and of Lacan provides Grumet's educational theory with its coordinates in maternal love versus paternal division and oppression.

### **Against Lacanian Education**

Grumet makes use of Kristeva's reading of Lacan for her critique of mainstream educational systems. For example, Kristeva's interpretation of the three registers underlies Grumet's argument that the traditional curriculum of literary studies can be equated to the paternalism of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Grumet's critique relies on Kristeva's interpretation of the Lacanian symbolic as a power which dominates the subject and also the processes of the imaginary and real. Grumet's account of the symbolic in relation to the imaginary reiterates the Kristevan reading.

[T]he symbolic overwhelms the imaginary, and even though the child continues to look for the mother in the forms of the father's culture, the gratification of that look is forever deferred.... This account makes the third term an unrepentant murderer, destroying the illusion of completion given in the dyadic romance of mother and child and never providing the compensation it promises (Grumet, 1988: 108).

In Grumet's view, the traditional curriculum and Lacanian psychoanalysis are determined by certain patriarchal social structures, and therefore as material practices they express the same ideology. Ideologically, the teacher's position is aligned with the dominating gaze of the panopticon, which functions to objectify women and deny the maternal influence in learning (109-115). The problems of the paternal-based curriculum are ameliorated in the imaginary relationship with the mother, in which there is a look 'of complete reciprocity', a 'gaze of mutual understanding' occurring in the transference of 'fleeting moments of fusion' between 'lovers, parents and children, teachers and students' (97). In this interpretation of the symbolic, the paternal look of the teacher objectifies the student, whereas the teacher positioned as the maternal Other fulfils the transference role of the mother - the one who had negotiated the infant's first relations with the outside world.

This is the realm of the semiotic that Kristeva claims for female knowledge. Grounded in the body, engaged with the other in play.... Only when the passage to the world and other is facilitated through touch and feeling ... can the child tolerate the threat of the look (102).

Grumet's teacher is positioned as the imaginary Other who gratifies the student's primary identification, while in contrast the teacher of the paternal symbolic Other presents a threat to the student. Specifically, what is it that threatens and gratifies the student? According to Grumet educational objectification threatens identity when it produces a curriculum that has no bearing upon the student's lived experience (107). Grumet equates these lived experiences, or 'the pupil's own reality', to the real (107). The teacher as imaginary Other facilitates the student's engagement with the real or the material world through the semiotic affective relations.

Nevertheless, if touch and sound are the sensual passages between parent and child and world, these modes of contact are associated with an intimacy that we limit to erotic or familial relations or to some strenuous forms of labour. In contrast, the look dominates the classroom (109).

Consistent with Kristeva's criticism of Lacan, Grumet finds that the traditional education system not only denies the power of the imaginary but also disconnects the real from

learning and knowledge. The disconnection between the registers occurs

because Lacan has effaced touch and sound, his domain of the "real," even though it contains the imaginary and the symbolic, loses the world and reduces culture to nostalgia. Our traditions of teaching literature ... provide a curriculum that recapitulates the ritual of this double murder (109).

Grumet's teacher assumes an imaginary position of gratification in that she employs a curriculum which does not ignore 'the subjectivity of the other it objectifies', and uses it instead to activate an engagement with the world (116). Grumet's curriculum theory has the effect of transposing the Lacanian psychic registers into philosophical or ideological positions. The real is conceived phenomenologically as the subject's engagement with the body and the material world, while the symbolic is read through Kristeva as an overwhelming prohibitive force. Moreover, Grumet maintains Kristeva's interpretation of the Lacanian registers and as a result her theory of pedagogical transference has many similarities with Kristeva's conception of transference. As I have explained with regard to the Kristevan analyst, Grumet's imaginary Other - mother and teacher – has a mediative role between the processes of symbolic prohibition and the semiotic real (Kristeva, 1984a: 8).

Grumet applies a certain psychoanalytic theory to education and specifically to the literary studies curriculum. The application makes a distinction drawn between Lacan and Kristeva in order to examine the pedagogical transference. *Bitter Milk* is an exploration of the reading experience in the educational setting, which on the one hand sets out the problems of Lacan's conception of transference for teaching literature, and on the other gives support to the Kristevan alternative to the Lacanian model. Grumet's explanation of the Lacanian analyst's approach to the transference centres upon that initial stage of transference in which the analyst is the subject of a presumed knowledge (122). Grumet acknowledges that the Lacanian subject of presumed knowledge only '*appears* to have control of the symbolic process' (122, italics added). However, the reason Lacan emphasized the illusion in this form of transference is not discussed by Grumet. A further discussion would show that the Lacanian analyst does not corroborate this desire for complete knowledge in transference. By confirming the analysand's belief, the analyst assumes the position of the master which directs the analysis towards 'a closure of the unconscious' (Nobus, 2000: 128).

Grumet does underline the importance of the Lacanian subject supposed to know, for it makes 'explicit the relation of form to power', yet she adds that this demystification is not sustained, due to 'the French interest ... to deconstruct those intentionalities without practicing them' (123-4). In other words, Lacanian psychoanalysis may help us to theorize

the relations of power and knowledge, but for Grumet this theory is not applied in practice. According to Grumet, the effect in the educational context is that the learning experience is neglected, because the one who is supposed to know 'is actually not looking at us but at another whom we do not know but who is finally more powerful and compelling than we' (125). The other to which the Lacanian teacher looks for confirmation is the symbolic order, and correspondingly the student does too, in order to 'gain a self by losing a self' within an alienating symbolic other (125).

### **The Teacher's Authority**

Clearly it is important in Grumet's educational theory to establish 'that the politics, theater, and object relations of academia do indeed resemble Lacan's scheme' (125). In the first place, Grumet applies her theory to her own experience of reading an educational text for literary studies.<sup>24</sup> In this context Grumet reads the text as a teacher. However the feelings experienced as she reads echo her past as a student, bringing back her 'own undergraduate mystification, humiliation, and uncertainty' (121). For Grumet, her unhappiness and anger is shaped by the pedagogical relationship, where the teacher-author who is supposed to know, looks beyond the student to a symbolic authority, and not towards the student's own learning experience.

This is not to say that the teachers have no method to their madness but that it is not made explicit to the students seated before them.... The code is given, explained, applied.... yet this focus on method ... has the effect of subordinating the work to the code that the reader brings to it. It feels technical (120).

The criticism here is directed against the kind of teaching which creates and sustains a distance between the student and the teacher, and between the student and the world. The distance is produced by a text or curriculum not clearly revealing its intentions and contexts, which is a way of teaching Grumet describes as a Lacanian disavowal of maternal origins. The transference occurring in the repressive model of teaching is characterized as an 'anger at the social, symbolic, institutional power of the parent/teacher' (126). An ethical alternative for education is the 'recognition of the mother's desire', which 'shifts me to the other side of the transference' – to the other side of the symbolic (126). Hence, Grumet's theory rejects the desire of the symbolic order in favour of the desire of the first Other. My argument here is that such a shift does not allow for a more ethical and effective handling of transference authority, and further, there is no disruption to the power structure supporting the teacher's

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<sup>24</sup> Grumet uses Kappeler, S. & Bryson, N. (Eds.). (1983). *Teaching the Text*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

authority, which although now matriarchal rather than patriarchal, remains unchanged.

Grumet's alternative reading experience is termed "bodyreading", and aims to restore the preoedipal relations by engaging the private and emotive reading experience with the interpretations endorsed by the curriculum (135). In *Bitter Milk*, the concept of bodyreading is not applied to any specific educational situation. However it is discussed further by Nancy Atwell-Vasey in *Nourishing Words: Bridging Private Reading and Public Teaching* (1998). Atwell-Vasey agrees with Grumet as to the educational relevance of Kristeva's conception of transference. In particular, Atwell-Vasey is concerned with the relocation of the position of the teacher; that is, from the power of the Other who represents the symbolic, to the power of the first real Other.

Kristeva believes that we can rewrite the oedipal scenario by retheorizing the value of prelinguistic experience, through remedial transferences in therapy and by representing the parental roles differently (Atwell-Vasey, 1998: 50).

Atwell-Vasey's model for the teacher is the maternal first Other, because the 'primary caretaker's interaction with the child can provide a model for the following relations that constitute alterity and intersubjectivity' (81). Here the teacher's role is understood in terms of Kristeva's theory of narcissism and metaphor in *Tales of Love*. Atwell-Vasey applies the imaginary relations of primary identification to the teacher's experience of reading and teaching literature.

By studying the nourishing role of the maternal function, we can find clues to the role of the nourishing classmate and teacher. First, there is the space the mother creates for a nascent ego.... The analogous pedagogy is the indulgence of the egoistic reading response, the improvisation, or the first draft of writing that is an outpouring of inclination. The teacher allows the student to experience his desires and concerns as important to the creative process (90)

Atwell-Vasey's educational theory was put into practice in a course on curriculum development for a Masters of Education.<sup>25</sup> The course used the teachers' autobiographical accounts of their reading experiences as material to design and teach the curriculum. In *Nourishing Words*, Atwell-Vasey investigates three of these autobiographies and the related classroom procedures. For my purposes in this chapter, the autobiography by the teacher "Jane" illustrates most clearly the way Atwell-Vasey employs Kristevan psychoanalysis for an ethics of pedagogy.

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<sup>25</sup> The course was taught at George Mason University, Washington D.C. (Atwell-Vasey, 1998: 13).

## Educational Theory in Practice

Atwell-Vasey's educational theory extends upon Grumet's work in re-defining language learning in terms of Kristeva's theory of the semiotic and the maternal (Atwell-Vasey, 1998: 8). Of all the autobiographies in *Nourishing Words*, the one by Jane is presented as the closest to a Kristevan model of teaching.

Jane's work with eleventh-grade readers provides an opportunity to explore possibilities for students coming together with each other and with a teacher in a community in which language is not merely regulated and mastered, but negotiated.... Jane's narrative offers us insight about what kind of support readers need in order to negotiate their interests and desires, in a school culture that tends to mask and standardize them (127).

In this description of an educational practice there is an emphasis upon desire, and for this reason it might have been possible to make certain connections with Lacanian transference, in which the desire of the analysand is similarly crucial to the ethics of the transference relationship. It must be remembered however, that the desire in Kristeva's conception of transference is not a remainder of the real, an object (a), rather desire for Kristeva can be gratified in the illusion of harmony within transference love. Atwell-Vasey's Kristevan teacher assumes the position of an imaginary Other with the ability to satisfy desires. For if the teacher

loves literature, is stimulated by worldly issues and committed to meaningful projects, they [the students] can identify with this position as an autonomous person who desires and gets fulfilled. They will develop a narcissistic confidence in a powerful *position* (167).

Previously I questioned whether Grumet's proposal for a maternal pedagogy to replace the traditional, paternal pedagogy would actually achieve a change in the power structure. In the above passage from *Nourishing Words*, the same implications arise in the privileging of a maternal theory of education, which therefore maintains the same power structure as the one it aims to challenge. The point is relevant to the ethical handling of transference in education. That is, if a teacher, who is immediately in a position of power, encourages the students' identification with her own values or systems of knowledge, will this effectively subvert that position of mastery? The question can be approached in Lacanian terms. The concept of a master signifier, or  $S_1$ , represents 'certain identities, ideals, or values' which the subject desires to be recognized and validated (Bracher, 1999a: 130). To shift the focus of education

to the student's desire, education must employ transference ethically, 'in a way that helps the subject produce his or her own new master signifier rather than accepting one from the subject supposed to know' (137). A Lacanian approach to education questions an emphasis on the teacher's desire. For Atwell-Vasey and Grumet, the defining feature of educational transference is the teacher's desire which is manifested in the curriculum (the literary texts, the methods of teaching), and also in the way the teacher's desire is directed towards the world outside the classroom. The Lacanian argument against giving prominence to the teacher's desire is that it validates the mastery of the teacher, whether or not the teacher assumes the role of a motherly or a fatherly figure. The ethical problem for an education which promotes the teacher's desire is that

in spite of the best intentions of the teachers.... [i]n transference, the teacher's desire determines the student's desire in one of two ways: either the student identifies with the teacher's desire, thus coming to desire, perceive, value, and enjoy what the teacher does; or the student identifies with the object of the teacher's desire (Bracher, 1999a: 130-1).

In a Kristevan educational theory the ethical intent is to focus on the student's desire. However in practice, as I will now discuss, the teacher's desire continues to dominate the student's desire.

The journal of Jane's class work, in *Nourishing Words*, includes responses by students to a novel, accompanied by Jane's responses to the students' work. The general aim of the theory in practice is for the teacher to 'serve as "the Other" for her students as she responds to their reading journals and preserves difference' (Atwell-Vasey, 1998: 140). The teacher is an Other with desires that serve as a model of identification for the students' desires. The transference in the educational relationship is defined in terms of primary identification, by which the first Other is the condition for all other identifications. In Atwell-Vasey's education theory the teacher's position is aligned with the Other of primary identification. Conversely, in a Lacanian approach the teacher refuses this identification, and instead directs attention to the Other of the unconscious. The ethical aim of Lacan's conception of transference is to shift the focus away from identity and the subject's master signifiers, and towards the conflict that arises between the ego identity and unconscious desires. The educational theories by Grumet and Atwell-Vasey are consistent with Kristevan psychoanalysis in that the teacher, like the analyst, assumes the role of an Other with an identity and desires. In the following pages, I will discuss in detail the responses by the teacher, Jane, to the students' work, in order to further investigate questions around a Kristevan ethics of transference and, specifically, as it is applied to education.

Jane's teaching practice is represented in various samples from five students' reading journals (named from A to E), although only three of those samples include the teacher's responses. Atwell-Vasey does not give a reason for the absence of responses to two of the students' journals. However it is possible to infer from Atwell-Vasey's commentary that these students (B and E) do not in some way meet the assignment requirements. For example, Student B's responses to a novel are described by Atwell-Vasey as less reflective and emotive than those of Student A, because B 'confines himself to expectations about structure and plot' (139). For B, the novel is successful because 'all the loose ends ... have been tied up, I don't think anything major is missing' (140). Atwell-Vasey's advice to their teacher is to pair B with A, which will enable B to recognize that his interpretation is one possible interpretation of many. While the aim of this exercise is commendable it does not take into account the student's desire or enjoyment - in this case, a pleasure in tidy conclusions - which has been replaced instead by the teacher's desire for the student 'to find his own position' (140).

For Student A's entry, which according to Atwell-Vasey 'offers more affect than Student B', the teacher does provide responses, mainly in the form of affirmative words or phrases such as 'excellent start', 'good', and 'good transition', including corrections to the student's grammar. Jane responds in a similar way to Student C whose entry is commended for understanding correctly the novel's mystery - 'Good for you', Jane writes (147). In her response, although Jane asks how the student felt and what she learnt about the novel's ending, these questions become rhetorical and are immediately answered by the teacher herself, who explains how the novel 'involves you with Merricat [the main character] and then makes you rethink the whole thing' (147). In these cases, the teacher's responses serve to either validate or criticize particular values, ideals or pleasures of the students. As Lacanian educationist Mark Bracher explains, these types of 'responses could result either in influencing students to embrace the external Symbolic Other's desire (e.g., the teacher's, other students', or a certain author's) or in alienating them in any other way from either their own identities or their unconscious desire' (1999b: 153). Atwell-Vasey's strategy for the reciprocity and maternal identification in the transference on the one hand gratifies the student's desire for a reassuring imaginary Other, while on the other hand affirming the student's perception of the teacher as a symbolic authority of language and literary meaning.

The journal that provokes the most extensive response from the teacher and from the author is by Student D whose journal entries are concerned with Edith Wharton's novel *Ethan Frome*. Atwell-Vasey equates the teacher's responses to this student 'as a mother's response to an infant [which] is both more attuned to the child ... so relationships that

combine resonance and difference', are able to 'transcend mastery', and lead to 'mutual influence' (Atwell-Vasey, 1998: 141). It is important then, that the teacher's responses are 'chosen for their dialectical potential, and not to be taken as retaliatory and dominating' (141). In general, Jane's responses are both affirmations of the student's responses - 'Good for you!' and 'Me, too' - and provide conclusive statements about the novelistic events and the associated feelings and ideas the student is grappling with.

Student: I'd have to say that the best experience the book provided me with was the ending: 'Zeena taking care of Mattie?' I just couldn't believe it! .... It was really very surprising.

Response: An example of life's irony - life has a way of tripping people up - or maybe of giving them what they've set themselves up for (147-8).

The teacher's responses to the student's awareness of irony is to name the response with the correct term. However the student's specific reactions - that she seems to have enjoyed the experience of being 'tripped up' - is eclipsed by the teacher's desire to have and to impart literary knowledge.

Although Jane's responses encourage an imaginary transference where she reflects and affirms the students' entries, this ideal of a loving transference is, as Lacan has shown, ethically the same as the transference involving the symbolic Other. As discussed previously in this chapter, both imaginary-order and symbolic-order transferences serve to reinforce previous conflicts or repression. Jane's responses illustrate this point when she takes up the position of and for the symbolic Other. In Bracher's account of the transference relationship for writing students, transference is not necessarily only with the teacher but also 'with the Institution as Symbolic Other: English Studies, Academic Discourse, the University, Society, or Language itself' (1999b: 133). In the following response to Student D, the teacher functions as the spokesperson for English Studies.

Student: *Ethan Frome's* ending really shocked me. The accident in the snow involving Mattie and Ethan scared me because I didn't know who would live or die. The end was also slightly confusing to read. The next thing I knew, Zeena was caring for an injured Mattie, and Ethan wasn't there anymore. It was really quite sad for Ethan and Zeena, but in the same respect joyous for Mattie and Zeena really cares about Mattie, got well, and was a changed person.

Response: Do you think she *really* cares about Mattie? Ask yourself - if you were Mattie, how would you have felt to be helpless and to have to be dependent on Ethan's wife? And, how do you think Zeena felt, suspecting that Ethan loved Mattie? Do you think her resentment would have gone away? This book has one of the most excellent endings I've ever read - my own suspicion is that Zeena was happy *because* Mattie was destroyed - and that's horrifying (149).

Despite the reiteration or mirroring of the student's words 'really cares', the teacher's response functions to undermine, rather than question, the student's interpretation. Certainly the student's interpretation of the novel's ending is unconventional which is significant in educational and psychoanalytic terms. For, not only does Student D find something positive in the ending, but her response overlooks the true cause of the so-called accident - a lovers' failed suicide pact - and, therefore, the accident is that the lovers did not die.

The student's interpretation of the ending overlooks the ironic tragedy of a failed suicide and, in its place, the student finds a happy ending. The student's reading constructs an imaginary illusion of completion, as confirmed by the standard, novelistic resolution, while excluding the violence and tragedy of the suicide attempt. The teacher's responses do not draw the student's attention to these excluded (real) aspects in relation to the included (symbolic and imaginary) aspects. Instead, the teacher's response affirms the standard reading, along with her own personal evaluation of the novel's ending.

### **The Real in Education**

In the educational relation described above between student, teacher and text, the real is not included in the learning process, while the symbolic and imaginary orders are validated throughout by the teacher's responses to the student's interpretation. Although the student does articulate her emotive responses to the ending - that she was 'shocked', 'scared', 'slightly confused', 'quite sad', 'joyous' - Jane's approach to these feelings is to amend the student's reading, explaining that the ending is not joyous but rather 'horrifying.' From the teacher's point of view, the student's incorrect reading is the cause of the student's confusion. It is understandable that a student would be confused at the novel's ending, and Jane's response is intended to help with that confusion. However her responses do not address the real in terms of the unconscious, the traumatic, or of the impossible to say.

The fact that the failed suicide in the novel is a blind spot in both the student's and then the teacher's text, can be understood in terms of Bracher's discussion on the real in education.

One of the most difficult tasks for teachers, and a task that many teachers feel threatened by, is providing a space for the Real - that is, for students to experience, express, and examine their own feelings and passions: their desires, revulsions, enjoyments (1999b: 134).

The teacher in Atwell-Vasey's case study has not encouraged the aspects of the student's writing which are unconventional by comparison with the standard English Studies interpretation. Instead, the teacher's responses function as an 'Authority who passes judgement', and therefore the 'the consequences will in all likelihood be greater conflict and perhaps greater repression' for the student (134). The teacher's final responses in the journal reinforce her authoritative, symbolic standing within the transference. The student ends her entry with, 'After finishing it, I had warm emotions, and it really left me thinking the way the characters had, and I realized what a fun interesting book it really was!' To the first clause of the sentence, Jane's final responses are, 'This is unclear, Sherry', then, in reference to the word 'fun', the teacher writes, 'Maybe another adjective would be better here' (Atwell-Vasey, 1998: 149). For the student, the novel might be 'fun' because it generates a rich emotional experience for her, or she may enjoy the unexpected turn of events, or it may be a compliant attempt to please the teacher and not the student's own view at all. Yet the teacher's responses do not allow space for the student, or the teacher herself, to explore this seemingly incongruous reading. Rather than denying the real in the student's writing experience, Bracher advises that the teacher, 'like the analyst, often needs to encourage the recognition and articulation of the parts of the students that are incommensurable with, and often anathema to, those parts that are in concert with the social conventions of the Symbolic order' (1999b: 134).

The student's interpretation of the novel's ending seems at odds with the events themselves, which is the point the teacher wants to make, and as Atwell-Vasey has recommended, it is important that the teacher helps students recognize that there is more than one interpretation of a text (Atwell-Vasey, 1998: 140). However in the context of the application of psychoanalysis to education, Atwell-Vasey's teacher neglects a fundamental precept of psychoanalysis, which is to pay attention to the breaks and gaps in the subject's language. Either consciously or unconsciously, the student used certain words to describe a complex narrative. For the teacher these words are inappropriate or inadequate to that narrative, and her responses are an attempt to correct an insufficient knowledge: in this case, of literature

and writing. By comparison Bracher's Lacanian educational approach would regard the student's written response as

deriving not exclusively or even primarily from deficiencies in knowledge or cognition but rather from conflicts within and among Real, Imaginary, and Symbolic components of identity, some of which constitute the ego, or sense of self, and others of which oppose and threaten the ego (1999b: 68).

As I have discussed, for Kristeva the transference is informed by a certain literary experience analogous to the preoedipal, primary identification which enables the renewal of symbolic structures and identity. Lacan's conception of the transference is different to Kristeva's and understands it as a central conflict between the ego, its Others and unconscious desire. The focus on conflict is taken up in Bracher's applied psychoanalysis in order to investigate the functioning of psychic conflict in the subject's language (133). For Bracher, everyday texts by students, and not only literary texts, are 'potential loci of compromise formations involving the ego's intentions, ego-alien desires, and defences against the ego-alien desires, the conflict, or the awareness of the conflict' (73). All writing problems, such as those with style, form, intention, and topic selection, can be understood as an unsuccessful compromise formation, in which 'a disguised form of the unconscious desire, or the defense against it, or both, have remained visible' (72). The conflict in Student D's text is indicated by the response to the novel's ending which made her feel 'slightly confused' and 'shocked', whereas, in general, she finds it 'a fun interesting book.' That is, conflict is represented in the way the student's generalised interpretation serves to undercut her emotional responses to the ending. Conflict in the student's text reveals both the defence mechanism and the response it unsuccessfully defends against.

Bracher's Lacanian approach to writing problems is for the teacher to not respond in the corrective mode, but rather to respond to those problems as expressions of unconscious desire in conflict with the ego and its Others (137). As discussed, when the teacher responds by drawing attention to the incorrect elements of the student's text she takes up the position of the authoritative symbolic Other. According to Bracher, in maintaining an authoritative role the teacher creates further conflict for the student, to whom writing is already an encounter with the demands and desires of the symbolic Other. An alternative approach is for the teacher, like the analyst, 'to encourage the recognition and articulation of the parts of students that are incommensurable with the Symbolic order' (134). Bracher's educational theory utilises Lacan's later seminars which, as we have seen, concern the relationship of the real – of drives and *jouissance* – with the symbolic system. As Bracher explains, the

articulation of the real is necessary to the psychoanalytic treatment, and it also has an important role in writing. Writing, like the analytic experience, serves to

discharge our affect and form it, structure it, define it in a way that gives us both a means of control over the affect and also the sense and confidence that we can control the affect instead of being overwhelmed by it (147).

In the case of Student D, the real disrupts the possibility for a coherent reading, and instead reveals the student's conflict between her emotional responses and her euphemistic interpretation. The teacher could have provided a space for the real by directing the student's attention to possible ego-alien elements, to unconscious desire and to the ego's defence mechanisms.

According to Atwell-Vasey, Jane's narrative portrays a teacher who, in her relationship with her students, makes room for 'the register of the maternal semiotic' in 'the continuation of this pattern of alternately merging with, and separating from others' (Atwell-Vasey, 1998: 127-8). Bracher's approach to education informs my argument that the teacher's denial of the real in her student's writing can only undermine the claim for a Kristevan pedagogy to subvert the authority of the teacher. Contrary to Atwell-Vasey's claims, the teacher's responses to the students' journal entries show that the Kristevan, maternal teaching praxis does not produce

a class in which interaction among language users is maximized, students are focused not on meeting standards per se, or minimizing mistakes, but on what meaning they might be able to make of the world that others could understand, and on what meaning they can make of what others say and write (127).

In my view, the problematic of an educational praxis which applies Kristevan psychoanalysis is determined by the very same problematic I have found in Kristeva's conception of transference. The problematic concerns the argument that Kristevan transference derives from her aim to amend the shortcomings of Lacanian psychoanalysis. However, Kristeva's critique is directed against the early Lacan, where the transference is defined in terms of an opposition between the imaginary and the symbolic, and not the later Lacan who gave a different emphasis to the real in transference. The same problematic is to be found in the educational theories by Grumet and Atwell-Vasey who, in their studies of the transference between the text, reader and writer, define the transference relations as an imaginary experience which engages with the semiotic processes. That is, through the transferences and reduplications of imaginary identification by teacher, student and text, the affective and emotive is made accessible to the learning process. These educational theories propose that

the curriculum include the real of the semiotic drive processes, which awards greater value and power to women teachers who are more able to provide a learning experience reduplicating the first experience of learning with the mother.

Kristeva's theory of the semiotic is a theory of conflict and contradiction between the semiotic and the symbolic order. It is through these contradictions that Kristeva sees her psychoanalytic work as closely aligned with Freud and against Lacan. In Kristeva's interpretation, the Lacanian symbolic dominates the nonverbal imaginary and real registers. By comparison, Kristeva's recent writings claim that Freud defined the psyche in terms of a conflict between, on the one side, the unconscious of affect and drive, and on the other, the ego and its internal and external alienating figures and structures. In this investigation, however, I have found that a Lacanian conception of transference, and its application to education, does recognize psychic conflict, and to this extent does not aim to reduce or eradicate the real as commonly understood in Kristevan psychoanalysis and the educational theories it has influenced.

In order to substantiate my reading of Kristevan psychoanalysis and its educational applications, I have discussed specific correlations of the position of the analyst in Kristeva's work to the teacher in educational studies. Firstly, the position is given a literary role, where the analyst and the teacher are readers and writers, authors of the curriculum and their own narratives, and interpretive authorities of the student's/analysand's text. Secondly, and more importantly, the Kristevan analyst and teacher are figures that combine the roles of both parents. The accent is on the re-configuration of the traditional parental roles, where value and power is aligned with the maternal, counteracting the hegemony of the paternal, symbolic order.

The Kristevan educational theory equates Lacanian psychoanalysis with traditional education structures, both having privileged the masculine that has support from the symbolic order. Nevertheless, it is not possible to substantiate the Kristevan critique of Lacanian psychoanalysis which does not privilege the symbolic, imaginary, or real-order transference in determining an ethical direction in the psychoanalytic treatment, or in the educational setting. For psychical conflict to be taken into account in both these contexts, the conflict must be challenged rather than gratified. If the teacher handles the transference by continually validating the student's transference, there is then no challenge brought to bear on those old conflicts that re-emerge in the transference within the educational context. Kristevan pedagogy has the tendency to re-affirm the student's prior conflicts with internal and external Others, for by the teacher taking up the combinatory role of both parents, he/she elicits new editions of those conflicts.

A further correlation between Kristevan psychoanalysis and the studies by Grumet and Atwell-Vasey is with the concept of mirroring or reduplication. In order to give validity to the primary identification with the first Other, the teacher or the analyst is in an empathetic role which aims to gratify the narcissistic ego of the student/analysand. Kristeva privileges the illusory moment of completion in metaphor and transference love, for this moment has nurturing capabilities in the developing ego's first confrontations with lack and desire. Grumet's and Atwell-Vasey's educational theories advocate for a teaching relationship that takes into account the maternal space and the semiotic processes. That is to say, the child or the student learns to negotiate alterity through an affirmative sameness in the nurturing of a developing identity or ego (Grumet, 1988: 102) (Atwell-Vasey, 1998: 90). However, in its educational applications, the Kristevan conception of transference allows for an unethical educational relationship on behalf of the teacher. In the example of Jane, the teacher's responses either affirm the areas in the students' work which agree with her own reading of the text, or are correctives to the students' unconventional interpretations. These kind of responses by the teacher serve to (unconsciously) gratify both the student's transference, of love or authority, and further gratifies the teacher's desire to speak as or for an authoritative Other.

Bracher's application of Lacan's conception of transference maintains that the best possible way to read the teacher's desire is through the forms of assignments and the responses to those assignments (Bracher, 1999b: 134). Journal writing or confessional writing may help students to understand their own writing experiences in relation to the psychological conflicts involved, and in relation to the pleasure of reading, writing and discussion. Yet Bracher advises that these type of assignments leave the student vulnerable to the teacher's desire, and that, 'teachers who ask students to do self-reflective or confessional journals should be very sensitive not only to the student's desire but also to their own' (180). The teacher's conscious intentions can be undermined by unconscious desires which may operate to provide certain types of gratification for the teacher.

The Kristevan teacher's responses express her desire both for empathy - the affirming statements - and for the recognition of her knowledge - specifically in the corrective responses to the students' readings. There are ethical problems in using empathy as a strategy in teaching for it can to easily lead to 'a misattunement on the part of the teacher, such that the teacher is actually mirroring a very different state than the student is actually experiencing' (181). Lacan's conception of transference avoids the pitfalls in Kristeva's in cautioning against the enactment of imaginary relations in transference, which is determined by 'the illusion that seems to drive us to this alienating identification that any conformity

constitutes' (Lacan, 1964: 146). Conformity is alienating for the analysand when, in the transference of an imaginary Other, 'the analyst gets caught up in the same game of comparing him- or herself to his or her analysands, sizing up their discourse in terms of his own' (Fink, 1997: 32). The ethical problem with the analyst as an imaginary Other concerns the focus of attention which, rather than directed on to the analysand's speech, is directed towards the analyst's desire in relation to the analysand.

Teachers cannot learn about the student's desire through the deceptions of the imaginary, identification processes, such as empathy. A Lacanian educational solution to the ethics of transference is to undo the effects of the imaginary and symbolic transference, by calling attention to the conflicting and unconscious desires expressed in the language of students.

## **Conclusion**

### **Social Theory, Subjectivity and the Imaginary**

Each chapter has set out to challenge a range of accepted interpretations within the context of Kristeva's work. As an investigation of different positions within the Kristevan interpretive field this thesis aims to contribute to the fundamental issue of the production of knowledge in social theory. The general strategy has been to consider those received interpretations, not as invariable positions, but rather as provisional stages in the wider arena of the social analysis of education. For social theory to 'ask about the process of assembling knowledge', it has to 'begin to think about knowledge production as a series of editings and recordings' (Wexler, 1987: 105). With respect to Wexler's challenge to social theory this thesis has been concerned with the production of knowledge in terms of the critical discourse generated by Kristeva's work, and the problems and possibilities contained within these interpretations. Of equal concern to the theme of the production of knowledge is an investigation of Kristeva's work as a refinement of Freud and a corrective to Hegel and Lacan. Each chapter has critically examined the Kristevan theory of the semiotic and the symbolic according to its aims to edit and rework certain theories and concepts in philosophy and psychoanalysis.

To introduce this investigation of Kristeva's theory of the semiotic and the symbolic the thesis began with the important contribution that Althusserian structuralism made to the development of Kristeva's major theory. Althusserian structuralism informs the Kristevan notion of subjectivity which is overdetermined by the contradictory registers of the semiotic and the symbolic. These are non-subjective structures which undermine the humanist conception of a subject of self-knowledge and agency (Dolar, 1998: 13). In Althusserian structuralism, it is not the subject who produces knowledge, rather the subject is an effect of the process (see Chapter 1: Symptomatic Readings by Althusser and Kristeva). Kristeva's subject is similarly determined by the notion of process, in that human creativity takes place on the basis of a subject in process, described as 'a kind of weaving between the drives and the undecidable web of human ties, significant connections that the subject does not control and which escape us' (Kristeva, 2000). Kristeva's subject is both a subject of the semiotic, of meaning effects that are irreducible to language, and also of the symbolic in relation to linguistic signs and social structures of meaning. There are certain signifying practices such as the arts, politics, and psychoanalysis where the sign and its structures are contested, where signification is a process, an open structure to be disrupted and renewed along with its subject. Kristeva has always been clear that the heterogeneous space of the semiotic

belongs to a structuralist endeavour, as opposed to the conception of a subject who is unified as an effect of the symbolic law.

The etymological kinship between the terms *semiotic*, *symbolic*, and *significance* clearly points to this differentiated unity [the signifying process], which is ultimately that of the process of the subject. The semiotic is thus a modality of the signifying process with an eye to the subject posited (but posited as absent) by the symbolic. In our view, structuralist linguistic theories come closer to the semiotic than to what we shall call the symbolic, which, dependent as it is on a punctual ego, appears in propositions (Kristeva, 1974: 41).

The Kristevan subject is determined by both symbolic ordering, which endows subjectivity with a consistent identity, and by the semiotic processes that are heterogeneous to the structures of identity and society. The dynamism of these two registers allows for a signifying practice which 'has no addressee; no subject, even a split one, can understand it. Such a practice does not address itself at all; it sweeps along everything that belongs to the same space of practice: human "units" in process/on trial' (101-2). By the permutation of meaning with the heterogeneity of the body and affects, there is a 'fragmentation of the apparatus of representation, of the psychical apparatus itself, without this fragmentation collapsing in the asymbolism of psychosis' (Kristeva, 2000). The apparatuses of representation and the psyche, of the social field and the subject, are connected in the signifying process in which the semiotic and symbolic order and disorder those representational structures.

In Kristeva's structuralist conception of subjectivity the subject is not completely submitted to social laws of meaning, for language is presupposed by the semiotic register of the zero degree of meaning, and therefore the symbolic always contains the potential to be undermined by asocial drive forces (Kristeva, 1985a: 21-2). My investigation has questioned Kristeva's social and psychoanalytic theory in relation to Lacanian psychoanalysis, in particular, with regard to the Imaginary, the Real and the Symbolic. In this conclusion I will refer to those arguments again by examining the role of the imaginary in the relation of the subject to the social.

In an interview in 1985 Kristeva explains the distinction between the Lacanian three psychic registers and her theory of the semiotic and the symbolic registers.

[T]he semiotic ... corresponds to phenomena that for Lacan are in both the real and the imaginary. For him the real is a hole, a void, but I think that in a number of experiences with which psychoanalysis is concerned - most notably, the

narcissistic structure, the experience of melancholia or of catastrophic suffering, and so on - the appearance of the real is not necessarily a void. It is accompanied by a number of psychic inscriptions that are of the order of the semiotic. Thus perhaps the notion of the semiotic allows us to speak of the real without simply saying that it's an emptiness or a blank; it allows us to try to further elaborate it. In any case, it's on the level of the imaginary that the semiotic functions best - that is, the fictional construction (23).

Kristeva explains that the semiotic reworks Lacan's presymbolic registers by converging the real with the imaginary, in which the lack of differentiation in the real finds meaning in an imaginary and primary identification. In encompassing the real and the imaginary, the semiotic becomes the possibility of language, insofar as the imaginary relation of primary identification is both the condition of representation, and of the connection between psychical production and the social field.

In the later chapters I have proposed that Kristevan psychoanalytic theory has consistently privileged the role of the imaginary in defining subjectivity in relation to the social. I will argue in this conclusion that Kristeva's conception of the imaginary conforms to the Althusserian imaginary, as a relation in which 'the subject was brought to accept as its own, to recognize itself in, the representations of society' (Copjec, 1994: 21). In Kristeva, the subject's relationship to society is fundamentally an imaginary one, in which the means of representation and fictional construction are the basis for that relationship to change. Kristeva has utilised the Althusserian imaginary, reformulating it according to her interpretation and critique of Lacan. At this point it is important to acknowledge that the Althusserian imaginary is not to be confused with the Lacanian imaginary (Copjec, 1994: 15-38). The source of the confusion lies in a particular emphasis in the interpretation of the mirror stage, as found in Althusser and Kristeva, in which the imaginary is conceived of as providing images of the subject's body, or of an other, that the subject identifies with or assumes as its own. Kristeva's criticism and revision of Lacan's mirror stage in *Revolution in Poetic Language* is addressed specifically at this interpretation of the imaginary (1974: 46-51).

In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva's criticism of the Lacanian registers is that they are disconnected whereas the semiotic and the symbolic are inseparable (Oliver, 1993: 41). As a dislocated register, the Lacanian imaginary is constrained by the illusions of the mirror stage, whereas the Kristevan imaginary 'goes beyond the mere representatives of affects to its source in drives' (38). Drives are related to the maternal body in the real: that is, the real condition of the child before the imaginary, and which is the condition for the thetic break –

the Kristevan revision of the mirror stage. Thethetic break is, for Kristeva, where the imaginary 'moves the child from its presymbolic identification with its mother to an identification with the other in the mirror' (40). Kristeva further explains the transition in terms of the negativity in the dialectic of drive heterogeneity which prefigures the negation of thethetic break; that is, the gap between body-ego and other. The imaginary relation of the body-ego and the other defines Kristeva's social theory, for it is through the mediation of the imaginary that the Kristevan subject relates to others and to social meaning.

In Kristeva's work the imaginary figures in poetic language, artistic practice and psychoanalytic discourse in relation to fantasy as a defensive construction, which on the one hand protects the subject in a narcissistic investment of social meaning, while on the other hand reveals the drive heterogeneity underlying fantasy (Kristeva, 1974: 49). By privileging the imaginary, which brings with it the semiotic processes, Kristeva's conception of the symbolic is thought to be more inclusive than Lacan's, in that 'the paternal prohibition will never completely succeed since the semiotic makes its way into signification' (Oliver, 1993: 47). The convergence of the real and the imaginary in the semiotic is developed in *Revolution in Poetic Language* and is maintained throughout Kristeva's work. Ten years later, in the essay 'Transferential Discourse', Kristeva re-emphasizes the centrality of the imaginary in her work, specifically in relation to psychoanalytic practice.

I would insist, therefore, on the fact that the analyst's function is to re-awaken the imaginary and to allow the world of illusion to exist.... Analytic discourse ... issues from the texture of the imaginary.... [T]he analytic discourse as imaginary discourse can deploy its three registers: representation of words, representation of things, and the semiotic inscription of affects. The analytic discourse thereby acquires its bodily effectiveness, the real impact one hoped for (Kristeva, 1984a: 8).

It was my argument in Chapters 3 and 4 that Kristeva's imaginary is intended to mediate between drives and signification, and that this theory takes its coordinates from a misinterpretation of the Lacanian symbolic as a hegemonic, closed system. In my discussion however, I have found that the Lacanian symbolic is characterized as incomplete and therefore fails to provide complete knowledge. The failure of the symbolic is made apparent when signification is interrupted by the real of the unconscious.

As I have discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, Althusser's influence on certain concepts and interpretations by Kristeva is significant, and this influence is also relevant to the different conceptions of the imaginary by Lacan and Kristeva. The Althusserian imaginary, as Copjec

has shown, enables 'the form of the subject's lived relation to society' (Copjec, 1994: 21). Therefore ideologically, for Althusser, the subject is founded through the recognition of, and identification with, images and representation. In adapting Althusser, Kristeva finds that the subject of a signifying practice is taken up in the process of 'the semiotic, the pre-verbal, which nevertheless mobilises our capacities for rhetoric to give it a communicable formulation' (Kristeva, 2000). Kristeva's theory is concerned with the possibility for certain signifying practices to disrupt the ordering of meaning and its unified ego, but also with the renewal of meaning via imaginary constructions. In Kristeva's words, the imaginary is the 'heterogeneous and multi-layered capacity that is the aptitude for representation' (Kristeva, 2000). The subject in Kristeva's theory is held in place by the sense-making realm of the symbolic, yet is destabilised by semiotic inscriptions played out in the imaginary. The imaginary sense of self has the possibility for destabilisation and therefore of renewal, in which fantasies 'are no longer the source of complaints or dogma. They seem to come under the scope of an artifice - the art of life' (Kristeva, 1984a: 6). In Kristeva's social theory there are two distinct frameworks which underlie the theory of the semiotic-imaginary in relation to the symbolic. The first is structuralist. Kristeva's work employs the structuralist symbolic which realizes the imaginary as signifying practices by which fantasies are materialised. In structuralism the imaginary relation of the subject to the symbolic occurs in the subject's perception of itself as able to supply images with sense. Copjec explains that the structuralist version of the 'subject comes into being by identifying with the image's signified. Sense *founds* the subject' (Copjec, 1994: 22). Kristeva combines the structuralist theory of the subject and the social with a psychoanalytic theory in which the imaginary is linked to the semiotic and the real of the drives.

An aspect of Kristeva's theory to exemplify these two different approaches to the imaginary and the symbolic is the discussion on narcissism in *Tales of Love*. As outlined in Chapter 3, narcissism for Kristeva is an experience of fusion, a metaphorical condensation that precedes the metonymy of desire. In narcissism there is a convergence with, and a dependence upon, the maternal body in the primary identification, yet on this basis there is an unbinding process in narcissism. At the end of the process of narcissistic fusion Kristeva explains that 'the initial attachment is disturbed by the admission that the other slips away .... [and] this discovery reveals to me that I am myself, right to the very heart of my demands and desires, uncertain, divided, decentered' (Kristeva, 1984a: 5). Kristeva's understanding of narcissism is a process of attachment and detachment, of the subject's connection to social meaning, and of the subject's division by the symbolic order. On the side of structuralism, narcissism is 'the structure that instruments the *harmonious* relation between the self and social order', while for psychoanalysis, 'the subject's narcissistic relation to the self is seen to *conflict with and disrupt* other social relations' (Copjec, 1994: 23). In merging the two

accounts of narcissism Kristeva has overlooked the important distinction, as theorized by Lacan, between the imaginary and the symbolic. For Copjec, it is crucial for psychoanalysis to maintain this distinction 'between the unbinding force of narcissism and the binding force of social relations' in order to avoid falling into determinism (23). Copjec's argument raises a question for Kristeva's psychoanalytic account of narcissism in the context of the subject's relation to society. Does the harmonious attachment inherent to the Kristevan imaginary effectively resolve the antagonisms in the psychoanalytic imaginary? The answer is found in Kristeva's psychoanalytic statement of intent on narcissism.

The ultimate goal [of analysis] ... would be where, after a certain amount of disillusionment, the spirit of play returns. "I am another, and yet, this somehow escapes me; there is something unsayable, and I've got the right to play with it to see if it is true." .... From here on I can really play, and play for real, precisely by making ties and bonds: to create communities.... The certitude I have acquired in analysis, of being able to attain the variable range of my discourse, both consoles my narcissism and allows me to transfer desires onto those of others (Kristeva, 1984a: 12).

In the analytic setting, the Kristevan imaginary fulfils or gives expression to the subject's desires, allows the subject to 'play for real' and, most importantly, furnishes the subject with certitude in the symbolic social relation. In order to counter the Lacanian preoccupation with alienation and separation, Kristeva's view of imaginary relations in analysis is that they are pre-eminent in facilitating the fulfilment of desires and the inclusion of the self with others (see Chapters 3 and 4). Kristeva's imaginary directs attention on to the narcissistic relation of love where the subject loves its own image as the representation of the ideal self. In this view of the imaginary relation, narcissism is a binding force in closing the gap between subjective desires and representations of the subject and the social in which the subject may find a place. On the basis of the inseparability of the symbolic and the semiotic, Kristeva's subject in process is figured as realizing desire in the social and symbolic order. For the subject of the structuralist imaginary, the relationship to representation is an integrative, ideal identification by which, in certain practices of representation and signification (of the carnivalesque, of poetic, novelistic and psychoanalytic discourse), the subject finds self-recognition in relation to the representational forms.

The imaginary capacities and relations of the subject have important implications for social theory in the articulation of the subject in relation to the social. It is, therefore, not only the contents of the imaginary which are relevant to the aims of social theory, but also the formal relationship of the imaginary to the symbolic. As Copjec asks with regard to the structuralist

conception of the imaginary, 'how the imaginary came to bear, almost exclusively, the burden of the construction of the subject - despite the fact that we always speak of the "symbolic" construction of the subject' (Copjec, 1994: 23). As we have seen the Kristevan imaginary is a binding and productive force which enables the realisation of the subject's desire. This is an attractive conception for social theory as exemplified in Anthony Elliot's *Social Theory and Psychoanalysis in Transition*. For Elliot the imaginary is most important for the subject's resistance against repressive social orders. Like Kristeva, Elliot claims that the imaginary capacities of the subject are the basis for not only the subject's interpellation in the social order, but also for creativity and transformation.

By elaborating alternative imaginary representations to hegemonic forms of self-constitution, these [social] movements supply a clear illustration of the creation of new ways of thinking, feeling, and acting in the social domain. At the same time, in becoming part of social life, these imaginary forms may act to fracture the very hegemonic modes of cultural representation they oppose - thus generating the possibility of an alternative future (Elliott, 1992: 242).

In this perspective, there is a productive and transformative connection between the imaginary capacities of the self and the symbolic relations of society. For Elliot, this conception of the imaginary for a social theory is very different to the imaginary in both Kristeva's and Lacan's theories of subjectivity. The difficulty with Elliot's critique is that it has assimilated Kristeva's theory with Lacan's, whereas my findings in this thesis do not support Elliot's interpretation of Lacanian theory and its relationship to Kristeva's work.

According to Elliot, neither Kristeva nor Lacan have provided an account of subjectivity which breaks with the notion of a deterministic symbolic order. In the introduction to this thesis I discussed Elliot's critique of both Lacanian determinism and Kristeva's theory of the semiotic, as that which offers no proper resistance to the symbolic. The semiotic is not a revolutionary force, according to Elliot, since it is only located in the restrictive field of the paternal law (230, 255). In previous chapters I have offered an interpretation which differs from Elliot's reading of Kristeva and Lacan. A key point in argument is that the flaw in many of the critical interpretations lies in the conception of the Lacanian symbolic as a closed, hegemonic structure, with which the subject cannot change her relationship. Elliot conforms to the deterministic reading of the Lacanian symbolic, and by doing so ironically affirms Kristeva's critique of Lacan. Moreover Elliot's social theory of the imaginary is, in fact, consistent with the Kristevan conception of the productive, binding force of the imaginary.

Elliot's argument against Lacanian psychoanalysis is that the symbolic is entirely determinative of the subject, and therefore the imaginary 'is no more than a construction of concealment, papering over that painful "lack" which lies at the heart of human subjectivity' (261). In this account of the Lacanian imaginary Elliot's criticisms are directed at Lacan's essay of 1949, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I', which is also Kristeva's focus in her critique of Lacan in *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Elliot's critique of the Lacanian imaginary defines the mirror stage as 'a mirage of unity and coherence', which enables the construction of 'a misrecognized centre of self' (129). The illusions of the imaginary order conceal a lack, due to 'the fragmentary state of the subject's real body', while in relation to that lack the sense of self is formed as an illusion which alienates and distorts the self in relation to an other (128, 140-1). In this reading, the imaginary is a weak concept which does not account for any connection with the symbolic. Lacan's theory, according to Elliot, forges a dislocation between the imaginary sense of self and the construction of the symbolic subject.

In Lacan's theorization of the imaginary, then, it is not the subject which puts images into representation. Images appear behind, or always beyond, individuals.... The basic deficiency here can be simply stated: Lacan does not account for what mediates between the reflected mirror image on the one hand, and the production of such representational forms on the other hand (139).

There are a number of inaccuracies in Elliot's interpretation and these stem from the reduction of Lacan's theory of the imaginary to the 1949 essay on the mirror stage. A point I have argued in the previous discussion is that certain misreadings of Lacan are explained on the basis of their partiality for only the early Lacanian texts.

In many interpretations of Lacan's work, such as those discussed in this thesis, the 1949 essay on the mirror stage is taken as the definitive account of the imaginary. However Lacan extensively developed the theory throughout the 1950s and 1960s. To a certain extent Elliot is right in understanding that the lack engendered in the Lacanian mirror stage is founded on an infantile dependency. What is left out in this reading, as Nobus has explained in his survey of Lacan's work, is that infantile dependency or foetalization may be necessary for the recognition of the self in the mirror, but 'as a condition it is not sufficient' to that recognition (Nobus, 1998: 109). In Elliot's reading of Lacan's mirror stage, the imaginary illusions of coherency are sufficient to the concealment of the prematurity of the infant. Nevertheless, Lacan did not conceive 'this solution as a relative cognitive equilibrium', finding instead that the imaginary is 'a source of new conflicts' (110). The illusion of unity is not on the side of the infant, but on the side of the other, the image in the mirror, whereas the child lacks autonomy

and a sense of self-coherency, which therefore creates a conflict between the ego and the other.

The evidence from Nobus' study is that the Lacanian imaginary is not simply a deceptive unity, and nor is it a self-enclosed space with no properly theorized connection to the other registers. Kristeva and Elliot both interpret the Lacanian imaginary as a linear and developmental stage, and they each retain this developmental structure in their conceptions of the imaginary. Where the difference lies is that in Lacan's later work there is a shift away from the developmental view of the imaginary to one where the imaginary functions in accordance with the real and the symbolic. As a result of this shift in Lacan's work, it is considered that the 'imaginary condition needs to be fulfilled, but it will only produce effects if synchronized with foetalization (the real condition) and - as Lacan stressed from the mid 1950's - the discourse of the Other (the symbolic condition)' (116). The child does identify with and differentiate itself from the image, but this alone does not fulfil the imaginary condition. In Lacan, therefore, the imaginary is associated with the real, by providing the illusion of mastery over dependency, and also with the symbolic, which functions to mediate between the knowledge of the self and its imaged otherness.

A conclusion of Nobus' research is that after 1949 Lacan moves away from a developmental approach, to one where the mirror stage and its sense of self is determined retrospectively by future symbolic events (122). Nobus explains that the retrospective process of the imaginary is further elaborated by Lacan in the concept of the gaze in Seminar XI, where the mirror is defined as a symbolic Other. In redefining the mirror as the Other, visual perception is no longer the superior sense in establishing self-consciousness; instead the symbolic Other is that which 'constructs and controls a human being's external world and which regulates his or her assumption of a "self-image"' (120). Nobus' study of the Lacanian imaginary is wider in scope than those by Kristeva or Elliot, and it explains how Lacan conceived of the relationship between the self-image and its environment, and the connection of the imaginary condition with the symbolic construction of the subject.

For Kristeva and Elliot the imaginary is valued for its productiveness as a counterbalance to the Lacanian primacy of the symbolic which determines the subject and its desire founded on lack. In Elliot, the imaginary is a productive force in that 'the imaginary capacities of human subjects, [are] competences which continually transform social life in liberatory and repressive ways' (Elliott, 1992: 242). There are correspondences here with the Kristevan imaginary which is infused with semiotic material; with the representation of affects and psychic inscriptions necessary to the formation and de-formation of identity (Kristeva, 1985a:

22-3). The implication in the imaginary conceived of as a positive and productive force is that any lack in signification attains the completion of meaning in the semiotic.

By semiotic ... I mean the effects of meaning that are not reducible to language or that can operate outside language, even if language is necessary as an immediate context or as a final referent. By semiotic, I mean, for example, the child's echolalia before the appearance of language, but also the play of colors in an abstract painting or a piece of music that lacks signification but has a meaning (21).

The semiotic is not independent of language but underpins it, and, under the control of language, articulates other aspects of "meaning" which are more than mere "significations," such as rhythmical and melodic inflections (Kristeva, 1998: 324).

In answering the lack in the symbolic, the semiotic is characterised as the material of fictional construction, a fantasy where drives are articulated within and across signification. The heterogeneous processes of the semiotic are inseparable from – in contradiction to – the symbolic; it is the potential for the disruption and renewal of the symbolic and its attendant identities.

Up to a certain point Kristeva and Lacan would agree that the subject is constituted as a transgression of the law and not only in confirmation of the law. In Lacan, the role of the imaginary is to form a gap between the self and representation in which the image seems unequal to the sense of self, and therefore desire causes the subject to look for itself somewhere beyond representation (Copjec, 1994: 37). However, in conflating the real with the imaginary, Kristeva leaves the subject mired in the imaginary belief that beyond the symbolic there lies an answer to the imperfections of representations. That is, the Kristevan subject in process is founded on the belief in an (imaginary) answer to the lack in signification (the symbolic), whereas the Lacanian subject is constituted on the basis of a failure (a real lack) in signification. If the mirror, or the Other cannot represent the subject adequately then it is doubt, and not a void, which causes subjectivity at the point where representation would appear to conceal something more. Conversely, Kristeva's subject is an effect of meaning in the symbolic and the semiotic; or sense and sensation are foundational for the subject. For Kristeva, the semiotic is realized in language, while for Lacan the real is the impossibility of language. In other words, it is at the point where representation seems to fail that the subject who desires to know finds its footing. Kristeva aims to recuperate the real in the field of signification, in which the materiality of language attests to a truth within and

beyond signification, in a continuity of being and sense. Lacanian psychoanalysis takes a very different position, but one which remains faithful to the Freudian unconscious, and accepts that sense cannot answer being. In Lacan, the focus is not solely on sense to furnish the meaning of being, but also to attend to the inconsistency of the Other - of signification - as the cause and the production of the subject.

Lacanian psychoanalysis does not formulate the real merely as another aspect of meaning, but rather as the very refusal of meaning. In a structuralist social theory, the subject makes sense of being, and is therefore entirely determined by the symbolic. In Lacan's theory of subjectivity, the subject is a subject of doubt, of a refusal of meaning, and therefore has a degree of choice. The choice is one that is unavailable to the Kristevan subject who always becomes the answer to the lack in the Other. By identifying with the inconsistency of the Other, the Lacanian subject takes up its real condition of lack from where the 'subject can "choose" to elevate nothing into something and to enjoy this' (Verhaeghe, 1998: 183).

Where might this lead in terms of education? To go back to the criticisms of Lacan by Wexler and Elliot outlined in the introduction. Wexler contends that Lacanian theory replaces the unconscious with signification, and is therefore unable to contribute to a social analysis of education requiring an account of identity production in educational relations (1987: 175). Elliot's criticism concerns the Lacanian emphasis on the symbolic and structural ordering of the subject which seems to offer no account of how the subject might challenge or resist the values and ideals of that dominant symbolic order (1992: 155). The conclusion of both social theorists is that the Lacanian symbolic law inescapably determines the subject.

Bracher's Lacanian pedagogy does not support the criticisms of Wexler and Elliot, and instead shows that the Lacanian theory of subjectivity allows for an examination of multiple aspects of subjectivity (the symbolic, imaginary and real psychic registers), and that its aim is to integrate unconscious desires with the self. As discussed in this conclusion, the Kristevan theory of subjectivity promises to provide the answer to the lack in the Other. In education, this model of subjectivity finds expression in a certain mode of response by the teacher to students' work, for example the positive reinforcement (Bracher, 1999b: 158). There are important drawbacks however to relying on positive reinforcement, for as Bracher explains, it does not shift the teacher away from the position of authoritative judge (the symbolic Other) who assumes knowledge of the student's intention and meaning. Positive reinforcement maintains the power of the teacher as an authority figure by allowing the teacher's desire to take precedence over the student's desire. The student's ego is bolstered by the teacher's praise, and thus any unconscious desire of student's which is contributing to learning problems cannot be examined or expressed. Positive responses do not necessarily

encourage the student to deal with desires that are in conflict with her/his own ego or with the authority of the teacher.

As I have discussed in Chapter 4, a Lacanian educational theory aims to integrate the split and dissociated aspects of subjectivity; that is, unconscious desires which repeat and insist on interfering in the effective discourse of the ego. This education theory does not equate to a deconstructive pedagogy that would emphasize the division of the subject, whose desires are unattainable insofar as the self cannot attain any truth by virtue of the slippage of signifiers (Bracher, 1999b: 162). The deconstructive education model is very similar to the reading of Lacan by Elliot, in which subjectivity is founded on an ontological lack, and therefore any social action leaves the subject fundamentally dissatisfied (Elliot, 1992: 261). The similarity I have shown between a deconstructive social theory, where the subject is divided and incomplete, and Elliot's claims about the Lacanian subject, serve to display the misconception underlying Elliot's approach. While it is correct to say that the Lacanian subject assumes the real condition of lack, the point is that the subject is thereby able to recognize the contingency to, rather than a void beneath, the signifiers upholding identity. Nevertheless, the recognition of contingency is not the final aim of Lacanian psychoanalysis or of its educational application. Bracher's educational theory places the emphasis upon the reconstructive operation which has to follow the deconstructive and alienating aspect of psychoanalysis (Bracher, 1999b: 162). The necessary step in consequence of alienation is, in Lacanian psychoanalysis, the process of separation where the subject acknowledges unconscious desires by embracing 'new signifiers as bearers of his identity even while recognizing that these signifiers are no more transcendently authorized than the discarded ones' (163).

If the student is to recognize unconscious desires in learning difficulties and processes, the psychoanalytic teacher has to avoid the position of authority, and instead find ways to return the student's message in order for the student to recognize those unconscious desires (163). The double challenge of a Lacanian pedagogy is, firstly, for teachers to reject the traditional role of the Other in terms of a criticism and validation of the student's ego, and secondly, to instead take up the position of the object (a). As the object (a), the teacher's desire is not for the student to identify with the teacher as a subject supposed to know, but rather to identify with the teacher's desire; that is, the desire for the student to recognize and assume responsibility for their own unconscious desire (167). These challenges of a Lacanian pedagogy can only be met by enabling students to understand that subjectivity is an irrational, conflicted and defensive structure. And that the rationality and coherence required for learning and knowledge is not attained through a strict ordering of discourse, but rather through an integration of unconscious desire with the self.

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