KRISTEVAN THEORY: MEANINGS, CONTEXTS, FEMINIST "USES"

Pamela Anne Illert, Dip. Fine Arts., B.A. Hons., Dip. Ed.

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Department of English
University of Adelaide

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ABSTRACT

In the first two sections of this thesis, I interpret aspects of Kristeva's theories and contextualise her thought by means of original insights and some secondary material. I also include a series of twenty-one art-works as a fictocritical gesture within the text. It becomes clear that there are radical differences between Kristevan thought and contemporary French feminism, aspects of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, postmodernism, and other contemporary theory. I demonstrate that none of these categories or theories can adequately contain Kristevan thought and that her roots in, or resonances with existential philosophy are most important. I particularly stress connections between Kristevan, Sartrean, and Beauvoirian existentialism: Kristevan subjectivity and Sartrean Being, subjective non-specificity and existential nothing, nothingness, or negativity, and Kristevan abjection and Sartrean dread, anguish, and nausea. No one has previously made these connections.

In the final section of this thesis, extrapolated aspects from all of these areas are used to determine the "usefulness" of Kristevan theory for contemporary feminisms. Such "usefulness" includes value in reading across other texts. I conclude that the most important "use" for Kristevan theory is as a "building block" in conjunction with other theory, in productive feminist speculations on possible female subjectivities (melding Kristevan and other theory) and alternative utopian and dystopian visions of female and feminist lives and futures. It seems that the experimental and uncertain spaces of such visions may be tentatively approached by means of a dramatic refiguring of Kristevan and other theory in order to decide more fulfilling, radically other possibilities which have not yet been realised.

STATEMENTS

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University, and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text or notes.

I am willing to make this thesis available for loan and photocopying if it is accepted for the award of the degree.

Pamela Illert

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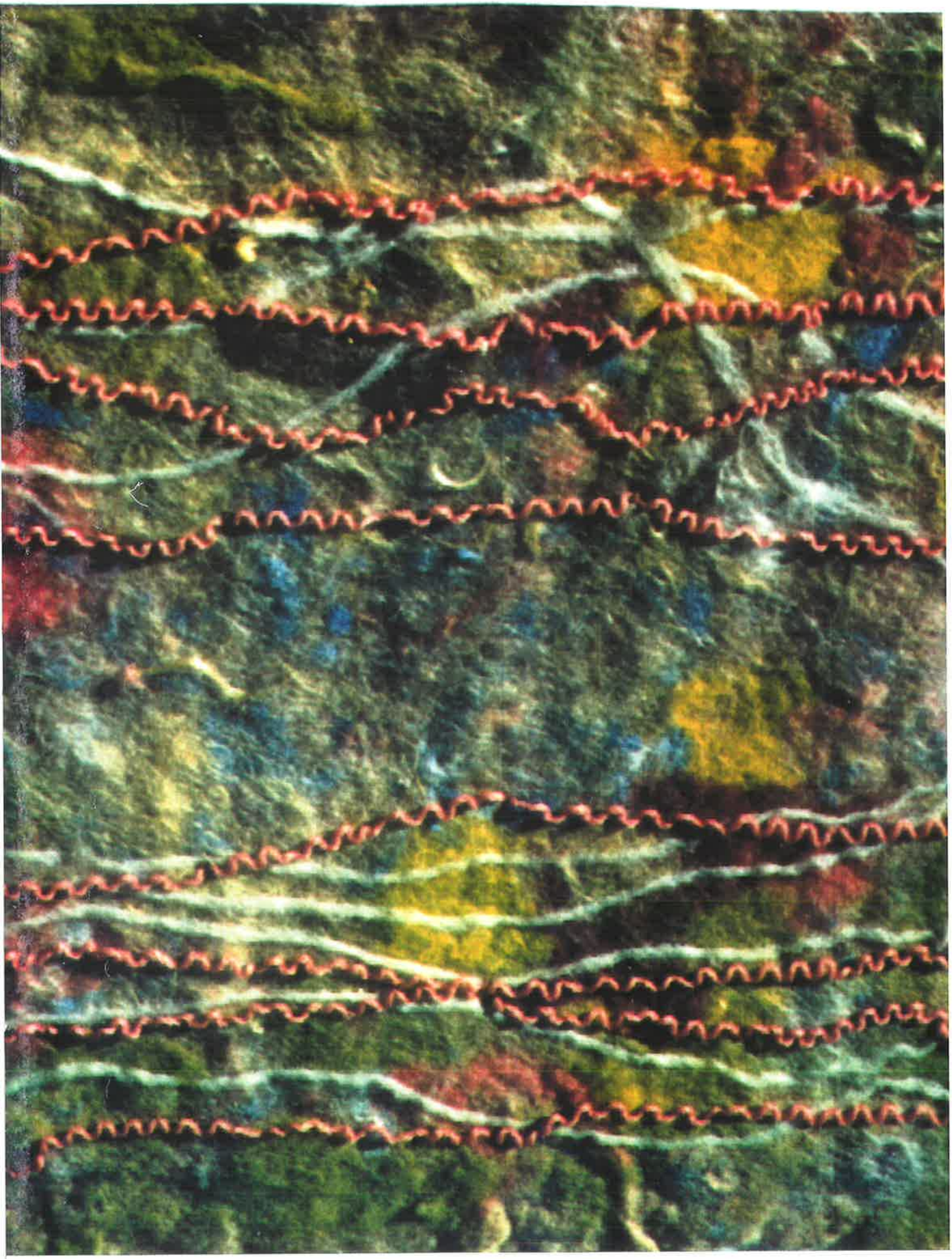
Frontispiece: The rhizome

"Unlike graphics, drawing, or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome refers to a map that must be produced or constructed, is always detachable, connectable, reversible, and modifiable, with multiple entrances and exits, with its lines of flight."
Deleuze and Guattari, On the Line (48-49)



SECTION ONE: **KRISTEVAN EXISTENTIALISM**

Introduction

In Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-Bind (1993), Kelly Oliver asserts that feminist theorists have previously had difficulty interpreting Kristeva's theories, contextualising her thought, and ascertaining the "usefulness" of her theory for contemporary feminisms (1-17). In Section One of this thesis, I make Kristeva's models more broadly available by explaining aspects of her work by means of original insights and secondary material when it accords with or productively contrasts with my own views. I also include reproductions of a series of twenty-one art-works in the text as a fictocritical gesture (app. 1).

This fictocritical gesture is motivated by the insights of Noel King and the models of Kristeva and other theorists. In particular, in Anxieties of Commentary: Interpretation in Recent Literary, Film and Cultural Criticism (1994), Noel King writes that the exact nature of paraliterary or fictocritical writing is uncertain. It is neither criticism nor non-criticism. He asserts: "Both concepts, the fictocritical and the paraliterary, are in the process of being defined and refined. . . . They are still in a process of becoming" (39).

In "'That was Then, This is Now' An Interview with Colin MacCabe, British Film Institute, 3 September 1992" (1992), King also writes of the interdisciplinary nature of contemporary theory and practice. He asserts that whereas it was previously possible to oppose the discipline of English to other interdisciplinary fields, this may no longer be done. He asserts that "it is no longer possible to claim that a sharp distinction exists between the current constitution of various disciplines and the various interdisciplinary configurations which once challenged them so polemically" (157-58).

On the basis of King's assertions, the reproductions of my twenty-one collages may be understood as a fictocritical gesture, neither criticism nor non-criticism, and in keeping with recent interdisciplinary trends in contemporary theory and practice. As such, they illustrate my text and help to make Kristeva's theories more broadly available. At the same time, they form a separate text beyond the possibilities of either words or images alone.

This latter aspect has precedent in the models of Kristeva and other writers. For instance, in "Stabat Mater" (1977), Kristeva juxtaposes two independent passages so that they may be read both separately and against each other. Likewise, in Cherished Objects: An Illustrated Novel (1989), Paul Hewson and Linda Marie Walker use photographic reproductions to illustrate their text in Chapter One and to assist in compounding understandings of their "character's" concern with the sky in Chapter Two, and in *Les Guérillères* (1969), Monique Wittig's text is regularly interrupted by parallel texts comprising women's names printed in capital letters, poems, and three large circles which represent the vulva.

My decision to work in a way similar to Kristeva, Hewson and Walker, and Wittig requires clarification in terms of my understandings of relations between practice and theory, and between my text and its readers. In the first case, I agree with MacCabe's assertions in "That was Then," that practice and theory are mutually dependant on each other and that they should be figured at the same time. This was my own belief and experience when writing this thesis and constructing the collages. McCabe states that:

> You're not going to say that production is everything and theoretical reflection is nothing, but nor are you going to say that you work out your theory and then you go and do your practice. I think what I'm really committed to now is the position that says you have to be undertaking both at the same time, without thinking that they're necessarily going to fit into place. (161)

With regard to my understandings of relations between texts and readers, I believe that interpretations should be limited. This is why I emphasise the written text over the visual images in my thesis. MacCabe also maintains this view. He quotes Ian Hunter in "Subjectivity and Government" (1983), as criticising "an ecstatic celebration of various empowered, desiring, resistive readers triumphantly imposing their meanings over received textual forms" [MacCabe's emphasis] (164). MacCabe explains that if interpretations are not limited, texts are rendered meaningless. He asserts: "This is the line that says that readers can read anything they like into a text" (164).

I am also aware of the idiosyncratic nature of my work. This is in keeping with King's assertions in Anxieties of Commentary, wherein he states that

> we should work to maintain spaces for eccentric practices of writing and research. This would be writing which 'drifts' and 'hesitates,' as Barthes puts it. It would be writing which refuses the easy confidence of 'rhetorical clausule,' by which he means writing that refuses the comfort of having 'the last word.' [King's emphasis] (276)

My second major aim in this thesis is to further contextualise Kristevan theory. I do this by stressing radical differences between Kristevan theory and the contexts with which it has previously been most frequently aligned. These contexts include contemporary French feminism (referring to understandings of essential female subjectivity, feminine writing, woman, feminists, and feminism) and aspects of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis.

It becomes clear that French feminism and psychoanalysis are limited in their potential to contain Kristevan thought, and that Kristeva's roots in, or resonances with existential philosophy are most important. No one has previously emphasised this aspect in relation to Kristevan theory and this is a particularly important oversight as existentialism is intimately connected to the phenomenological philosophical

discourse. This connection may be understood from the title of Sartre's foundational existential text, Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology (1943), Genevieve Lloyd's examination of subjectivity in terms of existentialism via phenomenology in The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy (1984), and Kristeva admits to the phenomenological basis and relations of her work. In The Man of Reason, Lloyd asserts "[Beauvoir's theory] derives also from Hegel's treatment of self-consciousness in The Phenomenology of Spirit, mediated through Sartre" (87). In "The System and the Speaking Subject" (1973), Kristeva links her theory of semanalysis with "phenomenological intuition" (28) and in Powers of Horror (1980), she writes that her "more straight forward consideration of analytic theory . . . history of religions . . . [and] contemporary literary experience" leads on from her "preliminary survey of abjection, [which is] phenomenological on the whole" (31).

I particularly emphasise connections between Kristevan, Sartrean and Beauvoirian existentialism: Kristevan subjectivity and Sartrean Being, subjective non-specificity and existential nothing, nothingness, or negativity, Kristevan abjection and Sartrean dread, anguish, and nausea, and Kristevan semanalysis, herethics, and existential ethics. Some of these aspects assist in providing a basis for my third major aim, which refers to ascertaining the "usefulness" of Kristevan theory for contemporary feminisms. Speculations on this concern form the basis and substance of the final section of this thesis.

Kristevan theory and some French feminist views

Kristeva's understandings of essential female nature, feminine writing, woman, feminists, and feminism differ greatly from other recent, representative, French feminist views.[1] Firstly, Kristeva recognises the characteristics of masculinity and femininity as human qualities but does not align these categories with human biology. In Tales of Love (1983), she writes of "bisexuality" and androgyny. She asserts that

"bisexuality" "deals with four components, which assume at the start two different relations, male and female, to the Phallus' power" and the androgyne is a "homosexual fantasy . . . not . . . biological makeup" (70). It follows that according to Kristeva, female femininity may only possibly exist in the semiotic. Once the female pre-subject enters the Symbolic, original female femininity becomes the phallic femininity of women or "homosexual" fantasy.

At the same time, Kristeva asserts a theory of feminine writing. Such writing is a product of the phallic femininity of Kristeva's universal (male) human subject. In "Word, Dialogue and Novel" (1966), Kristeva asserts that the feminine (representing residues of an archaic, pre-Oedipal, maternal, space, time, and pleasure) has long been evident in poetic, avant-garde, revolutionary, and *jouissant* texts. She writes that:

> Bakhtin was the first to study this logic, and he looked for its roots in carnival. Carnivalesque discourse breaks through the laws of a language censored by grammar and semantics and, at the same time, is a social and political protest. There is no equivalence, but rather, identity between challenging official linguistic codes and challenging official law. [Kristeva's emphasis] (36)

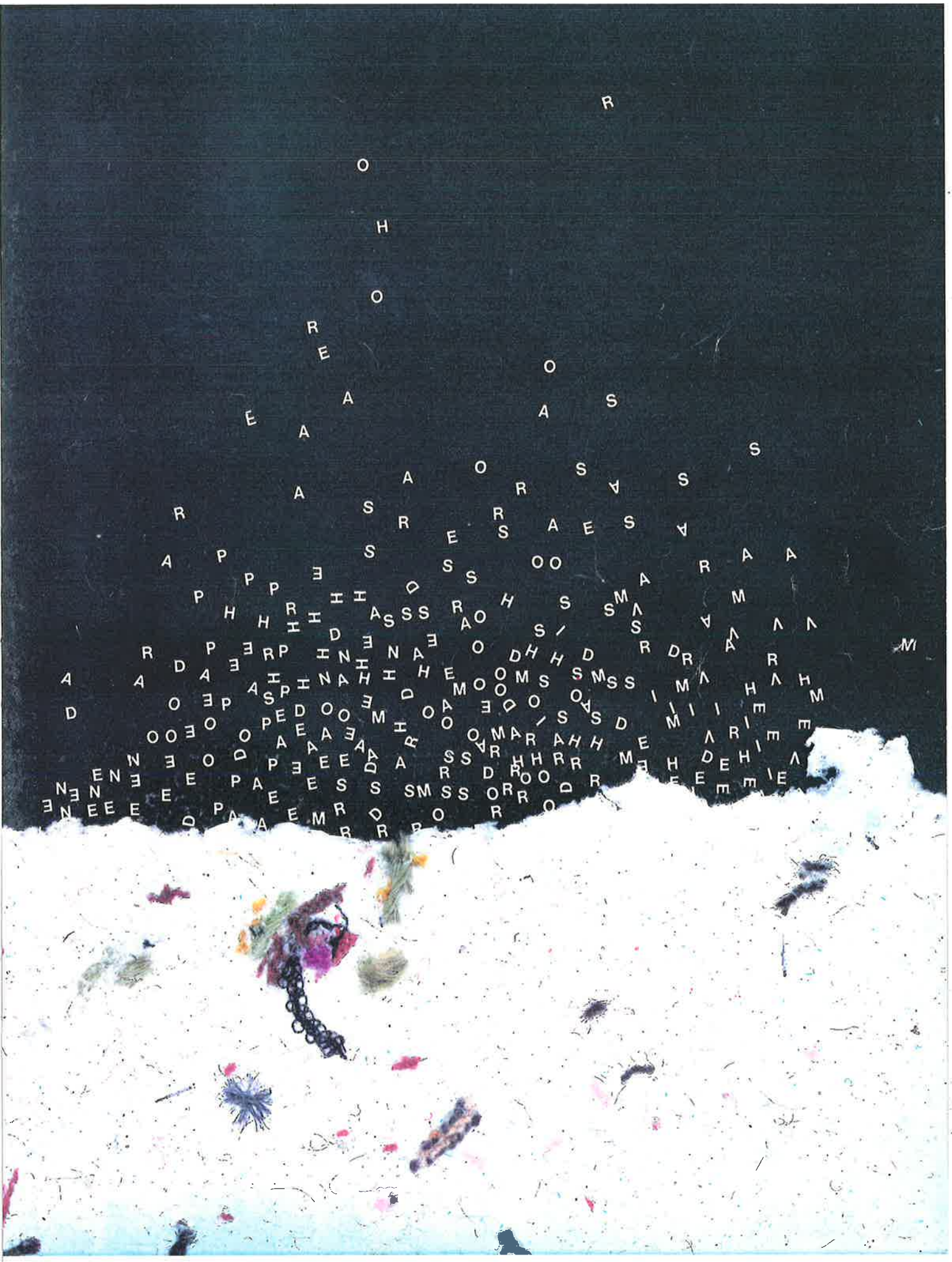
In Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists (1989), Elizabeth Grosz refers to moments when the feminine gains dominance over the Symbolic.[2] She writes that at these times:

> The semiotic explodes in an excessive, uncontrolled *jouissance* of madness (the madness of the psychotic or the fetishist, who refuse the father's law and retain their semiotic, pre-oedipal maternal attachments); of the 'holiness' of transgressive ecstasy (of which Lacan makes St Teresa of Avila the most striking example); and of poetry, which is at its most subversive in the writings of the avant-garde. (52)

1: Semiotic pleasure

"Carnivalesque discourse breaks through the laws of language censored by grammar and semantics and, at the same time, is a social and political protest."

Kristeva, Kristeva Reader (36)



Grosz explains that Kristeva understands feminine writing as potentially revolutionary. It locates the Kristevan (male) avant-garde writer at the centre of his circumstances where he produces texts that challenge, traverse, and transgress present boundaries of "sense," defer meaning, and refuse to "jell" into Symbolic identities. Such texts breach the Symbolic and name or speak the unnameable chora. They signal a language to come in the form of "a politically transgressive discourse that challenges the limits of representation" (51).

Grosz also explains that Kristeva's understandings of male femininity allow a slippage to be effected in which men are positioned as best able to name, speak, represent, and liberate the feminine and maternal in ways that women cannot (82). Kristeva argues that female participation in experimental writing is far too risky an enterprise for women to engage in. In "I Who Want Not to Be" (1974), she writes that certain experimental female writers have been driven to suicide because of the "pressures" of their ideological involvements (156-58). This view is also evident in "Oscillation between Power and Denial" (1974), wherein Kristeva avoids any real consideration of women's cultural products. She asserts that women's writing only manifests in one of two ways: as a reproduction or mime of the author's own "family story" or an imaginary story through which the writer constitutes an identity. Either way, the large majority of women's novels are "hysterical" (negative) manifestations in contrast to the positive and joyous texts of men. Furthermore, women's writing implies a position outside language. It is "the point of view of an asymbolic, spastic body. . . . Estranged from language, women are visionaries, dancers who suffer as they speak" (166).

Kristeva also has idiosyncratic views on maternity, the Mother, woman, feminists, and feminism. In Sexual Subversions, Grosz explains that in "Stabat Mater," Kristeva clearly distinguishes between maternity as experienced by the female subject and motherhood as represented by the archaic, pre-Oedipal Mother. In the first instance, Kristeva divides the subject's maternity into two spaces: the space of gestation

(pregnancy) and the space of subjectivity (motherhood). The space of gestation is understood as both a space and a series of functions and processes. It is not a subject. It is a process without a subject. It involves neither one nor two beings. It is beyond personal agency or identity. It is something that "happens" to women at an organic level. The subject only becomes involved at a nurturing level. At the same time, maternity is also a space of subjectivity for Kristeva. But because she denies any possible female complicity in the maternal circumstance, it follows that maternity cannot be understood as otherwise contributing to definitions of female subjectivity. For instance, Kristeva claims that to see maternity as an act of female will would be to claim a master - the fantasy of the omnipotent, phallic Mother - with whom the subject may psychotically identify. Yet to not emphasise female subjectivity over that of the embryo would be to disallow all subjects anywhere to anchor themselves as beings. Conversely, to affirm the embryo over the subject would be to position the female subject somewhere on the border between nature and culture (as animal and corporeal). Such circumstances are even more confused by lactation and nurturance when female subjectivity is further undermined when the mother's body becomes part object for her child (79).

Thus, Kristeva understands the space of gestation as a place beyond female will and the space of maternal subjectivity as a place where neither female mastery nor origin may be emphasised. In Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia (1987), Kristeva writes that pregnancy may best be understood as a temporary solution to the narcissistic desire for lethal fusion with an other. But again, such fusion is doomed to fail. As the child progressively moves towards autonomy, the mother comes to realise that pregnancy and motherhood may only ever be "a parenthesis within the depression, a new negation of that impossible loss" of the archaic Mother (91). She asserts that women, as potentially melancholy beings, must counter their condition by learning to separate from both their children and analysts and "try to face the void within the meaning that is produced and destroyed in all its connections and all its objects" in order to address the problems of female subjectivity (94). She goes on to

argue that understandings of such female subjectivity may be further informed by other understandings of motherhood as represented by the presence of the archaic Mother in religious discourse.

Kristeva partly explains these relations by means of an examination of Catholic religious traditions. In "Stabat Mater," she asserts that the cult of the Virgin Mary is an attempt to smooth out or cover over the contradictory status and position of motherhood in the Symbolic. For instance, within these traditions a parallel is drawn between Mother and Son. Mary is accredited nobility, given the attributes and paraphernalia of Queen of Heaven and Mother of the Church on earth, and shaped to embody two fundamental aspects of Western love - "courtly love and child love, thus fitting the entire range that goes from sublimation to asceticism and masochism" (164-65).

Kristeva writes that Mary's roles are reflected in her capacity as Mother of the Church on earth. She is imaged as *Maria Regina* from the sixth century and later named *Our Lady.* This latter title is analogous to the earthly power of the noble feudal lady of the medieval courts. She writes that Mary was officially proclaimed Queen by Pope Pius X11 in 1954 and *Mater Ecclesiae* in 1964. At the same time, Mary is described as an "ideal totality that no individual woman could possibly embody." She is the embodiment of humility - humble, self-abnegating, and modest - and a devoted fond mother (170-71). She exhibits sublimation, asceticism, and masochism (177-81).

None of these religious embodiments of maternity are empowering and all are difficult to sustain. Kristeva points out that in the first case, Mary's depictions as Mother of God and Our Lady are entirely dependent on her willing subjection to God. She may only attempt to assume her power by acknowledging God's existence and her own subjection to Him by "stifling that megalomania by putting it on its knees before the child-god" (180). Likewise, "real" women may only aspire to Mary's image by becoming "a nun, a martyr or, if she is married, one who leads a life that would

remove her from the 'earthly' condition" (181). Most women do not choose to do this. They choose to perpetuate the species. In so doing, they maintain Symbolic structures and collaborate with their oppressors and oppression. Mary's embodiment as an "ideal" Symbolic mother is also unsatisfactory. Kristeva writes that she is "A Unique Woman: alone among women, alone among mothers, alone among humans . . . [and her subjectivity] is attained only through an exacerbated masochism" (181). She points out that the virginal myth overlooks mother-daughter relations, lesbianism, and the repudiation of the masculine (183-84).

At the same time, the Church's attribution of powerful roles to Mary suggests recognition of traces of an archaic maternal power beyond Symbolic definition and control. In "Kristeva and the Subject of Ethics" (1988), Dawne McCance refers to "Stabat Mater" as an attempt by Kristeva to "highlight the division of the body in language, and to (re)introduce what has been effaced / repressed from theological-philosophical discourse: the semiotic body, the body which signifies [within the context of some sort of new 'ethics']" (20). The semiotic or maternal body to which Kristeva refers is that of the archaic, pre-Oedipal Mother. In Revolution in Poetic Language (1974), Kristeva writes that the Mother's body may "no longer [be] viewed as an engendering, hollow, and vaginated, expelling and rejecting body, but rather as a vocalic one - throat, voice, and breasts: music, rhythm, prosody" (153).

In "Stabat Mater," Kristeva writes that traces of the Mother remain in every woman's body from the time of pre-subjectivity through to Symbolic insertion. Because Kristeva sees pregnancy as a threshold between culture and nature, and the child's arrival as taking the mother out of her oneness in the granting of her possibility of reaching out to another, she asserts that archaic traces explode violently with pregnancy and paturation (182).

Beyond this, Kristeva writes of Symbolic woman as a metaphysical, blank, and hollow term, to be filled by any content or meaning. Women's practice becomes a

negative reaction against Symbolic existence and women's experience is one which precludes symbolisation, intellectualisation, and reason. In "Interview-1974*" (1974), she writes,

> women cannot be: the category woman is even that which does not fit into being. From there, women's practice can only be negative, in opposition to that which exists, to say that 'this is not it' and 'it is not yet.' What I mean by 'woman' is that which is not represented, that which is unspoken, that which is left out of namings and ideologies. [Kristeva's emphasis] (166)

Kristeva is also hostile to feminists and feminism.[3] In "A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident" (1977), Kristeva writes that women should "stop making feminism into a new religion, undertaking or sect and begin the work of specific and detailed analysis which will take us beyond romantic melodrama and beyond complacency" (298). Her "specific and detailed analysis" does not refer to any alternative female discourse. It refers to the female adoption of negative relations to existing (male) discourse.

In "Women's Time" (1979), Kristeva is especially antagonistic towards radical feminists who she sees as evidencing a "Nazi" mentality and perpetuating the fantasy of the all powerful Mother. She understands radical feminists as participating in a paranoid and separatist politics and aiming to establish an all female society "in which all real or fantasized possibilities for *jouissance* take refuge" (202). In "Julia Kristeva on Femininity: The Limits of a Semiotic Politics" (1984), Ann Rosalind Jones writes that Kristeva is less hostile to other "group orientated" feminists. She simply understands them as compulsive conformists (65).

In Sexual Subversions, Grosz writes that Kristeva locates herself both within and beyond a feminist heritage. She believes her position to be the logical conclusion of prior feminist traditions, an end point of women's struggles. As such, Kristeva fails to adopt any standard feminist position, to seek connections between such positions, or

to produce any internal critiques of them. She also fails to consider the variety of positions held by women and the differences between them (91-97).

Kristeva's understandings of essential female nature, feminine writing, woman, and feminists, differ greatly from other recent, representative, French feminist views. In New French Feminisms (1980), Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron write that from the late '60s and the early '70s, essentialist views of female subjectivity became popular in France. By that time, French women were politically aware and various groups and individuals had come to prominence.[4] One of the most well known of these radical women's groups, commonly called the *Mouvement de Libération des Femmes* (MLF), is referred to variously in the literature as *psychanalyse et politique, politique et psychanalyse* and *psych et po.* This radical group had a particularly high profile from the start and has become the cultural and intellectual centre of the MLF. It still represents French feminist tendencies towards essentialist views of female subjectivity (with an emphasis on the female body) and an accent on women's writing and language (as a key to accessing the female unconscious in order to assert and liberate essential female nature) (30-33).

Hélène Vivienne Wenzel asserts in "The Text as Body / Politics: An Appreciation of Monique Wittig's Writings in Context" (1981), that in the first case, French essentialist feminists tend to emphasise woman as fundamentally "different" from man in respect of some sort of female nature or essence.[5] This unlikeness is usually emphasised in terms of woman's biological variance (breasts, womb, or vagina) and the functions unique to those distinctions (woman as genitrix, daughter, or lover). The superwoman, female genitalia, and reproduction replace the superman, the phallus / penis, and creativity. In the second case, psychoanalysis is incorporated into French feminist theory and practice in order to emphasise discourse, and in particular women's language and writing, as a key to gaining entry to the female unconscious in order to assert and liberate essential female nature (268-73).

Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Monique Wittig are representative of these trends. Cixous and Irigaray use Symbolic language and writing to emphasise female biological variance and discourse. In "Writing the Body: Towards an Understanding of *L'Écriture Féminine*" (1981), Ann Rosalind Jones explains that Cixous associates femininity exclusively with women. She believes that under patriarchy, women's libidinal economy is neither identifiable by a man nor referable to the masculine economy. So, she seeks to liberate her essential femininity by means of her female writing (251). In Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory (1987), Chris Weedon asserts that Cixous focuses on the female physical drives, the female sexual organs, and sexual difference at the point of female sexual pleasure, in order to create a specifically female language and feminine writing (*écriture féminine*) (66-68).

Cixous' project is clearly based in a belief in the importance of the word and its potentially subversive qualities. In "Language and Revolution: The Franco-American Disconnection" (1988), Domna C. Stanton translates from *"Le Sexe ou la tête?"* (1976) wherein Cixous writes:

> Everything is word, everything is only word . . . we must grab culture by the word, as it seizes us in its word, in its language. . . . Indeed, as soon as we are, we are born into language and language speaks us, language dictates its law, which is a law of death . . . you will thus understand why I believe that political thought cannot do without thought on language, work on language. (73)

In "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1975), Cixous differentiates between speech and writing. She asserts that whereas speech (*parole*) is inevitably implicated in the dominant system of discourse, writing allows for the possibility of change. It serves as a springboard to subversion, which in turn leads to the transformation of social and cultural structures (879). She understands feminine writing as particularly revolutionary. It allows women's

> shattering entry into history, which has always been based on her

> suppression. To write and thus to forge for herself the antilogos weapon. To become at will the taker and initiator, for her own right, in every symbolic system, in every political process. [Cixous' emphasis] (880)

She asserts feminine writing will allow women many things including "her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal" and cause volcanic effects in the Symbolic (880). Cixous warns: "Let the priests tremble, we're going to show them our sexts!" (885).

Cixous' position is comparable to that of Irigaray. In "Writing the Body," Jones asserts that Irigaray also emphasises a previously unknown or unrepresented female specificity. Irigaray suggests that women may actively seek out this quality by taking up a multifarious sexuality and a contradictory and scattered language (presumed different from man's centred and "gridded" sexuality and his coded language) and use these as a starting point for articulating a female self-consciousness which has previously been absent or misrepresented in male discourse. Irigaray sees this female self-consciousness as locatable within a marxist political framework (249-50). As such, she differs from Cixous to the extent that she advocates an active feminist engagement with Symbolic systems and structures whereas Cixous evidences a desire for withdrawal from them or an apparent disinterest in them.

Wittig's views on essential female subjectivity and feminine writing seem more important than those of Cixous or Irigaray. Wittig's theory goes far beyond the work of either of her contemporaries. In "The Mark of Gender" (1985), she clarifies her belief that there is no reality outside the Symbolic. This leads her to use prior (male) models such as language in order to expose inherent limitations and destructiveness, clarify needs for sexual separatism, deconstruct / reconstruct language, construct possible models of woman (after the war), and articulate a material reality for women beyond linguistic experimentation (76-89).

Marks and de Courtivron explain in New French Feminisms, that Wittig was spokesperson for the radical association *Féministes révolutionnaires* for some time after its formation in October 1970. This group was devoted to the total destruction of the patriarchal order and had separatist tendencies from the beginning. The lesbians among its members were convinced that only a lesbian position could withstand appropriation by outside influences (33).

Wittig's position is clear in her search for a possible female language and alternative utopian visions of female and feminist lives and futures. Her quest for a possible female language may be seen in her alteration of language in a conscious and controlled way in Lesbian Peoples: Material for a Dictionary (1975). In this text, Wittig and co-author Sande Zieg seek to redefine words of particular relevance to women. A typical example of this is "Kaolin: A sort of white clay. Some amazons used it to make white mud masks. When they advanced during battle, their faces thus hidden, it was impossible to differentiate one from another" (90). Wittig's search for alternative utopian visions of female and feminist lives and futures is clear in *Les Guérillères*. This text and Wittig's quest is considered in Section Three (see pp. 107-08 below).

Kristevan theory and Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis

Kristeva's ontology also refers to Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. This is especially clear from readings of Kristeva's text Revolution in Poetic Language and Grosz's secondary text Sexual Subversions. It becomes evident that Kristeva's understandings of psychoanalytic and related terms and concepts such as the Symbolic, semiotic, True-Real, imaginary Mirror stage, Oedipus complex, castration threat,[6] abjection, and *jouissance* are idiosyncratic. I consider Kristevan abjection more fully in terms of existential dread, anguish, and nausea (see pp. 33-38 below).

In Revolution in Poetic Language, Kristeva conceptualises the Symbolic as the centre of human subjectivity. In Sexual Subversions, Grosz writes that Kristeva uses the term Symbolic in three senses which are based in, but different from Lacan's usage. She uses it to refer to the organisation of the social order regulated by paternal authority, to the order of language organised with reference to the speaking subject, and to the structuration of the unconscious by the Symbolic to repress incestual, pre-Oedipal love relations (xxii-xxiii).

In The Kristeva Reader (1986), Toril Moi (ed.) writes that Kristeva understands the Symbolic as allowing women no choice but to either identify with the Mother (this renders them marginal to the Symbolic) or identify with the Father (this requires women sacrifice both their maternal and personal bodies). Kristeva concludes that women should allow their insertion in the Symbolic while refusing the masculine model of femininity which is offered there. Not to do so would render women beyond the Law. Kristeva argues that the ambiguity of this circumstance for women may lead to suicide, as a possible response, in some female writers (138-39).

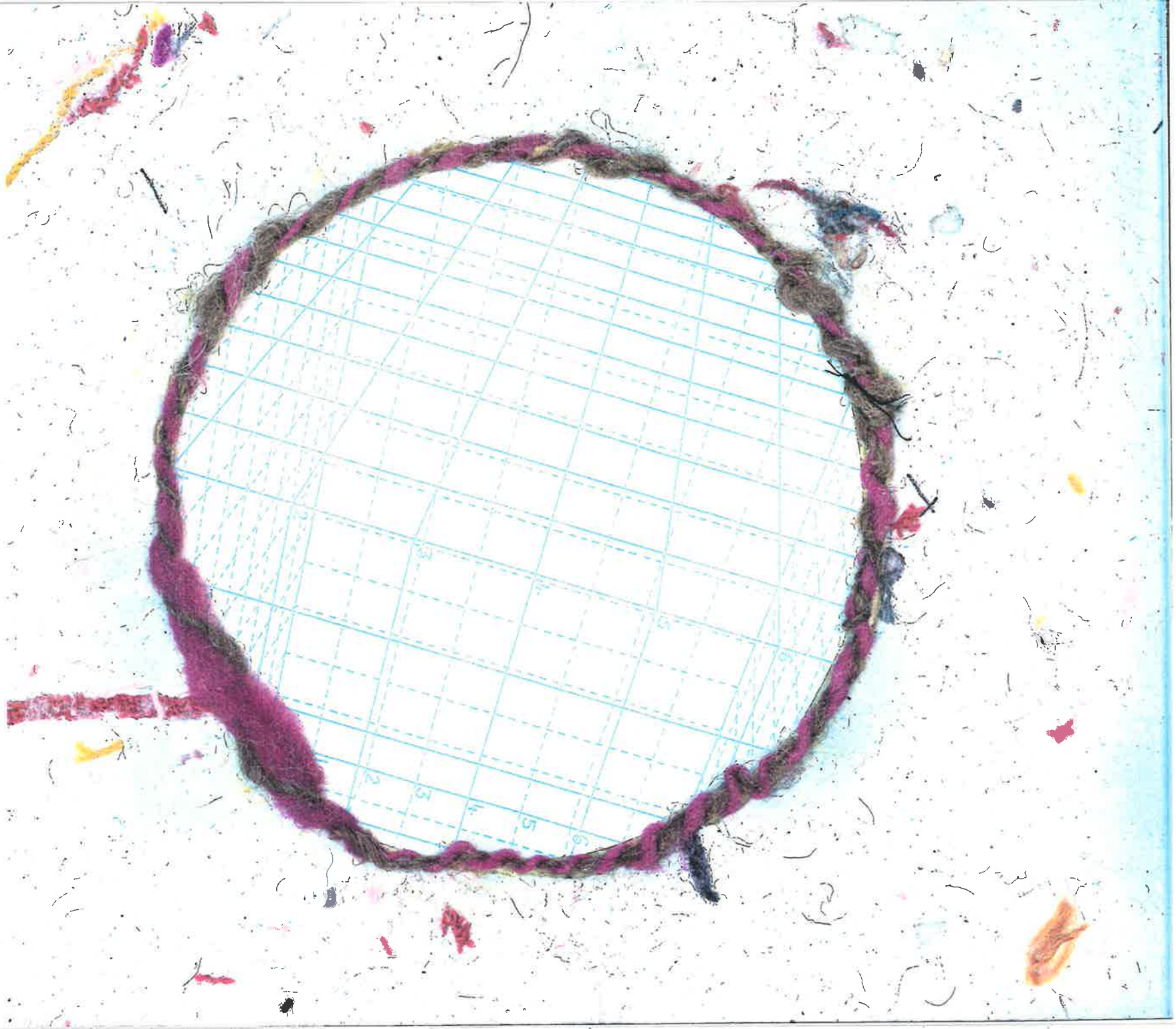
Kristeva examines semiotic alternatives in Revolution in Poetic Language. In this text, she writes that the semiotic is a pre-signifying energy comprising the "distinctive mark, trace, index, precursory sign, proof, engraved or written sign, imprint, trace, figuration" (25). Grosz embellishes this description in Sexual Subversions. She writes that it comprises formless, circulating energies associated with the female, feminine, and the maternal. These animate the pre-subject's movements and map out a space for the future subject to occupy. They divide and fragment at the same time that they organise the body in terms of erotogenic zones and pauses in a series of temporary stases and fixations of the drives (43-44). In other words, the semiotic represents both a threat to Symbolic order and the "unformed raw materials" before and beyond unity, logic, coherence, and stability as provided by the Symbolic and the Oedipal (xxi).

2: The semiotic, thetic, and Symbolic

The semiotic is the "distinctive mark, trace, index, precursory sign, proof, engraved or written sign, imprint, trace, figuration."
Kristeva, Kristeva Reader (93)

"We shall distinguish the semiotic (drives and their articulations) from the realm of signification, which is always that of a proposition or judgement, in other words, a realm of positions. This positionality . . . is structured as a break in the signifying process, establishing the *identification* of the subject and its object as preconditions of propositionality. We shall call this break, which produces the positioning of signification, a thetic phase."
[Kristeva's emphasis]
Kristeva Reader (98)

The Symbolic comprises "vertical stratification (referent, signified, signifier) and all the subsequent modalities of logico-semantic articulation."
Kristeva Reader (113)



In "The Subject in Signifying Practice" (1974), Kristeva theorises the development of the pre-subject at an unfixed location within the semiotic inside a pre-Symbolic womb called the chora (21-24). In Revolution in Poetic Language, she writes that although this cannot really be conceptualised, the pre-subject (comprising an endless flow and pulsion of the drives) is gathered up and contained in the semiotic by this container or receptacle. This chora is neither a sign, signifier, nor position. It is both rupture and rhythm, preceding verisimilitude, evidence, time, and space. It is ununified but nevertheless subject to some regulation. She writes that this regulation is different from that which operates in the Symbolic because the chora is subject to "a regulating process . . . which is different from that of symbolic law but nevertheless effectuates discontinuities by temporarily articulating them and then starting over, again and again" (26).

In "Julia Kristeva on Femininity," Jones writes that once the pre-subject begins to recognise itself as a sign, it leaves the chora and begins its passage out of the semiotic and into the Symbolic. She points out that Kristeva draws an analogy between this passage and the anthropological concept of the passage from nature to culture and sets up an analogy between psychic and political repression in which the "anarchy" of pre-Oedipal Mother / child relations is put down by the social discipline required by the Symbolic (57-58).

In Sexual Subversions, Grosz clarifies that this passage or boundary over which the pre-subject moves is called the thetic. She writes that the thetic is located in the semiotic and functions as a threshold or border between Symbolic structures and semiotic chaos. It comprises the imaginary Mirror stage, the Oedipus complex, and the castration threat. As such, it posits a unity and an organisation in the subject and constrains the drives. It manages and structures the chora, constitutes the limits, forms and contours of the drives, orders their circulation, and redefines and renegotiates relations with the imaginary (45-47).

3: The pre-subject in the chora

"the semiotic chora is no more than the place where the subject is both generated and negated, the place where his unity succumbs before the process of charges and stases that produce him." [Kristeva's emphasis]

Kristeva Reader (95)

For Kristeva, the imaginary Mirror stage constitutes the subject as both a separate and distinct identity and a reflection of it mirror / Mother / other. In Tales of Love, Kristeva writes that the subject's first separate and distinct identity is built in a space where there was previously only emptiness - a semiotic space in which there is no differentiation and no form. The pre-subject cannot hope to fill such a void. She writes that it is, "Who? What? The question has no answer other than the one that uncovers narcissistic emptiness: 'At any rate, not I'" (41).

Then, the Oedipus complex and the castration threat open the pre-subject up to the generation of signs. At this time, the subject is separated from the immediacy of its lived experiences and its identificatory investments in images. It begins to differentiate between signifiers and signifieds, and the self and world, in the larger process of its distinguishing between images and objects, and the substitution of these as symbols for lived experience. Once lived experience is replaced by representations, the subject's identity is restructured in terms of coherence, meaning, and sociality. Kristeva writes that "the question is no longer 'Who is it?' but 'Who has it?'; the narcissistic question 'Am I?' becomes a possessive or attributive question, 'Have I' [the phallus]?" [Kristeva's emphasis] (47).

In asking such questions, the subject is rejecting previous associations with the Mother and the maternal body and accepting the world of language and communication. In so doing, it constructs a conscious "I" which exists only in language. There is also another "I" producing language. In "Exposition and Critique of Julia Kristeva" (1976), Allan White writes that "it is only in language that the 'I' exists; but this 'I' is not exhaustive of the subject who is producing the language" (13). In other words, there are always two "I's." The one in language or the subject of what is said and the one who produces language or the subject who speaks. This means that the subject is always unstable and divided. It is never guaranteed or secure in its subjectivity. As the conscious speaking subject exists in the Symbolic, it acts as

4: The thetic comprising the imaginary Mirror Stage, the Oedipus complex, and the castration threat

"we find the thetic phase of the signifying process, around which signification is organized, at two points: the mirror stage and the 'discovery' of castration."
Kristeva, Kristeva Reader (100)

a medium for the release of other instinctive, unconscious, semiotic energies which are directed into and against the Symbolic. In "The True-Real" (1979), Kristeva asserts that these energies manifest in moments of "madness, mysticism or poetry" [Kristeva's emphasis] (217).

Furthermore, Kristeva understands these aspects as products of the True-Real. In "The True-Real," she builds on Lacan's understanding that not everything may be captured, represented, or expressed by Symbolic or imaginary means. There is "something else" that eludes capture, representation, or expression. This "something else" is a region of subjective "reality" beyond Symbolic Law. In this space, subjects may connect with their "true" Being. Kristeva calls this space and experience of this connection, the True-Real. This True-Real is outside of what is accepted as intelligible and plausible by the Symbolic (216-17).

It enters the Symbolic by means of the discourses of some subjects in forms which include hallucinations, meaningless phrases, and hysterical outbursts. These aspects are *jouissant* and relate to the emergence of the feminine in language, texts, and subjectivity. In Black Sun, Kristeva locates two types of female *jouissance*. She writes of a phallic *jouissance* in which there is a "competing or identifying with the partner's symbolic power - which mobilizes the clitoris" (78). The other *jouissance* is something "that fantasy imagines and carries out by aiming more deeply at psychic space, and the space of the body as well" (78). This other *jouissance* requires the liquefaction of the object blocking the psychic and bodily interior of the female subject. This object is the Mother imprisoned within the subject. She may be killed off by an imagined partner who provides what, and more than, the Mother may provide. This act of killing off the death-bearing Mother within the female subject endows man with the appeal of a life-giver, someone who is the same, yet "more-than-a-Mother" (79). Man does not become a phallic Mother, he becomes a restoration of the Mother by means of phallic violence. He destroys the negative and bestows the positive including

> vaginal jouissance . . . symbolically dependent . . . on a relation to the Other no longer imagined as part of a phallic outbidding, but as an invigorator of the narcissistic object and able to insure its outward displacement. . . . [Kristeva's emphasis] (78-79)

Kristeva adds that the outer loss of such an erotic object often causes women to experience an inner void. Depressive behaviour may develop on the basis of and within such a void. This may lead women to symbolically kill themselves or actually or symbolically "kill" their rivals in a variety of ways. In the first case, women may fill their lives with meaningless activity. In the second case, the desire to cause an other's death may be understood "as a sexual desire to joy in her rival or to give her jouissance" (82). As the depressive act avoids carrying out this perverse behaviour, "it hollows out the painful psyche and stands in the way of experienced sex as shameful" (82). Kristeva asserts that by revealing the (homosexual) secret behind the depressive response that causes the melancholy person to live with death, psychoanalysis helps to both reconstruct subjective psychic space and allows the integration of loss as both signifiable as well as erogenetic. Then, separation no longer appears as a threat to subjective wholeness. It becomes a step on the way to the construction of new and other conflicting meanings / non-meanings of subjectivity (83).

Kristevan thought is clearly different from other representative psychoanalytic views. For instance, in On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works (1905-31), Freud asserts that individuals are sexual beings from birth. Such sexuality is neither masculine nor feminine. It is "bisexual" or "polymorphously peverse." "Normal" masculinity or femininity (or neither) is achieved in the first five years of the infant's life as the child represses elements of its sexuality which are incompatible with its specific biology. This leads to the assumption of a conscious and unconscious gender identity (109-10, 159). Freud understands the Oedipus complex and the castration threat as of major importance in this process.

At the time of this crisis, boys and girls have different experiences. Boys both desire their mothers and recognise the lack of a penis in females. They correlate these aspects and fear that their desires will lead to their own castration. This leads boys not to compete with their fathers for the sexual possession of their mothers. Instead, they identify with their fathers' position and postpone sexual gratification for later. This leads them to develop a strong super-ego (340-43).

In contrast, girls supposedly love their mothers but blame them for not providing them with a "superior" sexual organ (a penis). They also recognise that they are already "castrated" (like their mothers). This leads them to feel disgust for their mothers and turn toward their fathers as love objects and the promise of future satisfaction through the bearing of male children. Babies come to represent girls' sublimated desires for the missing penis. Girls who do not experience this process, as described by Freud, are labelled by him as neurotic, often frigid, or prone to returning to, or becoming fixated in a "masculinity complex" (340-43).

Freud's theory positions the penis as central to all forms of human sexuality. It sketches the penis as desirable to both boys and girls and constructs masculinity as a "norm" against which sexual difference is measured. Boys supposedly feel either horror at female "lack" or a triumphant contemptuousness towards females. Conversely, girls supposedly develop penis envy which results in either a "masculinity complex" or feelings of female inferiority. Whereas the shock of the castration threat obliterates the Oedipus complex for boys, girls believe themselves to be already castrated and so have nothing more to fear. This leads them to slowly abandon or repress the Oedipus complex - or its effects may persist into "normal" adult life (336-37, 342).

Freudian theory clearly suggests much repression and negativity. In Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory, Weedon writes of Freud's "linguistic techniques of free association, hypnosis and the analysis of dreams, fantasies and parapraxes

(jokes, slips of the tongue, temporary forgetfulness)" aimed at liberating the unconscious (45). In "On the Warpath and Beyond: Hegel, Freud and Feminist theory" (1983), Jo-Ann Pilardi Fuchs sums up Freud's understandings of negativity.[7] She writes that Freudian theory evidences a dualistic view of the death and life drives. Freud names the death drive "thanatos" and in Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920), he asserts that this co-exists within the psyche with an erotic or life instinct called "eros." In Civilization and its Discontents (1930), he claims that thanatos hinders the unification of humanity and the "family." Earlier in Totem and Taboo (1913), he concludes that as long as society is structured around the "traditional" family model, negative drives will be a consequence of guilt fostered by the Oedipus complex (567-68).

Lacan reads Freudian theory in order to re-theorise the imaginary Mirror stage and conscious / unconscious relations in the broader project of rethinking human subjectivity. His views are especially important to understanding aspects of Kristevan thought, in particular, notions of thetic (comprising the imaginary Mirror stage, the Oedipus complex, and the castration threat). In *Écrits*: A Selection (1977) from the larger volume *Écrits* (1966), Lacan elaborates the imaginary Mirror stage as beginning a process through which the child gains gendered subjectivity and a place in the Symbolic. He asserts that this process begins from the age of six months and retains the meaning given to it up to the age of eighteen months. During this time, the infant experiences its first fragile sense of self or ego. However, this subjectivity is not experienced as something unique or distinct from other subjects in the world. At the same time that the infant is struggling to establish its subjectivity, it begins to recognise images and relate itself to them. This leads the subject to feel fragmented (1-7).

This fragmentation manifests in two ways. In Feminist Practise and Poststructuralist Theory, Weedon explains that in Lacan's appropriation of Freudian theory, the child observes the movement of its own mirror image and its reflected environment. It sees

a unified, bounded, mirror image but "feels" split. The unity and control which the child's identification with its mirror image brings is imaginary. There is a splitting of the child's ego into an "I" which is watching and an "I" which is watched. Then, after the resolution of the Oedipus complex and the castration threat, and the child's entry into the Symbolic, this ego is split a second time. The child misrecognises itself and its utterances as one and assumes itself to be the author of meaning. There is a split is between the "I" which speaks and the "I" which is represented in utterance (52). The subject seeks to "heal" these apparent disparities.

However, "healing" is not entirely possible. As Weedon points out in Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory, the desire for control through possession necessarily involves the subject's identification with the position of the Father as symbolically represented by the phallus. She writes that this is impossible as no one may control desire since no one may occupy the position of other and become the source of language (53). On the other hand, as Grosz observes in Sexual Subversions, Lacan recognises the mirror / Mother / other within the unconscious and manifesting in the incoherencies, gaps, and flaws in conscious expression. Then, he develops a primarily linguistic, semiological method of deciphering psychical symptoms in order to gain more direct access to subjective reality, capacities to know, and aspirations to objectivity (24-25).

Kristevan theory and existential philosophy

Kristevan existentialism seems most clear in particular areas of consideration. In this section, I examine Kristevan subjectivity and Sartrean Being, semiotic non-specificity and existential nothing, nothingness, or negativity, Kristevan abjection and Sartrean dread, anguish, and nausea, and Kristevan semanalysis, herethics, and existential ethics. This allows the location of Kristevan thought specifically within the theoretical parameters of existential philosophy.[8]

Kristevan subjectivity and Sartrean Being

The ongoing struggles of the Kristevan subject, between semiotic and Symbolic aspects as already described (see pp. 16-26 above), recall and are probably informed by Hegel's earlier understandings of master / slave relations.[9] Grosz explains in Sexual Subversions that in Alexandre Kojeve's 1933-39 lectures on Hegel, preserved in the posthumously published text Introduction to the Reading of Hegel (1969), The Phenomenology of Spirit (1807) is read as "an account of the dialectical unfolding of a history that is the consequence of the slave's supercession of his (physical, conceptual and social) slavery" (2-3).[10]

Grosz writes that according to Kojeve, from time to time, slaves rise up against masters in order to affirm self-consciousness. Masters respond to this and Kojeve sees ensuing battles as productive in that they allow for development and change to become possible and "history" to begin. However, unhappy struggles are ironically doomed to continuation as self-consciousness always needs objective confirmation of itself by way of the complicity of a (similar) other. If the master "wins," the slave is either obliterated, and the master is positioned as without any possibility of achieving any recognition or satisfaction from the slave, or the slave is reduced to the status of an object or "thing," whose recognition cannot be valued by its other. If the slave wins, the subject's position is simply reversed (3-4).

This reading suggests ways in which Kristevan theory may be clarified. For instance, the Symbolic may be understood as a master aspect and the semiotic may be understood as a slave aspect. Symbolic Law maintains Symbolic speaking subjectivity while semiotic aspects rise up against containment but are in turn controlled by means of repression. Kristeva refers to this circumstance as the continuing "process" or "trial" of subjectivity. In Introduction (1980), Leon S. Roudiez writes of Kristeva's understandings of "process" as rendering

nuances according to the context, either by using the word 'process' alone or qualifying it with either or both 'unsettling' and 'questionable' - especially when the subject is in 'process.' For the subject is 'questionable' (in the legal sense) as to its identity, and the process it undergoes is 'unsettling' as to its place within the semiotic or symbolic disposition. (17)

Sartre and Beauvoir also describe the "unsettling" and "questionable" nature of human subjectivity. In Being and Nothingness, Sartre writes of the conscious speaking subject as being torn between consciousness (Being-for-itself) and body (Being-in-itself). These extremes are separated by nothing, nothingness, or negativity. Tensions between Being and nothingness cause anguish which results in the Real. The price of this Real (anguish) derives from a consciousness of Being in which the subject understands itself as not measuring up to its own good ideals "not to be the past of good resolutions which I am" [Sartre's emphasis] (69-70). Anguish then becomes "the recognition of a possibility as my possibility . . . [which] remains out of my reach" [Sartre's emphasis] (73).

Likewise, in The Second Sex (1949), Beauvoir writes of the "unsettling" and "questionable" nature of female subjectivity in terms of struggles between immanence and an otherness or "moreness." She asserts: "Woman has ovaries, a uterus: these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature" (15). In the same text, she writes that women should not be confined to the traditional relations that they have had with men. She asserts "let her have her independent existence . . . mutually recognising each other as subject" (740-41). In "Simone de Beauvoir: philosophy and / or the female body" (1986), Catriona Mackenzie expands this latter point. She writes of Beauvoir's understandings of female subjects' struggles against historical, social, and cultural construction and her attempts to demystify the connection between women and reproduction and related distinctions such as the dualisms male / female, rationality / irrationality, and "man" / nature through an analysis of male myths about women (151-52).

Kristevan subjective non-specificity and existential nothing, nothingness, and negativity

The Kristevan pre-subject is clearly non-specific. Its non-specificity leads it to feel both abject and deject. In Tales of Love, Kristeva writes of "the one by whom the abject exists" as a "deject." The deject asks "Where am I?" instead of "Who am I?" (8). In so doing, the deject stresses "territories, languages, works . . . demarking his universe whose fluid confines . . . constantly question his solidity" (8).

Kristeva understands such subjectivity as desirable. In Tales of Love, she suggests that analysts should aim to help analysands

> remain floating, empty at times, inauthentic, obviously lying. . . . [Then] subjects might be able] to speak and write themselves in unstable, open, undecidable spaces. . . . [In time, such a vision will] actualize the seeming, the imagination. . . . [She adds] I speak in favour of imagination . . . [of] saturating powers and counterpowers with imaginary constructions - phantasmatic, daring, violent, critical, demanding, shy. . . . Imagination succeeds where the narcissist becomes hollowed out and the paranoid fails. (380-81)

Such an approach will supposedly help analysands come to terms with that which Kristeva refers to in Powers of Horror as the subject's "gouged out eye, the wound, the basic incompleteness that conditions the indefinite quest of signifying concatenations. That amounts to joying in the truth of self division (abjection / sacred)" (89).

In "Julia Kristeva on Femininity," Jones argues against such subjectivity as antagonistic to broader feminist projects. She criticises Kristeva as proposing the individual solution as the solution to all lack wherein

> the solitary poet [is] locked in struggle against language as law, the post-feminist 'woman' [is] loosing her energies in a gender-erasing bacchanale of language play, and - most recently - the analysand [is] constructing a sustaining self-image through a long, private cure. (66)

Jones concludes this is not compatible with feminist understandings that social formations and psychic relations are inseparably linked and that the division of political fact from "private" life has been one of the illusions that has historically disqualified women from power (70).

Sartre considers comparable aspects in terms of the nothing, nothingness, and negativity of non-Being. In Key to Special Terminology (1966), Hazel E. Barnes distinguishes between these terms. She asserts: "Nothingness does not itself have Being, yet it is supported by Being. It comes into the world by the For-itself and is the recoil from fullness of self contained Being which allows consciousness to exist as such" (804). In contrast, *négatité* is: "Sartre's word for types of human activity which while not obviously involving a negative judgement nevertheless contain negativity as an integral part of their structure: *e.g.,* experiences involving absence, change, interrogation, destruction" (804).

Nothing, nothingness, and negativity all relate to non-Being. In Being and Nothingness, Sartre asserts that "we are immediately tempted to consider being and non-being as two complementary components of the real - like dark and light" (44). He sees these components as mutually dependant in order that each might exist. He writes that:

> Nothingness carries being in its heart. . . . [And] whatever may be the original undifferentiation of being, non-being is that same undifferentiation denied. . . . [While] being is prior to nothingness and establishes the ground for it . . . it is from being that nothingness derives concretely its efficacy. [Sartre's emphasis] (52, 47-49)

Heidegger writes of similar concerns in terms of the categories of inauthenticity and authenticity. In Language and "the Feminine" in Nietzsche and Heidegger (1990), Jean Graybeal explains that in Being and Time (1927), Heidegger equates inauthenticity with immersion in the Symbolic mode of language and authenticity with the "call" of the semiotic dimension.[11] Then, he associates authenticity with the maternal, erotic, and *jouissant* (3). Graybeal writes that Heidegger seeks the Mother, Source, or Origin of being in language and the word as a means to accessing some sort of paradoxical exultation or *jouissance* in the sway of the Mother of language. She quotes from a collection of his works called Poetry, Language, Thought (1959): "If we let ourselves fall into the abyss . . . we do not go tumbling into emptiness. We fall upwards, to a height" (130-35, 150).

Kristeva observes Heidegger's predispositions. In Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art (1980), she writes of Heidegger's

> attentiveness to language and 'poetic language' as an opening up of beings; as an openness that is checked but nonetheless occurs; as a struggle between world and earth; artistic creations are all conceived in the image of poetic language where the 'Being' of 'beings' is fulfilled and on which, as a consequence, 'History' is grounded. . . . (25)

Graybeal also writes of Nietzsche's linking of the feminine (semiotic) with the processes of becoming, to opening up limited subjectivity to more complex states of Being by means of new and different usages of language. She writes that in The Gay Science (1882), Nietzsche turns to alternative modes of language and speech in order to articulate "the ecstasy of becoming, a being on the edge, the edge of oneself, of the other, of one's fantasized or projected other, and always of language itself" (39).

Graybeal asserts that this quest for a language and speech that may be heard and understood in the modern world may also be found in Thus Spake Zarathustra (1892) and that this text is less a misogynistic diatribe against women than "an extended

5: Nietzsche's, Heidegger's, and Kristeva's suspension over an abyss

"it seems to me that Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Kristeva all have something to contribute to an analysis of our contemporary religious situation. . . . Remaining in a difficult and painful awareness of the modern situation of suspension over an abyss, they all are drawn by the possibility of a *jouissance* that would do something other with the human drive for meaning than turn it into another 'religion.' Kristeva has shown how this drive for *jouissance* is correlated with the 'feminine' dimension of language."

Graybeal, Language and "the Feminine" (4)

meditation on the relation between silence and saying, between vision and verbalization, between despair or disgust over the inadequacy of language and the exultation of liberated poetic flight" (40).[12]

Kristevan abjection and Sartrean dread, anguish, and nausea

It is clear that both the Kristevan and Sartrean subjects experience various negative feelings as an accompaniment of their struggling, non-specific subjectivities. Kristeva calls these negative feelings abjection in Powers of Horror and Sartre calls them dread, anguish, and nausea in Being and Nothingness. In Powers of Horror, Kristeva locates three forms of abjection, related to food, waste, and sexual difference. These roughly correspond to oral, anal, and genital forms of sexuality (2-4, 26, 71). Understanding these abjects requires an examination of relations between the inside and outside of the body, the spaces between the self and the other, and the means by which the subject's body becomes a bounded and unified whole. The subject's reaction to these abjects is usually expressed in terms of gagging, spasms, choking, and vomiting (2, 3, 25, 45). Kristeva writes that at such times, these reactions do "not separate inside from outside but draws them the one into the other indefinitely" (25).

Kristeva understands the abjection of food as indicating a rejection of parental, maternal, and the female self as it is presently constituted by society. In Powers of Horror, she writes that "since the food is not an 'other' for 'me' who am only in their desire, I expel myself, I spit *myself* out, I abject myself within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish myself" [Kristeva's emphasis] (3).

According to Kristeva, all subjects have two possible options relating to their circumstances. The subject may abject food / life even before it is, or bracket fear and "ceaselessly confront that otherness, a burden both repellent and repelled, a deep well of memory that is unapproachable and intimate: the abject" (6).

Kristeva's second form of abjection relates to waste. The most extreme example of waste is the corpse, from which the subject is expelled in death. The corpse represents the limits of life and death and undermines notions of solidarity, stability, and self-certainty. In Powers of Horror, Kristeva writes that death is: "An 'I' overcome by the corpse . . . [and] it is death that most violently represents the strange state in which a non-subject, a stray, having lost its non-objects, imagines nothingness through the ordeal of abjection" (25). At the same time, a certain "death" is necessary in order that the subject may assume a stable enunciative position. Kristeva writes "'I' am in the process of becoming an other at the expense of my own death" (3).

Kristeva's third form of abjection relates to sexual difference. Sexual difference threatens the ego from within. The "horror" of menstruation is related to this. This may be seen in Kristeva's account of the social constitution of disgust for the human body in terms of the menstrual "pollution" of the female body. Her explorations imply the social significance of menstruation rather than any essential "horror." In Powers of Horror, she writes that "polluting objects fall, schematically, into two types: excremental and menstrual" (71). She asserts that whereas tears and sperm do not have any polluting value,

> [m]enstrual blood, on the contrary, stands for the danger issuing from within the identity (social or sexual); it threatens the relationship between the sexes within a social aggregate and, through internalization, the identity of each sex in the face of sexual difference. (71)

In Sexual Subversions, Grosz points out that menstrual blood represents a refusal of the link between the mother and the foetus. It is a border between two existences which are neither the same, nor separate from one another. As such, it does not emphasise sexual difference so much as the difference between men and mothers. It links women into maternity without acknowledging women's sexual specificity, a residual femininity which is not represented by maternity (76).

6: Abjection beyond structuration

Abjection is caused by that which "disturbs identity, system order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite." Kristeva, Powers of Horror (4)

Sartrean dread is elaborated in terms of subjective anguish and nausea. In Key to Special Terminology, Barnes distinguishes between these terms. She writes that anguish is:

> The reflective apprehension of the Self as freedom, the realization that a nothingness slips in between my Self and my past and future so that nothing relieves me from the necessity of continually choosing myself and nothing guarantees the validity of the values which I choose. Fear is of something in the world, anguish is anguish before myself (as in Kierkegaard). (799-800)

She writes that Sartrean nausea is:

> The 'taste' of the facticity and contingency of existence. 'A dull and inescapable nausea perpetually reveals my body to my consciousness.' On the ground of this fundamental nausea are produced all concrete, empirical nauseas (caused by spoiled meat, excrement, *etc.*). (804)

In Being and Nothingness, Sartre describes anguish as a product of the subject engaging in making choices, affirming old or new purposes and projects, at the cost of other choices. This supposedly leads the subject to experience overwhelming feelings of self-loss or anguish, or engage in bad-faith. He writes:

> consciousness continually experiences itself as the nihilation of its past being . . . it is in anguish that freedom is. . . . Anguish in fact is the recognition of a possibility as my possibility. . . . I can make myself guilty of bad faith while apprehending the anguish which I am, and this bad faith, intended to fill up the nothingness which I am in my relation to myself, precisely implies the nothingness which it suppresses. [Sartre's emphasis] (64-65, 73, 83)

Sartrean nausea refers to female corporeality. In Being and Nothingness, Sartre distinguishes between three possible modes of Being comprising Being-in-itself (given or fixed nature), Being-for-itself (subjective awareness), and Being-for-others (social and interpersonal identity). Of these three modes, Sartre privileges Being-for-itself or

consciousness and associates this with men. He suggests that woman has a fixed nature, determined by her anatomy, which limits her to the inferior state of Being-in-itself. Sartre calls the engulfment of Being-for-itself by Being-in-itself, the "slimy" (776).

Sartre describes the "slimy" as a particularly horrifying, soft, clinging, leach-like, docile, and threatening aspect. He writes at the very moment that the For-itself asserts primacy over the In-itself, there is a reversal of terms. The For-itself is compromised. He writes:

> I open my hands, I want to let go of the slimy and it sticks to me, it draws me, it sucks at me. . . . It is a soft, yielding action, a moist and feminine sucking. . . . I sense it like a dizziness; it draws me to it as the bottom of a precipice might draw me. . . . I am no longer the master in arresting the process of appropriation. . . . Here we can see the symbol which abruptly discloses itself: there exists a poisonous possession; there is a possibility that the In-itself might absorb the For-itself. . . . [Sartre's emphasis] (776)

In "Holes and Slime: Sexism in Sartre's Psychoanalysis" (1976), Margery L. Collins and Christine Pierce clarify links between sliminess, holes, and the female sexual organs in Sartre's work. They conclude that it is women's anatomy, not any characteristic female qualities, that constitutes the greatest threat to male subjectivity (the For-itself) in Sartrean theory (319-22). In Being and Nothingness, Sartre writes of the female sexual organs as obscene and suggests that they are inferior to male sexual organs. He asserts: "The obscenity of the feminine sex is that of everything which 'gapes open.' It is an appeal to being as all holes are. . . . [And] woman senses her condition as an appeal precisely because she is 'in the form of a hole'" [Sartre's emphasis] (782).

Beauvoir elaborates a comparable view of female subjectivity in The Second Sex. In this text, she writes of the female body as "different" from the male body. It is passive,

ambiguous, mysterious, secret, and distasteful. She associates woman with "the carnivorous plant, the bog, in which insects and children are swallowed up" (407). At the same time, she notes a certain conflict in woman. This conflict is between female subjectivity and objectivity, and female subjectivity and an otherness or "moreness." In the first case, she describes female subjectivity as "vegetative" or "vaginal." In "Female Eroticism in the Works of Simone de Beauvoir" (1989), Jo-Ann Pilardi clarifies the vegetative model as described in The Blood of Others (1945).[13] She reads this text as "a gradual metamorphosis from woman to plant, to spongy moss, to jellyfish, enveloped always in darkness and vapours, becoming less and less capable of voluntary movement" (21). In The Second Sex, Beauvoir describes the vaginal model of female erotic experience as "the soft throbbing of a mollusc" (407).

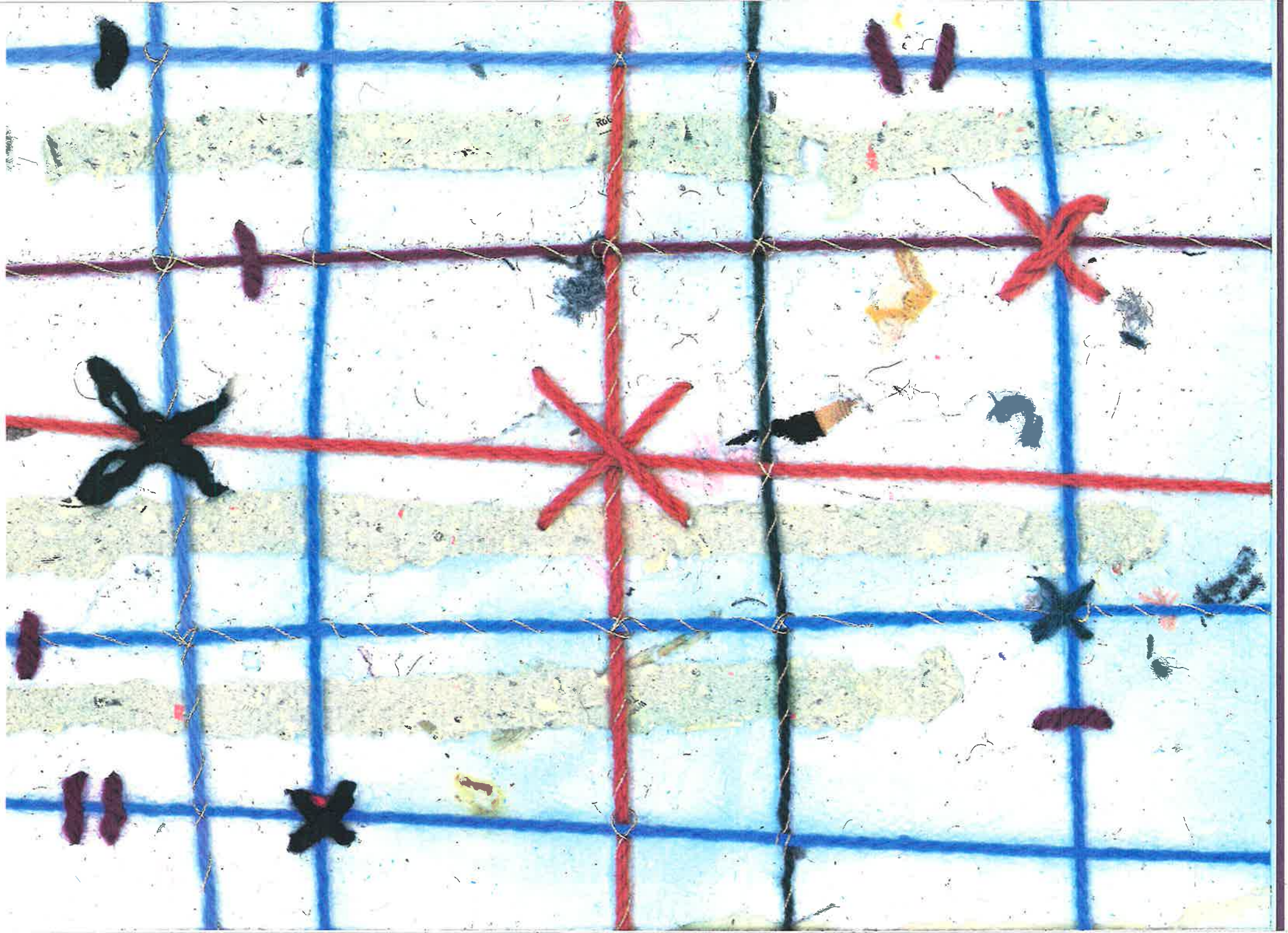
Beauvoir also recognises differences between male and female eroticism. On the one hand, she writes that the male is his body. "He thinks of his body as a direct and normal connection with the world, which he believes he apprehends objectively" while woman and her body are only one after the menopause because "[w]oman has ovaries, a uterus: these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature" (15). At the same time, Beauvoir recognises the fully formed male and female as basically equivalent as "the division of the species into two sexes is not always clear-cut" [Beauvoir's emphasis] (36). She also writes of a female "moreness" and asserts: "Woman like man, is her body; but her body is something other than herself" [Beauvoir's emphasis] (61).[14]

7: Beauvoir's imprisoned woman with a "moreness"

"Woman has ovaries, a uterus: these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature. . . . [At the same time] Woman, like man, is her body; but her body is something other than herself."

[Beauvoir's emphasis]

Beauvoir, The Second Sex (15, 61)



Kristevan semanalysis, herethics, and existential ethics

Kristevan ethics are intimately connected to language, which she aims to discern by means of semanalysis and psychoanalysis, linked to the Mother in herethics. Kristeva writes in "The System and the Speaking Subject," that

> semanalysis, conceives of meaning not as a sign-system but as a signifying process. . . . [It requires] the study of each signifying system as a practice. . . . [It] can be thought of as the direct successor of the dialectical method. . . .[As such, it is an ethical or moral concern and] it places itself at the service of the social law . . . [and] the subject of the semiotic metalanguage must . . . call himself in question. . . . [Kristeva's emphasis] (28-33)

In other words, Kristeva is asserting semanalysis as linked to semiotic and Symbolic processes. In "The Ethics of Sexual Difference" (1990), Alison Ainley clarifies that according to Kristeva, traces of ethics are especially clear at the boundaries of language where there is a confrontation between semiotic and Symbolic aspects. At this place, there is the constitution and deconstruction of texts as transformations are taking place and new practices are being established (55). In "The System and the Speaking Subject," Kristeva aims to use semanalysis, or the engagement between semanalysis and psychoanalysis and the processes by which discourses are put into question, in order to elaborate "a new position for the speaking subject . . . renewing and reshaping the status of meaning within social exchanges. . . . This is a moral gesture" (32).

Kristeva extends her understandings of ethics into other notions connected to the pre-Oedipal Mother. She calls this psychoanalytic ethics, herethics. In Tales of Love, Kristeva writes,

> if ethics amounts to not avoiding the embarrassing and inevitable problematics of the law but giving it flesh, language, and jouissance - in that case its reformulation demands the contribution of women. Of women who

> harbour the desire to reproduce (to have stability). Of women who are available so that our speaking species, which knows it is mortal, might withstand death. Of mothers. For an herethical ethics separated from morality, an herethics, is perhaps no more than that which in life makes bonds, thoughts, and therefore the thought of death, bearable: herethics is undeath [*a-mort*], love. . . . [Kristeva's emphasis] (262-63)

In other words, Kristeva's herethics is neither feminine nor feminist in any sense. It allows for the deconstruction and reconstruction of subjectivity during psychoanalytic interventions. In Tales of Love, Kristeva asserts that such interventions are a quest for rebirth through love, a means of perpetual renewal or non-death (1). In "My Memory's Hyperbole" (1984), she writes: "The psychoanalytic experience struck me as the one in which the wildness of the speaking being, and of language, can be heard" (275).[15]

Existentialism is also concerned with the ethical. In Being and Nothingness, Sartre asserts that the subject is morally obliged to seek freedom. In Key to Special Terminology, Barnes writes that freedom is:

> The very being of the For-itself which is 'condemned to be free' and must forever choose itself - *i.e.,* make itself. 'To be free' does not mean 'to obtain what one has wished' but rather 'by oneself to determine oneself to wish' (in the broad sense of choosing). In other words success is not important to freedom. (803)

In Being and Nothingness, Sartre asserts that in trying to become free, the subject avoids bad faith (350-51).

Beauvoir is also concerned with the ethical. Her ethicality refers to women's general responsibility to themselves, to choose, and to become free. According to Beauvoir, all women have the right and possibility of asserting their female subjectivity because they are free subjects on the basis that they are human. She writes that "it is not upon

physiology that values can be based; rather, the facts of biology take on the values that the existent bestows upon them" (69). She concludes that "there is no other way out for woman than to work for her liberation. This liberation must be collective, and it requires first of all that the economic evolution of woman's condition be accomplished" (639).

Conclusions

In this first section, I address two of the major difficulties surrounding Kristevan theory as located by Oliver in Reading Kristeva. I interpret the meanings that Kristeva attributes to the categories of essential female nature, feminine writing, woman, feminists, and feminism, and psychoanalytic and related terms such as the Symbolic, semiotic, imaginary Mirror stage, Oedipus complex, castration threat, abjection, and *jouissance*. I achieve this by means of original insights and references to secondary material when the views in such literature accord with or productively contrast with my own understandings. I also include a series of twenty-one art-works as a fictocritical gesture within the text.

By interpreting the meanings that Kristeva attributes to certain categories and terms, it becomes clear that Kristevan theory is radically different from other contemporary French feminist views and aspects of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. These are the contexts with which it is most often aligned.

In the first case, Kristeva recognises the characteristics of masculinity and femininity as human qualities but does not align these categories with human biology. Female femininity is understood as existing only in the semiotic or later as a residue of this pre-Oedipal space, time, and pleasure. This aspect manifests in the Symbolic when semiotic processes overflow Symbolic structures. As Kristeva understands that woman as such does not exist, semiotic residues associated with the female, the feminine, and woman, are concluded by her as best named, spoken, represented, and

liberated by some male avant-garde writers. Beyond this, Kristeva is hostile to feminists and feminism.

In contrast, some recent, representative, French feminist theorists assert different understandings of essential female nature in which there is an emphasis on female biological variance (breasts, womb, or vagina) and functions unique to those distinctions (woman as genitrix, daughter, or lover). These theorists incorporate psychoanalysis into their theory and practice in order to emphasise discourse, and in particular women's language and writing, as a key to gaining entry into the female unconscious and asserting and liberating essential female nature. Cixous, Irigaray, and Wittig are representative of these trends in different ways. These three women evidence political commitments to feminist groups and projects comparable with Anglo-American-Australian involvements and their theory and practice are entirely beyond Kristeva's idiosyncratic vision.

For instance, Kristeva uses psychoanalytic and related terms such as the Symbolic, semiotic, True-Real, imaginary Mirror stage, Oedipus complex, castration threat, abjection, and *jouissance* in ways which cannot be aligned with other recent, representative, psychoanalytic understandings. She creates a "cosmogony" in which she conceptualises the Symbolic as the centre of human subjectivity. Beyond this is the semiotic comprising pre-signifying, formless, circulating energies associated with the female, the feminine, and woman. In the semiotic, the pre-subject develops inside a pre-Symbolic womb called the chora. Once the pre-subject recognises itself as a sign, it begins its passage out of the semiotic and into the Symbolic. This requires the pre-subject cross the thetic. The thetic comprises the imaginary Mirror stage, the Oedipus complex, and the castration threat. The imaginary Mirror stage splits the subject into what it "feels" that it is (a separate and distinct identity) and what it sees itself to be (a reflection of its mirror / Mother / other). This subject is split a second time upon entry into Symbolic speaking subjectivity. This split is between the "I" that is producing language and an "I" who is the subject of what is said. Once inserted in

the Symbolic, subjectivity is never guaranteed or secure. At all times, semiotic processes threaten to overflow Symbolic structures. When they do, the subject experiences *jouissance*. *Jouissance* is a product of the True-Real. The True-Real is beyond what is accepted as intelligible or plausible by the Symbolic. At the same time, it is the only space where subjects may connect with their "true" Being.

Although these views cannot be easily aligned with Freudian theory, some broad links may be asserted between Kristeva's understandings of Symbolic and semiotic relations and her goal of liberating the feminine and Freud's understandings of conscious and unconscious relations and his goal of liberating the unconscious, as well as Kristeva's understandings of abjection and *jouissance* and Freud's understandings of the death (thanatos) and life (eros) drives. It is clearer that Kristeva's understandings of the imaginary Mirror stage are based in, but different from those of Lacan. However, none of these psychoanalytic connections are sufficient to adequately contain Kristevan thought. It becomes evident that her roots in, or resonances with existential philosophy are most valuable.

No one has previously emphasised this aspect in relation to Kristevan thought. This is a particularly important oversight as existentialism is intimately connected to the phenomenological philosophical discourse. This connection may be understood from the title of Sartre's text Being and Nothingness, Llyod's examination of subjectivity in terms of existentialism via phenomenology in The Man of Reason, and Kristeva admits to the phenomenological basis and relations of her work in "The System and the Speaking Subject" and Powers of Horror.

Existential roots or resonances are especially evident in Kristeva's understandings of Symbolic subjectivity as split and struggling under semiotic threat, Hegel's understandings of master and slave aspects, and Sartre and Beauvoir's different understandings of subjectivity as "unsettling" and "questionable." In the first case, Hegel's model of master and slave relations may be reformulated in terms of Symbolic

and semiotic aspects. In this new model, the Symbolic and the semiotic compete against each other. From time to time, the semiotic rises up to affirm the female, the feminine, and woman, and the Symbolic responds to this. It seems that such struggles are beyond resolution. If the Symbolic "wins," the semiotic is either obliterated and the Symbolic cannot achieve any further recognition or satisfaction from it or the semiotic is reduced to something which cannot be valued by the Symbolic. If the semiotic "wins," the situation is simply reversed.

Sartre also describes subjectivity in terms of unceasing struggle. In Being and Nothingness, he writes of Being-for-itself (consciousness) and Being-in-itself (body) separated by the nothing, nothingness, and negativity of non-Being. Within this model, tensions between Being and nothingness cause anguish which results in the Real. In The Second Sex, Beauvoir particularly describes female subjectivity as torn between immanence and an otherness or "moreness." At the same time, she recognises that female subjectivity is shaped by historical, social, and cultural forces.

In the second case, Kristeva stresses the non-specificity of human subjectivity. Prior to Symbolic insertion, Kristeva understands the pre-subject as comprising formless, circulating energies associated with the female, the feminine, and woman. Upon becoming a conscious, speaking subject, this Being experiences the two splits of the imaginary Mirror stage. Then, as a Symbolic subject it experiences the constant threat of semiotic interventions. Existential theory asserts related understandings. Sartre writes of the nothing, nothingness, and negativity of non-Being as the complement of Being. Heidegger writes of Being and nothingness in terms of inauthenticity and authenticity. He associates authenticity with the maternal, erotic, and *jouissant* and inauthenticity with the Symbolic mode of existence. In all cases, Symbolic Being is non-specific.

It follows that Kristeva and the major existential philosophers focus on a consequence of all such relations. Kristeva calls this abjection, and Sartre calls it

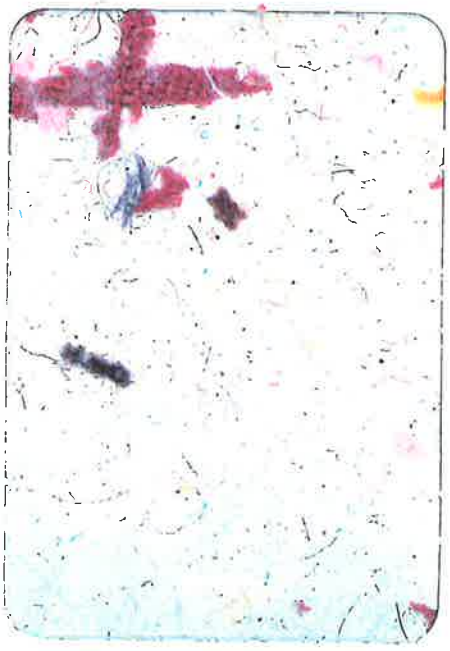
anguish and nausea. Kristeva locates three forms of abjection relating to food, waste, and sexual difference. The "horror" of menstruation is related to this. Sartre writes of anguish and nausea. Anguish is understood as a consequence of subjects having to make choices and affirm old or new projects at the cost of other choices. Nausea turns out to be an expression of disgust for the female body. Sartre writes that nausea is a product of times when the For-itself (man) is engulfed by the In-itself (the female and feminine) or "slimy." From time to time, Beauvoir's understandings resonate with similar vibrations.

In the following section, I connect some of these aspects of Kristevan thought with other contemporary theory. This provides a more recent context or a "bridge" into Section Three wherein I address the third and last difficulty located by Oliver in Reading Kristeva. This refers to the "usefulness" of Kristevan theory for contemporary feminisms.

8: What is female identity beyond psychoanalytic impositions?

"The question prompted by the Freudian notion of narcissism would then be the following: what is narcissistic 'identity'? How stable are its borders, its relation to the other? . . . A whole complex structuration can seemingly be conceived through what is after all a psychiatric term. . . ." [Kristeva's emphasis]

Kristeva, Kristeva Reader (241)



SECTION TWO: **POSTMODERNISM, THE LIMITS OF THE SELF, AND "TRUTH"**

Introduction

It is neither necessary nor sufficient to understand Kristevan thought only within the feminist (essentialist and non-essentialist), psychoanalytic, and existential categories described above. In this section, I emphasise further links between Kristevan theory and postmodernism, explorations of the limits of the self, and some contemporary notions of "truth." The complex subjective constructions that these connections imply are described by Kristeva in terms of a series of assertions and losses of Being. This theory further implies a need for appropriate spaces in which to locate human Being.

Kristevan postmodernism

Kristeva elaborates an idiosyncratic view of postmodernism.[1] In "Postmodernism?" (1980), she refers to postmodernism in two main ways. She asserts the determinant yet fragile nature of any particular language within the totality of Symbolic experience and various "eruptions" into these aspects. In the first case, Kristeva writes that

> the position of language within human experience is determinant but fragile. Language is determinant because all social phenomena are symbolic. . . . Language is fragile because any particular language . . . along with the variations of discourse . . . is merely an infinitesimal yet minimal part of the totality of symbolic experience. . . . Language is additionally fragile in its status as an objectively real medium of communication. . . . [Kristeva's emphasis] (136-37)

In the second case, Kristeva writes of a series of semiotic eruptions into Symbolic experience. She asserts that avant-garde or borderline writings, such as those of Pound, Célene, and Mayakovsky, demonstrate a basic realignment in style that may be

interpreted as an exploration of the imaginary relation between subjectivity and the Mother through language (138-39). According to Kristeva, such writing brings the imaginary to a point where it is no longer part of the community. It expresses into signs what is otherwise irreducable to others' experience. It is an exploration of the exchange between signs and death, where idiolects venture into the darkest regions of the limits of meaning. Kristeva concludes the writing most likely to dominate in these circumstances is

> the closest, most varied, multiple, heteroclitic, and unrepresentable idiolect. What is unrepresentability? That which, through language, is part of no particular language: rhythm, music, instinctual balm. That which, through meaning, is intolerable, unthinkable: the horrible, the abject. Modern writing knows how to 'musicate' best . . . that which . . . is the most horrible and abject. Abject music in which we can survive without stopping up our eyes and ears. (141)

According to Kristeva, this is contemporary postmodern writing.

Postmodern theory

In Anxieties of Commentary, King elaborates some of the difficulties associated with the use of the term "postmodernism." He observes that one cannot even be certain whether or not the word has a hyphen (25). He decides that

> the most appropriate way of thinking about the whole debate surrounding postmodernism is to regard it in two ways: first as a discursive field or discursive formation whose contours can be mapped, and secondly as the latest name given to the gap which opens between particular practices of cultural criticism and the cultural objects they purport to describe. (21)

King maps some of the central accounts of postmodernism and writes of the necessity

> to paraphrase Wittgenstein's remark that 'meaning is what one finds in explanations of meaning' and say that 'postmodernism is what one finds in

explanations of postmodernism.' Another of Wittgenstein's remarks seems appropriate here: 'At one point one has to pass from explanation to mere description.' (32-33)

Chris Baldick describes some of postmodernism's characteristics. In The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms (1990), he writes that postmodernism comprises

> products of the 'space age.' . . . [And] it is applied to a cultural condition . . . characterized by a superabundance of disconnected images and styles . . . fragmentary sensations, eclectic nostalgia, disposable simulacra, and promiscuous superficiality . . . amid the random swirl of empty signals. . . . [The postmodernist greets contemporary existence with] flippant indifference, favouring self-consciously 'depthless' works of fabulation, pastiche, bricolage, or aleatory disconnection. . . . [It] is used widely in reference to fiction . . . [which] employ devices reminiscent of science-fiction, playing with contradictory orders of reality or the irruption of the fabulous into the secular world. [My emphasis] (174-75)

In "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" (1982), Frederic Jameson emphasises the characteristics of pastiche and "schizophrenia" as postmodernism's most distinctive features. Pastiche refers to art and the abandonment of personal style and originality as essentials. He asserts that prior to postmodernism, there were a variety of different styles such as expressionism and modernism. Each of these styles is quite unmistakable and unlikely to be confused with something else. In time, postmodernism consolidated as a specific body of theory. Various groups in society began to speak private languages, codes, and idiolects separate from others and stylistic diversity and heterogeneity became commonplace at the same time that stylistic innovation was no longer possible. Aspects of dead styles were recycled and the modernist ethic of personal and private style died. So did the concept of a unique self and a private identity (111-16). This means that since postmodernism, neither language nor subjectivity may be understood as secure. Both comprise a pastiche or

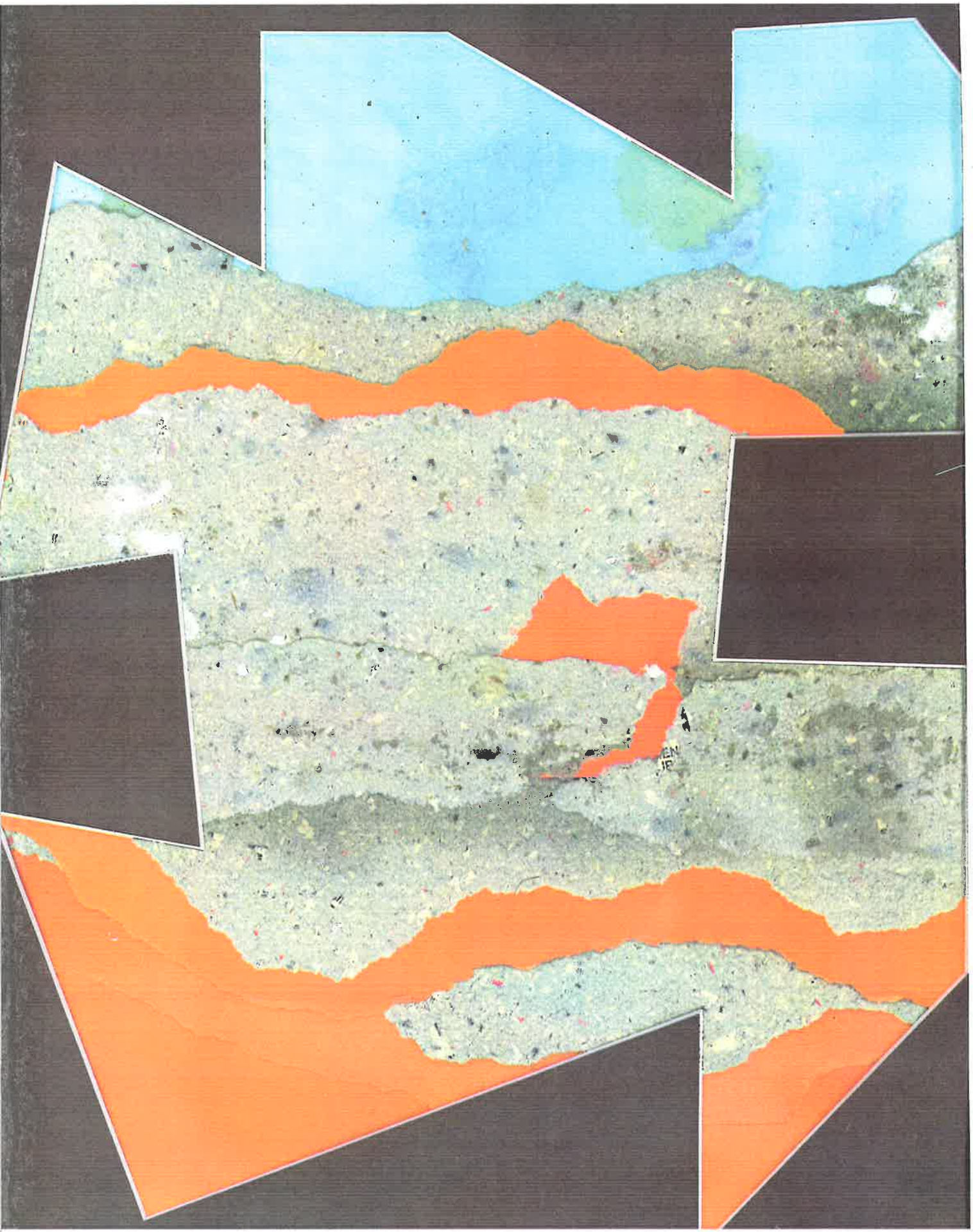
"blank parody" of already available personal stylistic features, from anywhere, going nowhere (114).

Understandings of postmodern subjectivity are further informed by Jameson's view of "schizophrenia." Jameson explains this term by means of reference to Lacan's understandings of speech and language. He emphasises Lacan's view of schizophrenia as essentially a language disorder and his linking of the schizophrenic experience to the processes of language acquisition. He explains that in Lacan's model, schizophrenia is a consequence of the infant's failure to accede fully into the realm of speech and language. Schizophrenia becomes a breakdown of the relationship between signifiers. The schizophrenic subject has no experiential feelings of time and no sense of temporal continuity. Schizophrenia becomes the experience of a series of perpetual presents in the form of a series of "isolated, disconnected, discontinuous, material signifiers which fail to link up into any coherent sequence" (119). As such, the schizophrenic subject may never "know" itself or the world in which it lives. It has an undifferentiated vision of itself and the world, in the present, as opposed to a series of engagements or focuses of perceptions concerning the self and the world within a broader context of ongoing history (118-20). Likewise, the postmodern subject may never really "know" itself or the world in which it lives. It experiences a fragile, fragmented, and "depthless" subjectivity beyond historical context or development. Kristevan theory describes such subjectivity in the form of a series of explorations of some assertions and losses of subjectivity. These include the absolute (mystical) merger of self in God as phallic Mother / other, the partial merger of self in a secular other, and "bisexuality," androgyny, and narcissism.

9: Woman understood as "pastiche" and "schizophrenic"

"Both pastiche and parody involve the imitation or, better still, the mimicry of other styles and particularly of the mannerisms and stylistic twitches of other styles. . . . [Previously] All these styles . . . [were] quite unmistakeable . . . not likely to be confused with something else. . . . [Postmodern theory asserts that these models] do not work any more (or are positively harmful) since nobody has that kind of unique private world and style to express any longer. . . . [And] only a limited number of combinations are possible; the most unique ones have been thought of already." Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" (113-15)

"the schizophrenic experience is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence. The schizophrenic thus does not know personal identity in our sense, since out feeling of identity depends on our sense of the persistence of the 'I' and the 'me' over time." "Postmodern and Consumer Society" (119)



Kristeva's explorations of the limits of subjectivity

Kristeva describes the absolute (mystical) merger of self in God as phallic Mother / other in Tales of Love. She explains that Jeanne Guyon, as a quietist, pursued a fusional relationship in God in order to passively receive illumination from Him by means of her assumption of a state of inaction and inattentiveness (299). Kristeva understands this motion as representative of a movement towards some sort of "truth" beyond the possibilities afforded by the rational representation of classical reason, the subordination of passions to thought, reason, knowledge, and "truth," and a reaffirmation of the medieval thesis that "truth" stems directly from the love of God (297). At the same time, Kristeva recognises the tension of Guyon's circumstance. She writes that Guyon's Real "is not 'her own,' but where she holds herself thanks to her imaginary devices of 'silence' and 'pure love' . . . [in the face of] the risk of toppling over into a black, unspeakable affect" of her tenuous subjectivity (312).

Kristeva also writes of the partial merger of self in a secular other in Tales of Love. She focuses on Romeo and Juliet's relation in terms of the possibilities it affords for the subject's partial assertion or loss of self whilst actively participating in "real" human relations from a psychoanalytic point of view. Within this shift, Kristeva seems particularly concerned with the hatred, malevolence, rebellion, and revenge that this implies.[2]

For instance, she writes broadly of

> the intrinsic presence of hatred in amatory feeling itself. In the object relation, the relation with an other, hatred, as Freud said, is more ancient than love. As soon as an other appears different from myself, it becomes alien, repelled, repugnant, abject - hated. . . . But as soon as the strength of desire that is joined with love sets the integrity of the self ablaze; as soon as it breaks down its solidity through the drive-impelled torrent of passion, hatred

10: Guyon: Mystical surrender in God

"Jeanne Guyon was a quietist in the essential aspects of its doctrine. She was so when advocating renunciation, annihilation of the self, reached by seeking a childlike state and culminating in the apotheosis of nothingness. She was so, too, on account of her marvellously optimistic and jubilatory confidence in the continuous presence of God who would give of himself to those who loved him disinterestedly. . . . She was even more so in her refusal to consider punishment and hell. . . ."

Kristeva, Tales of Love (301-02)

- the primary bench mark of object relation - emerges out of repression. [Kristeva's emphasis] (222)

She particularly focuses on the hatred, malevolence, and revenge evident in Juliet's relations with Romeo. She quotes from Shakespeare to illustrate Juliet's impulse to "break up" Romeo's body, "come, gentle night . . . and, when he shall die, take him and cut him out in little stars, and he[3] will make the face of heaven so fine, that all the world will be in love with night" (221).[4]

Kristeva also speculates that Juliet's responses may indicate a more general female rebellion against Symbolic Law in which the heterosexually coupled woman experiences the Law's "no longer ideal but tyrannical facet, woven with daily constraints and consonant hence repressive stereotypes" (209). Or, that women may be more prone to violence than men on the basis that

> feminine desire is perhaps more closely umbilicated with death; it may be that the matrical source of life knows how much it is in her power to destroy life (see Lady MacBeth), and moreover it is through the symbolic murder of her own mother that a woman turns herself into a mother. (214)

Or, that it may even be that violence is women's particular route to pleasure as "[w]hile in her avenging ardour against her own father or husband, the woman recaptures with her secret lover the unsuspected jouissances of maternal fusion" (211).

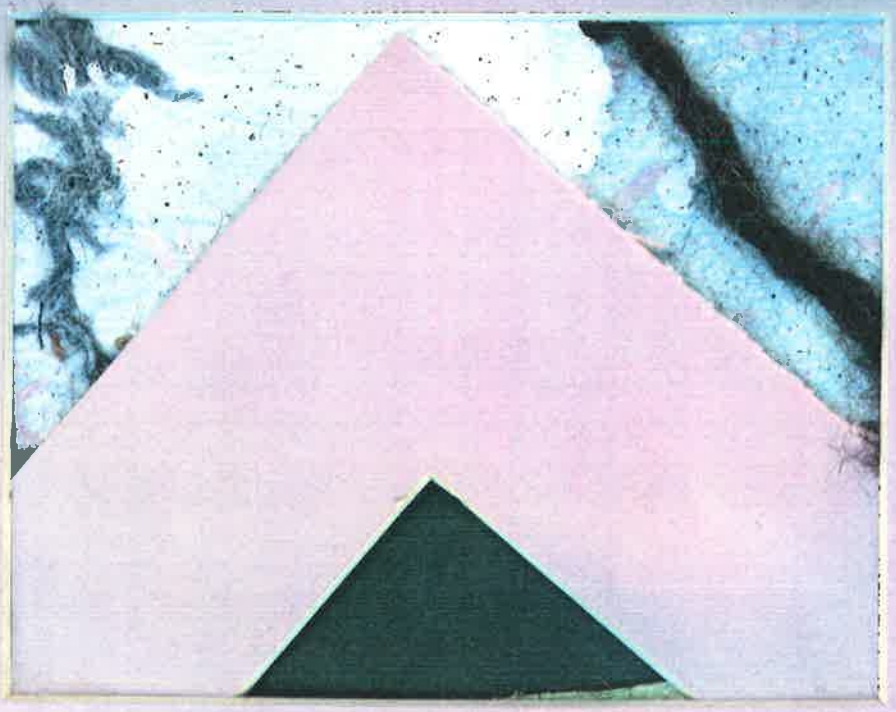
Kristeva also writes of the different blendings of masculine and feminine aspects in her idiosyncratic constructions of "bisexuality" and androgyny. In Tales of Love, she asserts that:

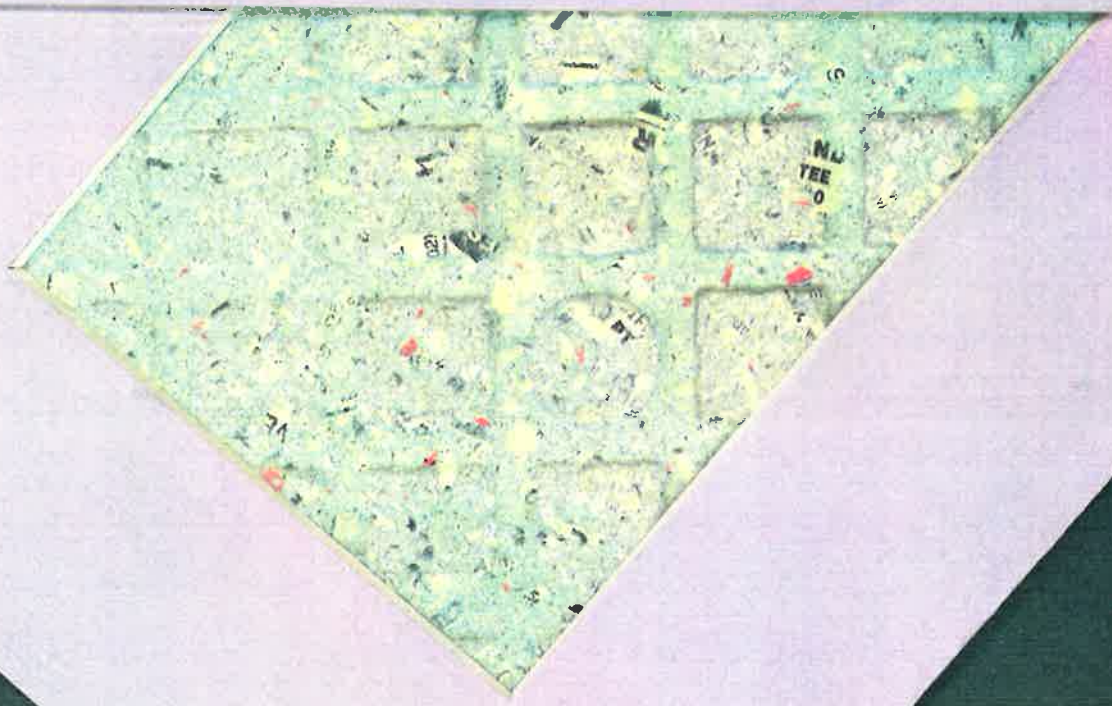
> Androgynous is not bisexual. . . . In the hypothesis of bisexuality one deals with four components, which assume at the start two different relations, male and female, to the Phallus' power. . . . [In contrast, the androgyne is] Absorption of the feminine by man, veiling the feminine in woman, androgyneity settles its accounts with femininity - the androgyne is a phallus

11: Romeo and Juliet: Blending in an other

"As soon as an other appears different from myself, it becomes alien, repelled, repugnant, abject - hated . . . [and] hatred is the keynote in the couple's passionate melody." [Kristeva's emphasis]

Kristeva, Tales of Love (222)





> disguised as a woman; not knowing the difference, he is the sliest masquerade of a liquidation of femininity. (70-71)

The Kristevan androgyne and the "bisexual" both contain the characteristics of masculinity and phallic femininity. Kristeva claims that the phallic femininity of Diotima is particularly desirable. She writes: "Diotima is it, she is that Phallus, even if she doesn't have it" [Kristeva's emphasis] (74). Kristeva concludes this desirability on the basis that it is "potentially procreative because of the very fact that it insures harmony and survival, hence immortality, for the socius . . . [even if it does allow the subsumation] of a pagan *jouissance*, the dazzlement of maternal fertility" (74). She writes that women should accept the "inevitability" of this circumstance and compromise by placing their "loves" in Symbolic structures, painfully identifying with men, and replacing the Mother with a super-ego-prompting Father (80).

Finally, Kristeva concludes Narcissus as the "ideal" Symbolic subject. She writes that Narcissus first appears in Ovid's Metamorphoses as the originally "perverse child . . . the first modern antihero, the nongod par excellence. . . . His murky, swampy, invisible drama must have summed up the anguish of a drifting mankind, deprived of stable markers" (376). Since that time, Narcissus' introspective predisposition has been consistently understood as a positive quality, linked to Christian and gnostic religious experience. Plotinus (AD.205-270) suggests subjects flee all views of otherness except the One and only Source, which is to be found in our soul within ourselves, in order to achieve salvation. Later, Thomas Aquinas (1227-74) writes of self-love as the necessary and limiting basis of all love (105-7).

Kristeva asserts that according to Aquinas, self-love has a precedence over all other forms of love. It opens up the subject to the individual experience of ontological goodness. Thus, while God remains the absolute proper, self-love seems to enjoy a certain historical or genetic primacy. Kristeva asserts that this love may be directed outwards or maintained. If it is directed outwards, as in the love for another,

12: Female "bisexuality": phallic femininity and phallic masculinity

"In the hypothesis of bisexuality one deals with four components, which assume at the start two different relations, male and female, to the Phallus' power."

Kristeva, Tales of Love (70)

individual subjectivity is not subverted or undermined through a thrusting of the subject out of itself and into its object. This is because, if the subject remains within the ontological good and maintains the genetic primacy of the self, the love of self being greater than the love for the other, this subject may go before any other loved one and maintain an "independent" subjectivity because such love is not egoistic. It allows the subject to remain "within the ontological good that is accessible in the first place as one's own - to be good" [Kristeva's emphasis] (172-73). It also establishes the self as a focus within which love may be maintained (173-74).

Kristeva's own view of narcissism is that since the modern realization of the "death of God," religious identifications within a focus on the self have become difficult. Narcissus is now forced to understand that he has been misled and that he always was the Source, the One, and that there is no other than himself. She writes that Freud originally recognises the libidinal basis of narcissism and goes on to strengthen his concept of the libido and the ego by defining them as mutually dependent on each other. In so doing, Freud establishes narcissism as both a prime mover and a barrier for love. Love becomes no more than a chancy stasis of hatred. Such love (or amorous transference) is the basis of the psychoanalytic cure. Kristeva claims that in this process, "it is restored, aroused, and promoted endlessly. This, in order to analyse it . . . to dissolve it down to its framework, its carrier wave - which is hatred" (123-25).

Kristeva adds that since Freud, "Narcissus no longer takes himself . . . for a sin or a sublime value, but rather for that infinitely distant boundary marker on the basis of which an immediately symbolic sensuality attempts to take shape" (125). In literature, this character is often described as an alienated, abject, and incomplete creature. This locates Narcissus as a particularly postmodern character. In turning inwards, he finds unstable, open, and undecidable spaces and is forced to come to terms with his new, abject subjectivity. As such, he is presently

> very different from the political and erotic animal of the ancient world.

> Leaving politics to its laws, Narcissus has become a Sage and he opens up the city to speculation. The soul ceases being a goddess in order to reflect itself as a psyche, as an internality proper to each individual solitude. (118-19)

Kristeva's explorations of some assertions and losses of subjectivity sketch "characters" whose subjectivities may be aligned with those of dispersed and destabilised postmodern identities seeking liberation from the identities that they presently "have" in order to reconstruct themselves elsewhere. In "Notes on 'Post-feminism'" (1982), Mary Russo clarifies that postmodernism echoes as post-feminism. She writes that post-feminism emerged out of France in the late 1970s and was shaped by currents of French thought including "fluidity . . . inner-spatial dimensionality, implosion, rupture . . . disorganisation, disunity, disidentification and dissent from orthodoxies of all kinds" (28-29).

In Introduction (1982), Nancy Fraser refers to such aspects as nominalist and asserts that

> some deconstructive-psychoanalytic French feminists have projected a nominalist vision of liberation as liberation <u>from</u> identity. . . . [Paradoxically], they often figure that liberated state as the recovery of a repressed femininity. Here femininity is a condition of dispersed and destabilized identity that is associated with the pre-Oedipal phase of individual development. [<u>Fraser's emphasis</u>] (7)

In "Women's Time," Kristeva refers to post-feminism as "third-generation" feminism implying "less a chronology than a <u>signifying space</u>, a both corporeal and desiring mental space" [<u>Kristeva's emphasis</u>] (209).

Towards other possible subjectivities

Some theorists have recognised a general need for new and different subjectivities. In "Choreographies" (1982), Jacques Derrida writes,

> what if we were to reach, what if we were to approach here . . . the area of a relationship to the other where the code of sexual marks would no longer be discriminating? The relationship would not be a-sexual, far from it, but would be sexual otherwise: beyond the binary difference that governs the decorum of all codes, beyond the opposition feminine / masculine, beyond bisexuality as well, beyond homosexuality and heterosexuality which come to the same thing. As I dream of saving the chance that this question offers I would like to believe in the multiplicity of sexually marked voices. I would like to believe in the masses, this indeterminable number of blended voices, this mobile of non-identified sexual marks whose choreography can carry, divide, multiply the body of each 'individual,' whether he be classified as 'man' or as 'woman' according to the criteria of usage. (76)

Some feminists are particularly concerned with figuring possible female subjectivities. An early feminist attempt to figure female self / other relations may be found in Beauvoir's text, The Second Sex. In Section One, I explain that in The Second Sex, Beauvoir writes of female subjectivity as immanent to the extent that it is passive, ambiguous, mysterious, secret, and distasteful. It is associated with nature understood in terms of viscosity, stickiness, mucous, blood, and slime (407). At the same time, she acknowledges that the female body is "more" than this (61). She writes that "it is not upon physiology that values can be based; rather, the facts of biology take on the values that the existent bestows upon them" (68-69).

More recently, some feminists have figured female self / other relations in mergers beyond the limits of the self, or within the limits of the self. Firstly, in The Lesbian Body (1973), Wittig effects a merging of the female self, in an other beyond the limits of the self, by means of a textual devise. She writes of "m / y" bodily parts (28). In so doing, she not only blends two subjectivities in an external merger, she also effects a "blasting through" into a new language beyond subversion. Her methodology is particularly important to those who believe that by referring back to

13: The sexual marks of Derrida's ideal world

"what if we were to reach, what if we were to approach here . . . the area of a relationship to the other where the code of sexual marks would no longer be discriminating? . . ."

Derrida, "Choreographies" (76)

earlier models, one only reinforces the power of those models to oppress. Deborah Staines effects a similar blending in "Now Millenium" (1993). She writes "you seep into me / leaving only the imprint of your bones" (101), and writes of "a lover whose skin slips like water / through my fingers" (119). In Working Hot (1989), Mary Fallon also blends her female and maternal self in an other beyond the limits of the self. This other is the phallus. Fallon becomes the phallus in a multi-sexed compound. She writes: "I AM THE PHALLUS you might have a penis but I AM THE PHALLUS and I AM MUMMY sonny so run away and play trains and let me get on with peeling these words for tea" [Fallon's emphasis] (26).[5]

Other feminist have sought to blend the self with others within the limits of the self. In "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s" (1985), Donna Haraway writes that by incorporating external aspects into the self, cyborg subjectivity undermines notions of the "original unity, fullness, bliss, and terror, represented by the phallic mother from whom all humans must separate" and female essentialism (192).[6] She adds that there is not any state which may be understood as specifically female, there is nothing about being female that naturally binds women together, and there is presently a "painful fragmentation" among contemporary women and feminists (197).

This leads Haraway to conclude the necessity for a post-gender cyborg subjectivity. She defines this construction as "a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. . . . [It] changes what counts as women's experience in the late twentieth century" (191). It is beyond

> bisexuality, pre-Oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity. . . . The cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence. (192)

According to Haraway, this "higher unity" will allow an absolute transgression of boundaries, a collapsing of categories, and women will come to joy in possible female subjectivities and spaces. She asserts that in this world people will not be

> afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints. . . . Cyborg feminists have to argue that 'we' do not want any more natural matrix of unity and that no construction is whole. (196, 99)

Haraway asserts that such subjectivity is presently unclear as theorists are now engaged in "the struggle for language and the struggle against perfect communication, against the one code that translates all meaning perfectly, the central dogma of phallogocentrism" in order to propose a fragmented and diverse subjectivity that is decentred, unstable, and accessible, that survives "not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other" (217-18). She understands "women in the privileged occupational categories and particularly in the production of science and technology that constructs scientific-technical discourse, processes, and objects" as particularly responsible for the construction of such aspects (211). She asserts that such women should be "open" to this as

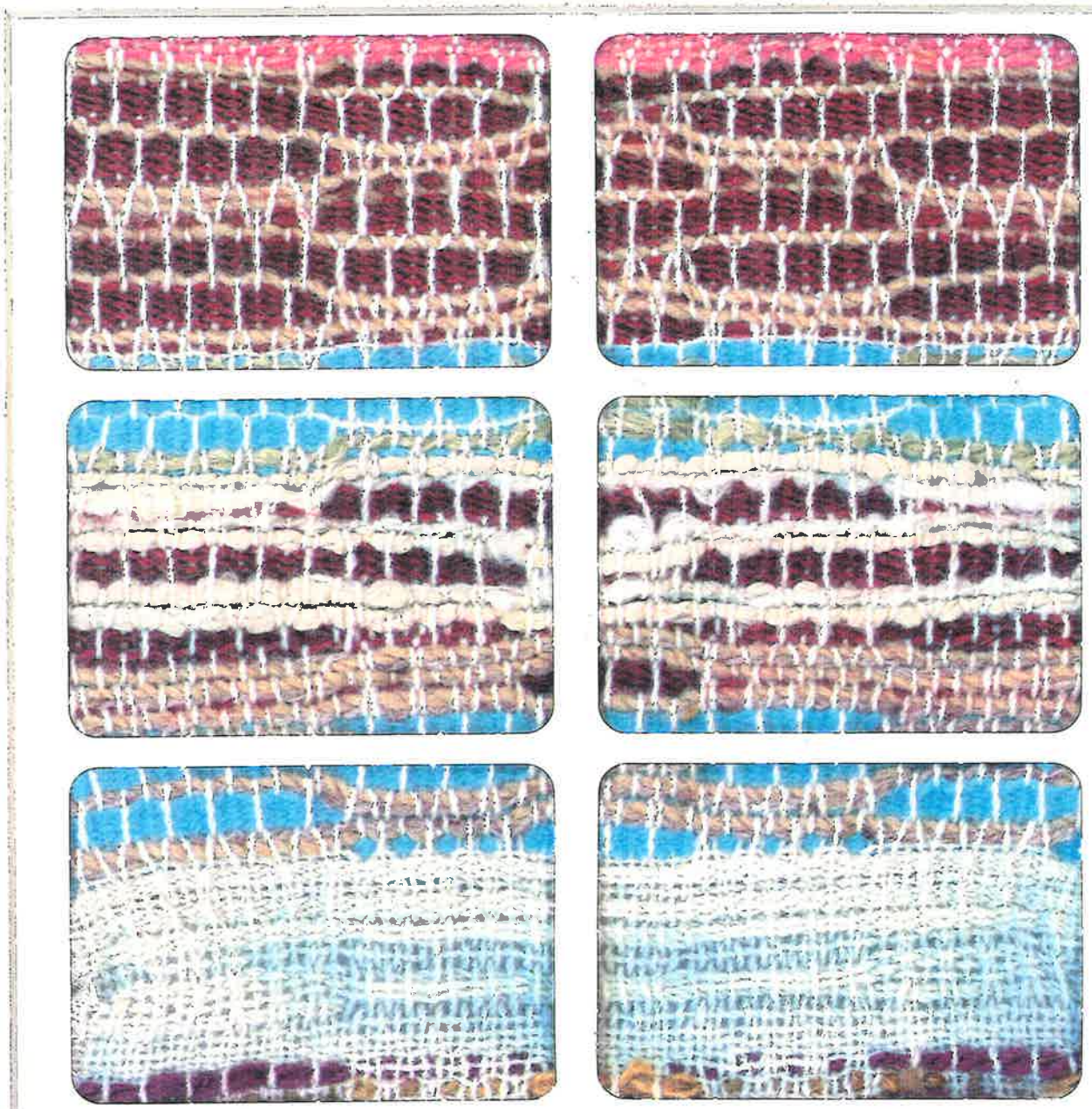
> the production of universal, totalizing theory is a major mistake that misses most of reality, probably always, but certainly now . . . [and women should seek to articulate a new] way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves. (223)

In "From The Female Man to the Virtual Girl: Whatever happened to feminist sf" (1994), Frances Bonner writes that feminist science-fiction is not just science-fiction by women, comprising "strong female characters" or "role reversals" without any analysis of social situations (4). It presently comprises three streams. These include a continuation of the feminised space opera (in which women have adventures among the stars and spaceships), fabulation (short stories which challenge the notion that

14: The cyborg world: A grid of control or alternative lived social and bodily realities

"From one perspective, a cyborg world is about the final imposition of a grid of control on the planet. . . . From another perspective, a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints. The political struggle is to see from both perspectives at once. . . ."

Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs" (196)



the world may be seen and told), and a "shift to the machine" (by which she means "the coming to awareness of robots and computers and the place of desire in their interactions with humans") (6-8).

Bonner's "shift to the machine" specifies the precise nature of characteristics which she understands as desirable for assimilation by cyborgs. These are robot or computer aspects. Bonner concludes this as especially important as, "One of the virtues of this concentration on machines is that it enables the exploration of difference long conducted in sf through the relationship with the alien, to be conducted without what I have previously termed the 'tentacle effect'" (8). Whereas the figure of the other may be alien, off-putting or frightening to women, robots or bodies in which computers are housed are more accessible as they are generally understood as based on the human. Furthermore, this construction allows the avoidance of the necessity for Oedipal crises and possible programmable forms may be imagined (8).

Bonner also observes that utopias and dystopias are presently included in the three major streams of feminist science-fiction writing but are not developed in their own right. She understands this as regrettable on the basis that the utopia is one of feminist science-fiction's most viable contributions (6).

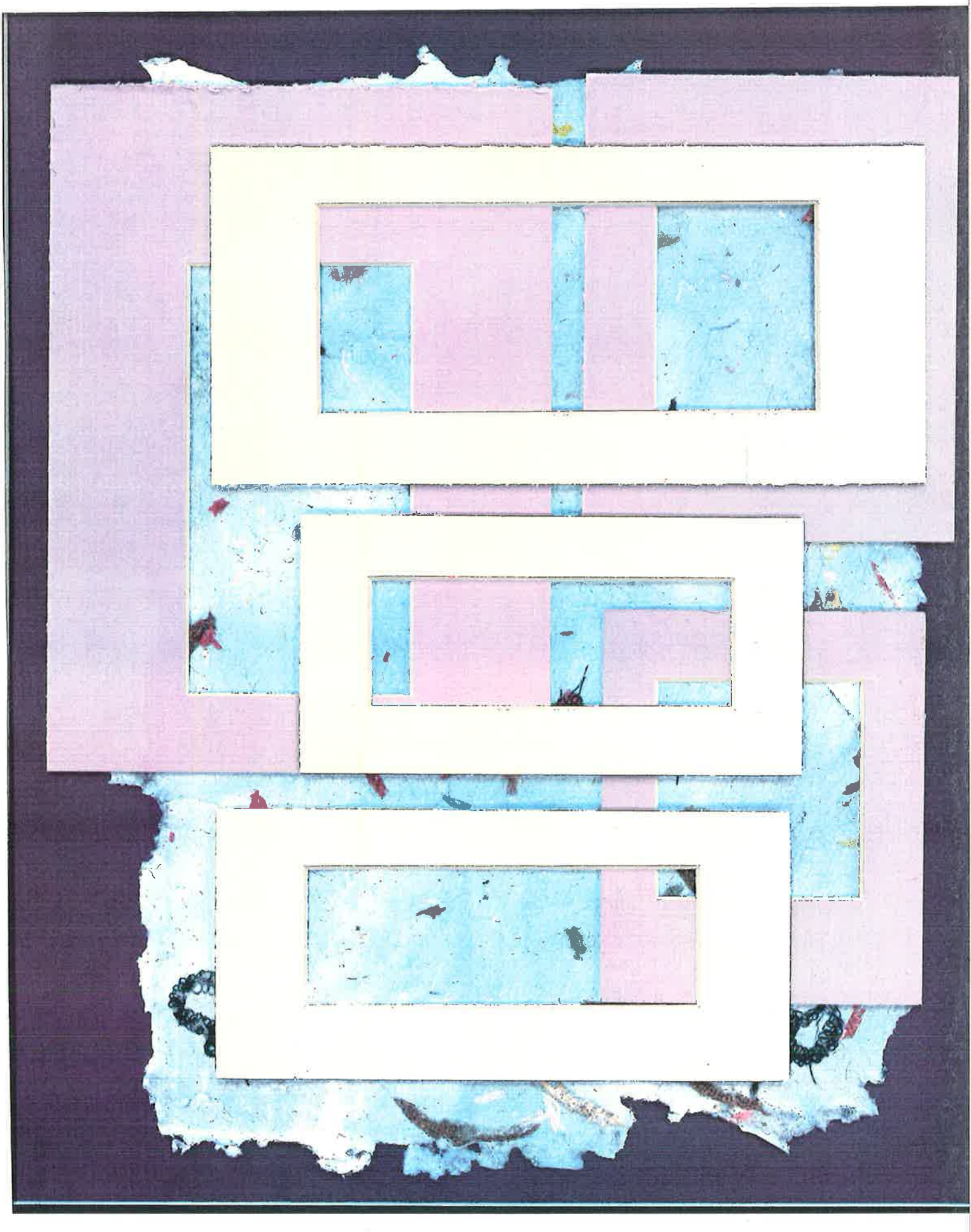
It seems that all such quests to figure self / other relations beyond the limits of the self, or within the limits of the self, are narcissistic. In Altarity (1987), Mark C. Taylor asserts that

> the effort of the speculative I / eye to see itself in every 'other' is essentially narcissistic. . . .Unwilling to tolerate difference, the 'loving' 'I' seeks satisfaction by dominating others and *assimilating difference.* [My emphasis] (99)

15: Feminist cyborg windows on the world

"Cyborg imagery can help express two crucial arguments in this essay: (1) the production of universal, totalizing theory is a major mistake that misses most of reality, probably always, but certainly now; (2) taking responsibility for the social relations of science and technology means refusing an anti-science metaphysics, a demonology of technology, and so means embracing the skilful task of reconstructing the boundaries of daily life, in particular connection with others, in communication with all of our parts."

Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs" (223)



Some feminists question the value of all such projects. In "Bodies and God: Poststructuralist Feminists Return to the Fold of Spiritual Materialism" (1992), Kathryn B. Stockton asks:

> Is it enough to believe - to have faith - that some freer body is being touched upon? Can one touch a body that one must, in order to touch it, locate outside in the impossible place of a discourse that escapes the discourses that we know? Is this necessary detour of one's culturally constructed body . . . the ultimate act of political, mystical autoeroticism? . . . How can we bend ourselves towards the impossible bodies and selves we must believe now that we can be? And how can we keep from fully arriving at this material destination, so that we do not fully overtake ourselves, capture ourselves, enslave ourselves, but continue to yearn after a telos that recedes from our desire to fix it? [Stockton's emphasis] (149)

"Truth"

In seeking to answer such questions, it becomes clear that it is no longer possible to understand "truth" in terms of any single, eternal, universal aspects or accept the possibility of objective, observer neutral knowledge. Some theorists respond to these insights by adopting an oxymoronic position and Kristeva is representative of this trend.

Kristeva's understandings of "truth"

The Kristevan ontology evidences a clear commitment to a belief in "truth." This may be seen in Kristeva's preparedness to use Symbolic logic and language in selective traversals of various bodies of knowledge such as existentialism, psychoanalysis, postmodernism, literary theory, and feminism in the construction of her own theory. At the same time, Kristeva is also clearly aware of the inadequacy, as opposed to the irrelevancy, of such aspects. She seems to celebrate this inadequacy.

In "Semiotics: A Critical Science and / or a Critique of Science" (1969), she writes that:

> Quantum mechanics is aware that our discourse ('intelligence') needs to be 'fractured,' and must change objects and structures in order to be able to tackle a problematics that can no longer be contained within the framework of classical reason. (84-85)

Some contemporary understandings of "truth"

In The Concise Oxford Dictionary, Baldick explains that structuralism recently pursued "truth" by analysing

> cultural phenomena according to principles derived from linguistics, emphasizing the systematic interrelationships among the elements of any human activity, and thus the abstract codes and conventions governing the social production of meanings. (213)

In the 1960s, structuralism was succeeded by poststructuralism. Baldick asserts that this was a reaction

> against structuralist pretensions to scientific objectivity and comprehensiveness. . . . [Proponents] emphasized the instability of meanings and of intellectual categories (including that of the human 'subject') and sought to undermine any theoretical system that claimed to have universal validity. . . . (175-76)

Most recently, "truth" is largely understood as irrelevant on the basis that it is ultimately unachievable and unknowable. In "Chaos, Cultural Studies and Cosmology" (1992), the cultural theorists David McKie and Michael Bennett align contemporary shifts from structuralism to poststructuralism, and modernism to postmodernism, with trends in science, a particularly "truth" directed discipline. They assert that structuralists reduce "wholes" into segments of reality in order to

16: Discourse must change its objects and structures

"Quantum mechanics is aware that our discourse ('intelligence') needs to be 'fractured,' and must change objects and structures in order to be able to tackle a problematics that can no longer be contained within the framework of classical reason."

Kristeva, Kristeva Reader (84-85)

study parts whereas poststructuralists prefer to observe webs of interaction and flows of meaning (786). This latter tendency is also a characteristic of chaos theory wherein systems are studied rather than parts and corners rather than cores or dominant flows. With the advent of postmodernism, universals and meta-narratives have been further abandoned in favour of fragmentation and micro-narratives. This trend may be seen in science as chaoticians' abandonment of "grand universal theories" (GUTs) and "theories of everything" (TOEs) in favour of the chaotic, the irregular, and the everyday. Likewise, the postmodern tendency to focus on simulacra and surface rather than depth, may be seen in chaoticians' preference for studying computer generated images and appearances rather than molecular structures. Finally, as postmodernism surrenders "vanguardism" in order to participate in the existing commercial mainstream, so chaoticians discard "high" science in order to learn from phenomena in nature (787).

Other theorists stress the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge that such motions imply. In "Representation and Bifurcation: Borges's Garden of Chaos Dynamics" (1991), Thomas P. Weissert writes that culture is a complex, fluid system "in which each of the disciplines is a current of information" (224). In this fluid system, aspects are intermixed and no discipline remains isolated from this process. Literature informs science and science informs literature. As these flows compound, currents become more complex and ripples come to influence other currents in a non-linear, random fashion (224).

Other theorists entirely reduce all possibility of "truth" to myth. In Introduction (1988), Damien Broderick asserts,

> anthropologists . . . found that science was not a special way of thinking. It . . . is just a sort of story-telling. A Kind of narrative. The myths of technocracy. . . . Its laws are not the laws of 'scientific method,' sought for so long by anxious philosophers, but the laws of narrative and myth. (x-xi)

Some feminist understandings of "truth"

In "Philosophy" (1990), Grosz locates three major feminist understandings of "truth." These are "egalitarian," "conservative," and "radical" feminist responses. According to Grosz, egalitarian feminists usually seek to eliminate all barriers which would prevent women's equal inclusion in philosophy or to change existing philosophical systems to include female concerns. Conservative feminists seek to use philosophy as a tool to criticize, even "rectify" problems in feminism rather than aim to resolve tensions between feminism and traditional philosophy. Radical feminists question the possibility of any "truth" or objectivity independent of observers, history, or social conditions (157-66).

She concludes that none of these positions is adequate. She writes that some feminists favour a plurality of perspectives and a multiplicity of philosophical models - not unlike science's modernist response. She asserts that this allows "many positions, each of which is equally valid" [Grosz's emphasis] (167). She writes that pluralism and multiplicity may inform a new space "sustaining several types of discourse, many perspectives and interests (even contradictory ones)" (169). Within such a view, notions of "truth" and "falsity" are largely irrelevant to broader, strategic, feminist models. Feminist philosophy becomes a strategy of provisional commitments and recognitions in which theory is a form of textual, conceptual, and educational practice. The concept of reason is expanded to include that which has previously been expelled, that which has traditionally been associated with the female, the feminine, and woman. Grosz asserts that such a philosophy

> aims for the production of new methods of knowing, new forms of analysis, new modes of writing, new kinds of textual objects, new texts. No one method, point of view, position for subjects and objects is the norm or model for all philosophy. . . . [And, feminist philosophy] would no longer be confined to women's issues, issues concerning only or largely women, but be free to range over any issue. [Grosz's emphasis] (169)

In Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature (1991), Donna Haraway calls a plurality of perspectives "points" from which understandings may be perceived rather than "truths." She writes that she only approves of notions of "truth" and objectivity to the extent that they may lead to the accommodation of

> an earth-wide network of connections, including the ability partially to translate knowledges among very different - and power differentiated - communities. We need the power of modern critical theories of how meanings and bodies get made, not in order to deny meaning and bodies, but in order to live in meanings and bodies that have a chance for a future. (187)

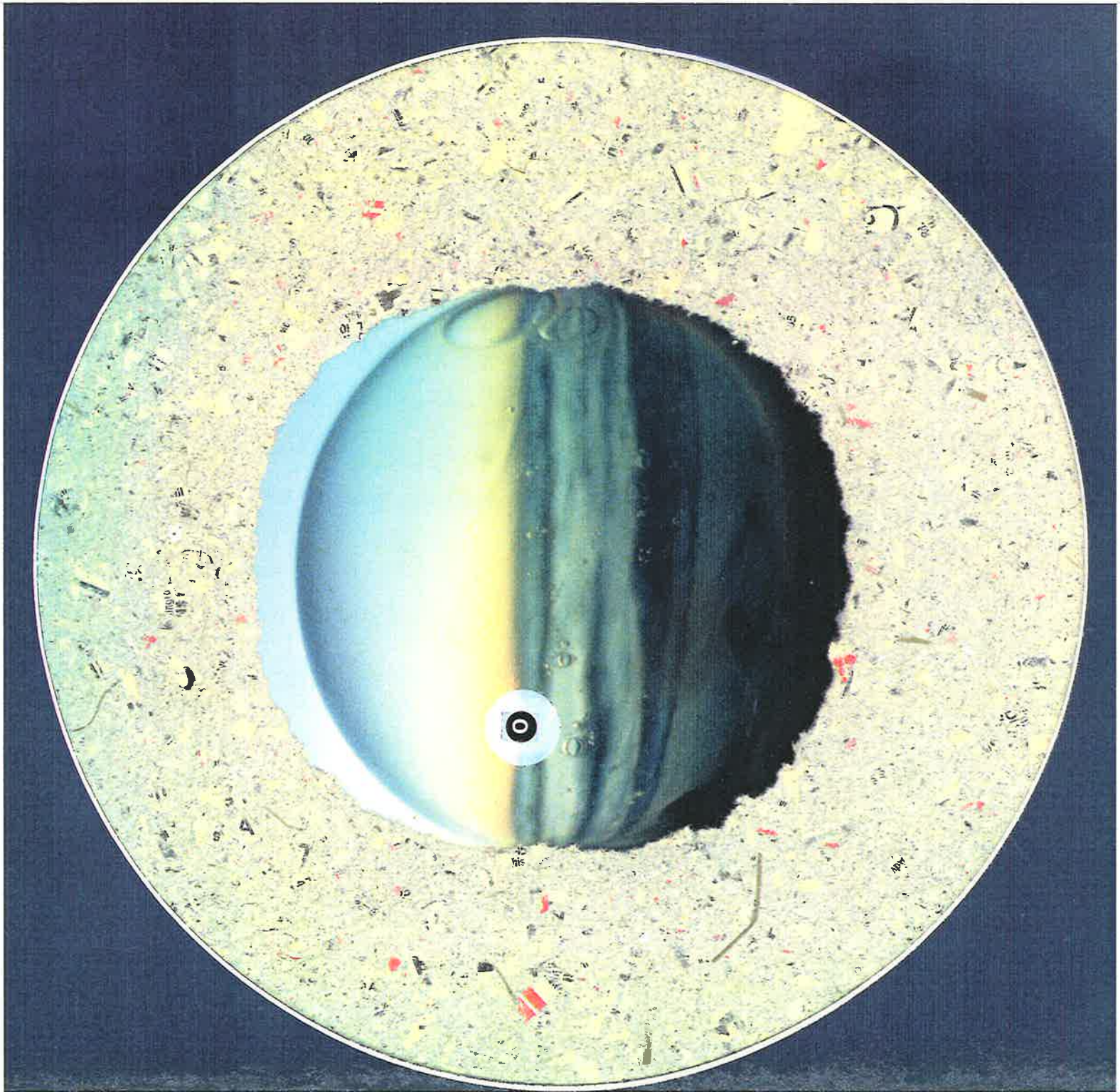
Haraway calls the "points" from which plural perspectives may be maintained, "situated" positionings. She concludes her own understandings as "situated" and writes that "feminist objectivity means quite simply situated knowledges" [Haraway's emphasis] (188). According to Haraway, situated positionings allow a partial perspective and a limited location from which women may see from the peripheries and the depths rather than from a "God's eye" view. At this place, doubts about the self-presence of the subject, often referred to as the "death of the subject," give way to generative doubts about "the opening of non-isomorphic subjects, agents, and territories of stories unimaginable from the vantage point of the cyclopian, self-satiated eye of the master subject" (192). Within this view, the contemporary subject becomes "the one who can interrogate positionings, and be accountable, the one who can construct and join rational conversations and fantastic imaginings that change history" (193).

In other words, Haraway is asserting that whereas the scientific "knower" partially connects with "truth" and objectivity, the critically positioned feminist is able to produce objectivity whilst seeking identity (193). This more comprehensive objectivity comprises "the joining of partial views and halting voices into a collective subject position that promises a vision of the means of ongoing finite

17: "Objectivity as positioned rationality"

"The science question in feminism is about objectivity as positioned rationality. Its images are not the products of escape and transcendence of limits, i.e., the views from above, but the joining of partial views and halting voices into a collective subject position that promises a vision of the means of ongoing finite embodiment, of living within limits and contradictions, i.e., of views from somewhere."

Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs, and Women (196)



embodiment, of living within limits and contradictions, i.e., of views from somewhere" (196).

The possibility of the conjoining of "rational conversations" and "fantastic imaginings" in order to effect political change, necessarily involves understandings of relations between women and writing, and especially women and feminist science-fiction writing. The French feminist view of relations between women and writing is detailed in Section One (see pp. 12-15 above) and the most important aspects of the Anglo-American-Australian position are summed up by Grosz in "Women and Writing: The Work of Julia Kristeva in Perspective" (1982). She asks,

> how can women write and speak a language that is not their own . . . how can women write or speak as women? . . . Does feminist writing involve simply a change of content - or more? Do novels with female heroines, plots orientated towards women's 'activities' and interests achieve this reorientation? Is a sexual reversal of content adequate to pose a challenge? . . . Or is it more a question of form, of fracturing and challenging the very idea of hero, plot, point of view, or, even further, of challenging grammar, syntax and sense. Can form be separate from content? . . . To what or whom is feminist writing directed? . . . [With regard to] accessibility of texts . . . two quite distinct and antagonistic groups emerge: the advocates of clear, straight forward, accessible language . . . and the upholders of linguistic experimentation, code breaking, and innovation. . . . [Grosz's emphasis] (29)

It seems that feminist science-fiction writing may meld these extremes. In Metamorphoses of Science Fiction (1979), Darko Suvin writes of science-fiction's "narrative dominance or hegemony of a fictional 'novum' (novelty, innovation) validated by cognitive logic" (63), and in Screening Space (1987) Vivian Sobchach stresses science-fiction's "cognitive mapping and poetic figuration of social relations as they are constituted and changed by new technological modes of 'being-in-the-

world'" (224-25), and in Aliens and Others: Science-Fiction, Feminism and Postmodernism (1994), Jenny Wolmark writes of

> feminist analysis of the construction of gendered subjectivity in order to suggest possibilities for more plural and heterogeneous social relations, and to offer a powerful critique of the way in which existing social relations and power structures continue to marginalise women. (2)

Conclusions

The struggling, non-specific, abject, existential-psychoanalytic subject of the Kristevan ontology is also a postmodern subject. This may be understood from Kristeva's assertions about the determinant yet fragile nature of any particular language (including subjectivity) within the totality of Symbolic experience and various "eruptions" into such aspects as well as her connection of postmodern writing with feminine writing. These understandings fit within other understandings of postmodern subjectivity and language as described by Baldick and Jameson.

For instance, Baldick's views allow the understanding that the pre-Oedipal, Kristevan subject is postmodern to the extent that it is "disconnected," "fragmented," and "nostalgically" attached to the Mother. In the semiotic, this pre-Oedipal subject is surrounded by the "random swirl" of semiotic marks, traces, signs, and imprints. Later, when this subject is inserted in the Symbolic, its relations with the Mother become "disposable" and Symbolic woman especially experiences the "random swirl" of the Father's empty signals. This leads Symbolic woman to feel a "flippant indifference" to "depthless" (male) cultural products. Some female writers respond to this by producing works of fabulation, feminist science-fiction writing, or embracing "contradictory orders of reality" in order to theorise female subjectivities. Some French feminist writers focus on figuring the "irruption of the fabulous" (or the feminine) in their language and subjectivity.

Jameson's understandings of postmodernism in terms of pastiche and "schizophrenia" further inform such understandings. For instance, Kristeva asserts that Symbolic woman may never "be" in any female sense, or name, speak, represent, or liberate any residual femininity from the pre-Oedipal semiotic for herself. She may only ever assume a pastiche of already available phallic female features. This results in her experiencing her subjectivity as "schizophrenic" in the form of a series of isolated, disconnected, and discontinuous signifiers. As such, this woman may never really "know" herself or the world in which she lives. Her subjectivity is fragile, fragmented, and "depthless" beyond historical context or ongoing development. Kristeva's explorations of some assertions and losses of subjectivity may be understood as a response to such circumstances.

For instance, Kristeva elaborates the absolute (mystical) merger of self in God. This exploration specifies the limits of human Being and brings into focus the risks associated with traversing subjective boundaries. Such borders are entirely "traversable" in quests beyond the possibilities afforded by the rational representation of classical reason but the risks of such motions include abjection and psychosis. Kristeva limits the extent of her explorations in detailing the partial merger of the self in a secular other in the case of Romeo and Juliet. In this example, there is a focus on heterosexual self / other relations within the psychoanalytically inclined Symbolic. This elaboration is particularly important in that it emphasises women's unsatisfactory relations with the Law and men (especially husbands and fathers) and explains some female responses to these relations in terms of hatred, malevolence, rebellion, and revenge. Kristeva's constructions of androgyny and "bisexuality" may be understood as only serving to repress the expression of any residual essential femininity in women. Most importantly, Kristeva concludes narcissism as the "ideal" form of subjectivity and an embodiment proper to each and all human Beings. Kristeva's understandings may be understood as linked with those of postmodernism, post-feminism, or nominalism which Kristeva asserts as particularly desirable.

Such understandings may be further informed by James Donald's text Sentimental Education: Schooling, Popular Culture and the Regulation of Liberty (1992). Donald implies that the Symbolic subject may best understand its self / other relations from a narcissistic perspective. He asserts that the other is always within the self and that repression is the means by which subjects individuate. He locates repression in the unconscious and poses the conscious as a mediating link between the self and the other. Donald also theorises that the unconscious always contains something beyond the self, yet within the self. This "something else" or otherness means that the subject may never fully come to recognise itself within its own unconscious. This leads it to feel a certain malevolence towards its own narcissistic responses to its own images and representations (94-95).

Kristeva concludes a similar point of view in Strangers to Ourselves (1991). She writes that the unconscious is a site of otherness and that this otherness is the reason that subjects feel malevolence towards their own narcissistic responses to their own images and representations. Then, she develops this stance by writing of the archaic, narcissistic self projecting "out of itself what it experiences as dangerous or unpleasant in itself, making of it an alien double, uncanny and demoniacal" [Kristeva's emphasis] (183). This abject and malevolent double then serves as a receptacle for all aspects that the subject deems undesirable, because they make it feel anxious, frightened or strange, and cannot otherwise contain (184). At the same time, this abject and malevolent double and its activity make the subject feel "separate," "incoherent," and "not in touch" with its own feelings. It becomes clear that the subject is both responsible for the creation of this abyss between itself and its other, as well as its own various feelings of being "lost," "indistinct," and "hazy" (187). Kristeva extends these understandings in Nations without Nationalism (1990) into views about the hatred of others who do not share similar origins and hatred of oneself (2-3).

The borders of human subjectivity are also considered by other feminist theorists in explorations of the absolute transgression of the limits of subjectivity (like Kristeva's elaborations of Guyon's subjectivity), partial transgressions of the limits of subjectivity (like Kristeva's explorations of Romeo and Juliet's secular merger), and a return to the self (like Kristeva's explorations of narcissism and Donald's views as explained above). Partial assertions and losses of the female self within the other beyond the self, may be found in texts which include Wittig's The Lesbian Body, Staines' "Now Millenium," and Fallon's Working Hot. Conversely, a partial assertion and loss of the female self within the other within the self (like that of the Kristevan Narcissus) may be found in Beauvoir's The Second Sex in terms of a subjective melding of immanence and "moreness." It may also be found in the potential of Haraway's figure of the cyborg as described in "A Manifesto for Cyborgs," wherein the subject may assume any number of aspects into itself in order to most "truly" approach its subjectivity and subjective spaces. Such Being is clearly decentred, unstable, accessible, and beyond the "kinds" of embodiments described elsewhere.

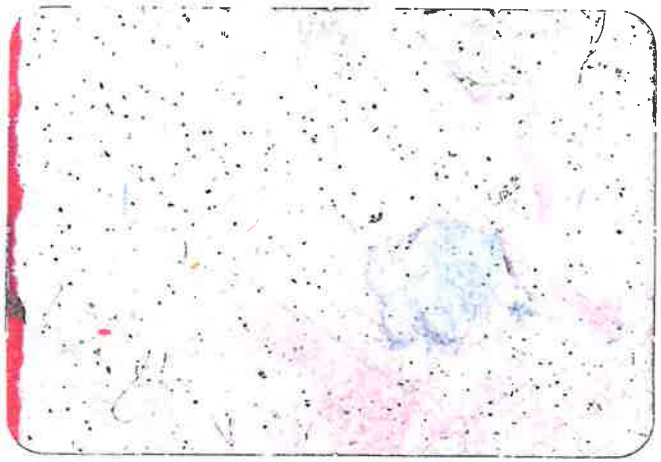
In "From The Female Man," Bonner specifies the precise nature of characteristics which she understands as desirable for assimilation by cyborgs. These are robot or computer aspects which allow self / other relations to be figured in terms most acceptably "like" the self. Theorists like Taylor in Altarity find all such quests essentially narcissistic and Kristeva writes in Tales of Love, that narcissism is "an internality proper to each individual solitude" (118-19). Whereas an "'I' has [previously] been another . . . no longer indivisible . . . lost in another, for another" (4), the 'I' / other relationship may now be harmoniously reworked into a relation of the 'I' with the other within the self (15). At the same time, feminist theorists like Stockton in "Bodies and God," question whether any of these constructions are potentially "freer" or more oppressive than other presently available models.

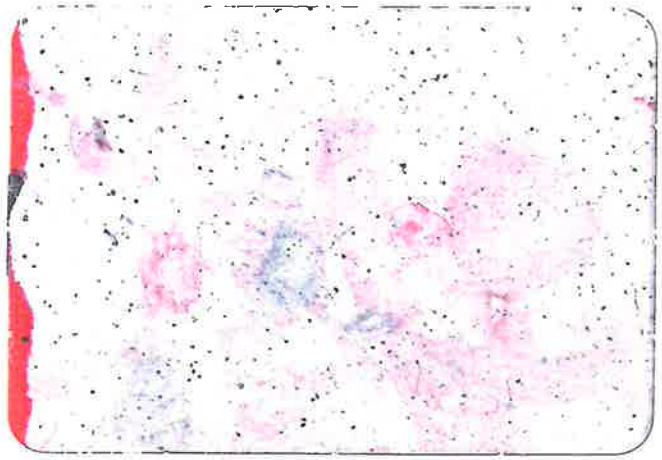
In seeking to answer such questions, notions of "truth" and women's relations to texts and textual production become particularly important. Since the understanding

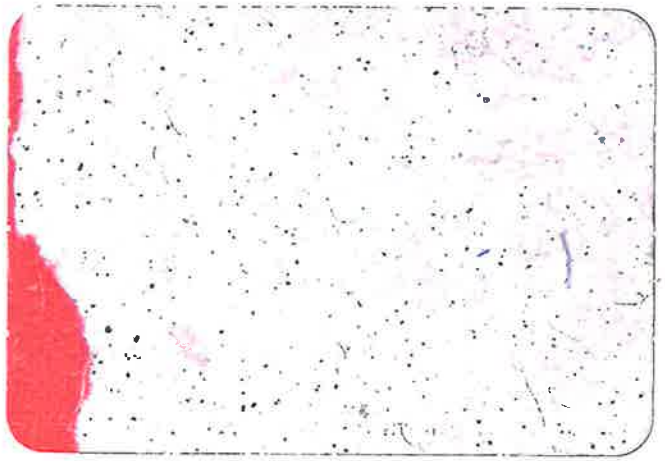
18: Woman hiding behind her eyes, under the patriarchal "look"

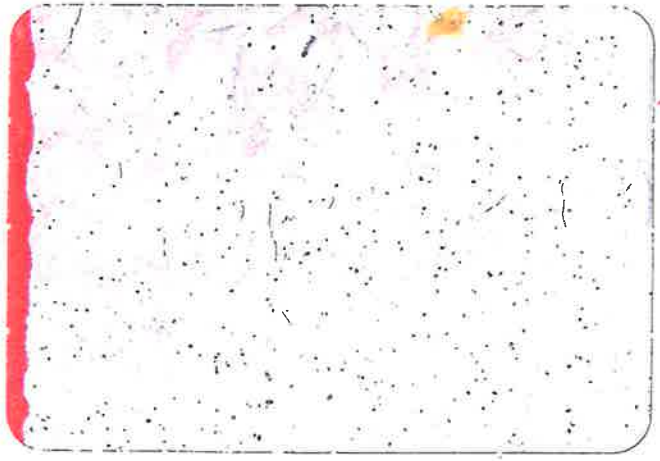
Rich describes the obverse of narcissism, the self under the patriarchal "gaze" of the other. She writes of feeling like "[a] woman waiting behind grimed blinds slatted across a courtyard she never looks into."

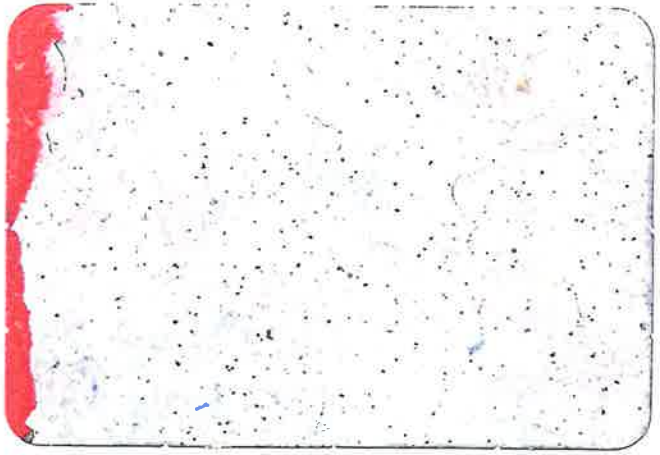
Rich, Poems: Selected and New (1950 -1974) (177)

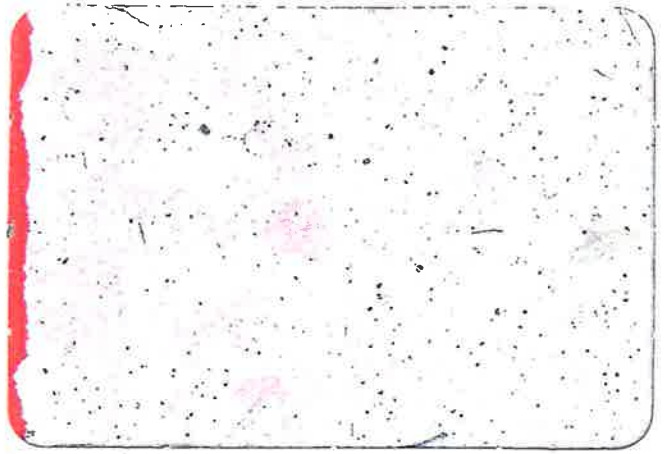












that "truth" and objectivity are not possible, many female writers have continued to use Symbolic logic and language whilst at the same time recognising their inadequacies. This reflects broader trends in all the intellectual disciplines wherein there has been a move from structuralism to poststructuralism, and modernism to postmodernism, characterised by motions towards fragmentation, micro-narratives, the chaotic, the irregular, and the everyday. Broderick concludes an extreme view in which he asserts that it is impossible to distinguish between the disciplines, and that science is just another form of narrative and myth. In such a world, feminist writers need new perspectives and methodologies. Grosz suggests that a plurality of perspectives and a multiplicity of models are appropriate for contemporary feminist philosophy. Haraway calls such perspectives "positionings" and suggests they be used to construct an "earthwide networks of connections" within which the contemporary subject may "interrogate positionings" and "join rational conversations and fantastic imaginings" in order to effect political change.

Although Grosz queries the possibility and nature of women's writing within the Anglo-American-Australian tradition, it seems that feminist science-fiction writing may help to effect the goals that this section suggests as desirable, and Kristevan theory may be a key to opening up such possibilities. In pursuing these options, I respond to Oliver's third difficulty as located in Reading Kristeva. This relates to the possible "usefulness" of Kristevan theory for contemporary feminisms. In the following section, I stress Kristevan theory as informative to readings across other texts. I assert its most important "use" as a fundamental "building block," in conjunction with other theory, in productive feminist speculations on possible female subjectivities (melding Kristevan and other theory) and alternative utopian and dystopian visions of female and feminist lives and futures. It seems that the experimental and uncertain spaces of such visions may be tentatively approached by means of a dramatic refiguring of Kristevan and other theory in order to decide more fulfilling, radically other possibilities, which have not yet been realised.

SECTION THREE: USING KRISTEVAN THEORY TO READ ACROSS TEXTS AND SPECULATE FORWARDS

Introduction

In the final section of this thesis, I refer back to previously extrapolated aspects of Kristevan theory, such as her existentially based understandings of subjectivity as struggling, non-specific, and abject, her idiosyncratic use of psychoanalytic and related terms such as the pre-Oedipal Mother, the Symbolic Father, abjection, and *jouissance*, and her postmodern understandings of the determinant yet fragile nature of any particular language within the totality of Symbolic subjectivity and various "eruptions" into these aspects.

This allows feminist readings of earlier and contemporary texts using Kristevan and other theory. Perhaps most importantly, it informs productive feminist speculations on possible female subjectivities and alternative utopian and dystopian visions of female and feminist lives and futures. It seems that such "use" is probably one of the most important ways that Kristevan theory may be considered. In Reading Kristeva, Oliver also concludes: "The most interesting parts of my analysis are those in which I present a recuperative reading, against the grain, of Kristeva's writings in order to make them more useful for feminism." [My emphasis] (17).

Reading across earlier texts

Firstly, Kristevan theory may be used to productively read across earlier texts in order to understand their contemporary feminist relevance. This has already been demonstrated by feminist theorists including Makiko Minow-Pinkney in "Virginia Woolf: 'Seen from a Foreign Land'" (1990) and Maud Ellman in "Eliot's Abjection" (1990).

In "Virginia Woolf," Minow-Pinkney explains that both Kristeva and Woolf understand texts in terms of a melding of "semiotic impulses and thetic control" (158). In Revolution in Poetic Language, Kristeva asserts:

> [A] text, in order to hold together as a text . . . [requires] a completion [finition], a structuration, a kind of totalization of semiotic motility. This completion constitutes a synthesis that requires the thesis of language in order to come about, and the semiotic pulverizes it only to make it a new device. . . . [Kristeva's emphasis] (51)

Minow-Pinkney's point is that both Kristeva's and Woolf's texts evidence an urge to formality into which *jouissance* intervenes. She concludes this on the basis of Woolf's use of a variety of technical devices to "fluctuate" the unified and fixed positionality of the subject in language. She lists these technical devices as including

> free, indirect speech. . . . [It also] includes the excessive use of present participles . . . excessive use of the conjunction 'for' . . . making writing 'porous' . . . by means of what Woolf called her 'tunnelling process' . . . the intrusion of lengthy phrases between subject and predicate . . . [and] the break up of syntaxis into parataxis. . . . (160-61)

Minow-Pinkney's second point is that the subjectivities of Woolf's "characters" may be read in terms of Kristevan understandings of semiotic interventions into Symbolic Being. She asserts that this is clear in Mrs Dalloway (1925), Orlando (1928), A Room of One's Own (1929), The Waves (1931), "Kew Gardens" (1919), and "The Mark on the Wall" (1917). For instance, Minow-Pinkney describes Mrs Dalloway as having a dispersed subjectivity which momentarily fuses with objects that she sees and more often dissolves "gradually in the rhythm of her manual occupation" (163). She observes that Orlando's subjectivity in Orlando is sexually non-specific. It is a heterogeneous and open ended play of difference, "a traversal, a constant alternation of positions" (165). Minow-Pinkney quotes Woolf's assertion that Orlando "was a man; she was a woman. It was a most bewildering and whirligig state to be in" (165).

She also observes that Woolf understands Orlando's circumstance as generally representative of female subjectivity. She quotes Woolf from A Room of One's Own as asserting that "to have a father as well as a mother . . . one must be woman-manly or man-womanly" (165). Minow-Pinkney describes loosely corporeal subjectivity as disintegrating entirely in The Waves when Rhoda experiences psychic breakdown and hallucinations. She asserts that this disintegration is most clear in "Kew Gardens" when Woolf writes of the self "dissolving like drops of water in the yellow and green atmosphere, staining it faintly with red and blue" (161).

Likewise, Ellman reads Eliot's vision of The Waste Land (c.1923) in terms of Kristevan abjection. She writes of the pervasive "brown fog" in which corpses proliferate and erode the perimeters of life (181). According to Ellman, this land between can be understood as the space of female subjectivity. Ellman understands this from her reading of "The Fire Sermon" (from The Waste Land) wherein the city and a woman's body melt together. She quotes Eliot:

> 'Trams and dusty trees.
> Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew
> Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees
> Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe.'
>
> 'My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart
> Under my feet. After the event
> He wept. He promised me "a new start."
> I made no comment. What should I resent?'
>
> 'On Margate Sands.
> I can connect
> Nothing with nothing.
> The broken finger nails of dirty hands.
> My people humble people who expect

Nothing.'

To Carthage then I came

Burning burning burning burning
O Lord Thou pluckest me out
O Lord Thou pluckest

burning. (185-86)

Ellman makes the general observation from her reading of Eliot's text that "Eliot himself declares that all the women in 'The Waste Land' are one woman" (185). According to Ellman, this woman is "the very spirit of its own construction, the phantom of its own betweennesses" (185).

Reading across contemporary texts

Kristevan theory may also be used productively to read across some contemporary writing. In particular, connections may be elaborated between Kristeva's descriptions of Guyon's absolute (mystical) merger of self in God as phallic Mother / other and Sandy Jeffs' report of her own subjectivity in "Poems from the Madhouse" (1993), Kristeva's detailing of Romeo and Juliet's partial loss of self in a secular other, "bisexuality," androgyny, and Hewson and Walker's account of fictional "characters'" mergings in Cherished Objects, and Kristeva's elaboration of Narcissus' subjectivity and Walker's disclosure of her own subjectivity in "Line of Sight" (1988).

For instance, I explain that Kristeva understands Guyon's absolute (mystical) merger of self in God as phallic Mother / other as an absolute assertion and loss of the self. This motion creates a tension. As Guyon reaches out for semiotic *jouissance*, she risks abjection (see p.53 above). In a comparable way, in "Poems from the

Madhouse," Jeffs writes of reaching out for something beyond the limitations and sham of sanity and the pain of Being. In so doing, Jeffs hovers at the borders of sanity and insanity. The tension of her circumstance manifests in a reality which she asserts "has a lifelessness of the dead / and the visionlessness of lost dreams" (61). Abjection "leaks" into her subjectivity. It causes her to

> challenge accepted realities.
> She only waits to reveal herself in a pageant of
> lively characters who belong to
> the fringes of the mind's liquid boundaries. (61)

It also causes her to abject major features of her subjectivity. These qualities include perception, the loss of perception, and contradiction. She writes:

> I sit
> where perception becomes a burden
> and where the burden becomes the loss of perception.
> What is this world,
> this world of contradictions,
> this torturous maze of distress
> Where confusion reigns and
> clarity remains submerged? (7)

I also explain that Kristeva understands Juliet's secular merger in Romeo as a partial assertion and loss of the self. As Juliet moves towards this blending, she experiences feelings of hatred, malevolence, and revenge towards Romeo. I observe that Kristeva describes "bisexuality" in terms of phallic masculinity and femininity in man as different from phallic masculinity and femininity in woman, and androgyny as a tenuously bounded totality (see pp.55-57 above). In a comparable way, Hewson and Walker's fictional "characters" in Cherished Objects may be read as secular lovers after Kristeva's idiosyncratic understandings of the model of Romeo and Juliet. In this more recent model, Eva leaves Henri although there is no evidence of any feelings of

hatred, malevolence, or revenge in their relationship. As separate embodiments, Eva and Henri represent both polarities of gendered sexual specificity and oppositional semiotic and Symbolic sensibilities under threat from abjection.

Eva's semiotic sensibility is first described as "between cities. . . . She might easily have gone the other way. . . . She was a suspicious woman. . . . She was indifferent to talk" (N. pag). At the same time, Henri is described as a fully Symbolic subject. He believes in "appearance, validity, building . . . directions." Whereas Eva sees a "residual beauty in words . . . poetry that's missing," Henri sees beauty as a "fragment." Eva concludes: "The room was his. . . . [But he] never had the words. . . . [He] will have to learn that other language" (chap. 1).

As the text proceeds, Eva moves towards a Symbolic sensibility. She ceases wishing for "a way of putting trains on maps, not just engines, but speeds and sounds and lengths." She moves towards juxtaposing front yards and parking buildings, space and decoration, and a bridge and liftwell on her maps. She also becomes concerned with becoming "domesticated" and pursues the erotic on her maps where "parking buildings were arcades, were labyrinths, were sites for sex not love." Over this same period of time, Henri begins to doubt the validity of his Symbolic predispositions. He ceases numbering, measuring, dating, locating, and naming and begins to behave in an irrational way. He "sent the plane and report to Eva. He glued the photograph [of a silver plane] to the lid of the suitcase. He sent a description of a bottle to his employer" (chaps. 2-3).

When Eva finally joins or blends with Henri, abjection "hovers" at the borders of their relationship. Eva recognises this border when Henri sends her a blue jar. She refers to it as an "ambiguous frontier." Later, another gift of a white cup from Henri convinces Eva to re-book a seat on the train to go to Henri (chap. 3). The jar and other objects in the text function as fetishes. Henri's motion towards fetishism indicates moments of semiotic eruption into his Symbolic consciousness. Just as Eva

moves towards the masculine / Symbolic / Henri, so Henri moves towards the feminine / semiotic / Eva. Henri links with the Mother via the Oedipal moment at the thetic. In process or prior to blending, Eva and Henri represent possible aspects of Symbolic and semiotic relations. They are the (separated) Kristevan androgyne and as a couple they represent the blended Kristevan "bisexual."

As an androgyne, Eva evidences an incompleteness. This can be understood from Hewson and Walker's metaphoric description of her subjectivity in terms of the room she inhabits.[1] She writes that "there was no-one else staying here. And yet there were rooms with half opened doors and coat-hangers and cases" (chap. 1). As a blended couple, Eva and Henri bring together the four aspects of the Kristevan "bisexual." As a male "bisexual," Henri evidences both a Symbolic "masculinity" and a semiotic "femininity." He concludes that "the silver plane was elemental to his case, he isolated it for days. He photographed it, and wrote a report for the tall woman (in which he quoted Eva's opinion that some yards are like cabinets)." As a female "bisexual," Eva evidences a semiotic "femininity" and a Symbolic "masculinity." Walker writes that:

> Eva drew the floor plan of a building which housed the cars. . . . Under it she placed a yard divided into small sections, each containing either rocks, shells, figurines, tiny Chinese bridges, or plastic animals. Up in the right hand corner she put the plane. (chap. 3)

When Eva and Henri merge, they bring together the four different aspects of the Kristevan "bisexual," phallic masculinity and femininity in man as different from phallic masculinity and femininity in woman.

I also explain that Kristeva understands Narcissus as an original Source, Unity, and One. She suggests that subjects engage in narcissistic speculations in order to explore the limits of their subjectivity on the basis that Narcissus is a sage and an internality proper to all subjects (see pp.57-60 above). In Tales of Love, Kristeva further ponders the geography of such subjectivity by reference to Guillaurme de Lorris' text

Romance of the Rose (c1236). She particularly stresses his use of an ancient contemplative tradition which refers to gardens, views, and territories.

Kristeva writes of Lorris' text as a consideration of the amatory space rather than any consideration of the psychological initiative of the free individual or related obstacles. She particularly stresses the spring, wall, and orchard as features of "love's territory, which a lyrical 'I' marks out and tames" (293). In a similar way, Walker engages in narcissistic speculations by means of reference to the same ancient contemplative tradition referring to gardens, views, and territories in "Line of Sight."

In this vision, Walker's spring is the well of her own narcissistic introspection beyond the context of what she refers to as "transitory talk." She finds this particular context in a book on the education of a gardener and books by her favoured traveller (20). By referring to these texts, Walker's wall can be read as the limits of her own possibilities as she understands them to be. Walker concludes that she cannot work with the materials presently available to her. She laments: "I can't turn my street into the Alps, I can't even garden the Italian way, my foreground is several pots of lavender and geraniums, and my background is pictures of the Alps and writings by these two contemporaries" (22).

Walker's orchard comprises the possibilities available to her narcissistic gaze. These include aspects within the wall of her world and other possible worlds and constructed perceptions and "reality." Within these limits, she aims to create a "puzzle" like an old gardener who had

> closed out all sights, made the property exclusive, kept the beauty veiled, visible from the curves after wandering through his forest, for he had left gaps; he based his garden on gaps, spaces of difference and distance, keeping sacred the inside and outside. (21)

19: Narcissus' otherness: also open, gaping and mortal

"As to the mythical Narcissus, he is a modern character much closer to us. He breaks with the ancient world because he turns sight into origin and seeks the other opposite himself, as product of his own sight. He then discovers that the reflection is no other but represents himself, that the other is the presentation of the self. Thus, in his own way, Narcissus discovers in sorrow and death the alienation that is the constituent of his own image. Deprived of the One, he has no salvation; otherness has opened up within himself. . . . If he is alone with him who is alone, his otherness is not completed within totality, it does not become internality. It remains open, gaping, mortal, because deprived of a One."

Kristeva, Tales of Love (121)

It seems that Walker has no desire to move beyond the possibilities contained by the walls of her subjectivity. She concludes that she must "resist leaving my house. . . . In my spare room I have laid out maps and lists." This is so that she can look from the safety of her own space. She further asserts that "my face will change, because I'll be home amongst the high people" (29).

Speculations on possible female subjectivities

Kristeva's explorations of some assertions and losses of subjectivity clarify the limits of human Being and promote a narcissistic return to the self (see pp.53-60 above). From this position, Kristeva further suggests that subjects seek to transcend their subjectivity. She theorises this in terms of her psychoanalytic theory and practice. In Tales of Love, she writes that analysands should return to, confront, and accept the facts of their condition. Then, they should speak from this position in order to affirm their Being. Kristeva theorises that this will ameliorate individual suffering and deformed subjectivities, and effect a transcendence of Being (linked to forgiveness) as various crises are absorbed into psychic structures, making them more complex and supple, and increasingly capable of love (379-83). She writes that this will

> actualize the seeming, the imagination. . . . [Kristeva speaks] in favour of saturating powers and counterpowers with imaginary constructions phantasmatic, daring, violent, critical, demanding, shy. . . . Imagination succeeds where the narcissist becomes hollowed out and the paranoid fails.[2]
>
> (381)

However, in Black Sun, Kristeva theorises that any form of transcendence is necessarily limited. She writes:

> It is by making his words suitable for his commiseration and, in that sense, accurate that the subject's adherence to the forgiving ideal is accomplished and effective forgiveness for others as well as for oneself becomes possible. . . . [But] writing is bound to evil not only at the outset (in its pre-text, in its

objects) but also at the end, in the absoluteness of its universe that excludes all otherness. (217)

These views have roots in, or resonances with the existential philosophy of Albert Camus.[3] In The Myth of Sisyphus (1942), Camus writes of transcendence in terms of a confrontation, acceptance, and a continual return to subjectivity. He describes Sisyphus as rising above his suffering at the very moment he returns to his torment.

> That hour like a breathing-space which returns as surely as his suffering, that is the hour of consciousness. At each of those moments when he leaves the heights and gradually sinks towards the lairs of the gods, he is superior to his fate. He is stronger than his rock. (109)

This confrontation, acceptance, and continual return to subjectivity, in concert with a certain scorning of the human condition, allows the realisation:

> One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches that higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He, too, concludes that all is well. The universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (111)

In other words, both Kristeva and Camus understand human subjectivity in terms of a confrontation, acceptance, and continual return to suffering Being in order to affirm subjectivity as they imagine it. Kristeva views this in terms of a certain forgiveness of self / others / life in order to make the self more capable of a "love" necessarily limited by "evil." Camus writes of a similar subjective response in which Sisyphus returns to his suffering in order to attain self-consciousness and victory over his "fate." Like the Kristevan subject, his success is necessarily limited but the struggle is understood as sufficient in itself.

Other theorists consider the notion of transcendence and some assert its value. For example, in "The Transcendence of the Individual" (1989), John H. Smith concludes:

> [A] conception of transcendence may seem denigrating to some, since the subject can never again, literally or figuratively in the ethics and metaphysics of presence, be 'full of itself.' Yet this particular 'status' constitutes the individual subject's freedom and potential for human understanding. [Smith's emphasis] (98)

Some feminist theorists also consider notions of transcendence. In "Religion" (1990), Mary Tulip writes of a form of female transcendence in which the subject returns to the self. She asserts that this is both a "political" and "courageous" act.

> It involves finding the divine in ourselves, in our body truth, in the 'small places' of our lives, our daily pleasure and work, our relationships, away from inflated egos and ambitions. . . . Transcendence in this spirituality comes through immanence, the body, the here and now, being in touch with the spirit within nature and history, not rising above them to some other realm. (253-54)

Whereas Tulip writes of transcending the self by means of turning inwards and focusing on female corporeality, other feminists like Jeffner Allen in "An Introduction to Patriarchal Existentialism: A Proposal for a Way out of Existential Patriarchy" (1989), theorise female subjectivity in terms of both a turning inwards and an expansion outwards. By turning inwards, women may connect with the female self within the limits of the self, and by turning outwards they may connect with other women beyond the borders of the self. Allen calls this motion "sinuosity." She asserts:

> Sinuosity is a pattern of connectedness that constitutes women's experiences of being in a world. Sinuosity is a dynamic structure that enables the emergence of a positive women-identified sensibility and feminist experience. [Allen's emphasis] (81)

She particularly focuses on the motion outwards in which women connect with other women by means of trust, care, touch, love, and freedom. She asserts that this forges links by means of a "gathering the curving, winding, folding of women's lives." Allen writes:

> The sinuous undulates, ripples, in the breeze. It slithers silvery on moonlit nights. The sinuous billows in the waving fields of corn, the flowing of a mane, the rolling in laughter of joyous celebration. At the same time, the sinuous names the sinew, the tendon, tough and strong. Here anger and revolt are embedded in women's muscles, giving us the endurance to shape a world of our priorities and delights. The determinations of resistance and survival which women make daily craft the sinuous by a bold taking of risks. (82)

Allen stops short of eulogising sinuosity as a metaphysical paradise promising perfection or an "ideal" existence on the basis of the difficulties necessarily involved in the course of its development. These obstructions include the judgemental actions of patriarchy and the difficulties involved in emphasising one's own feelings and experiences (82-83).

Allen's feminist vision of sinuosity seems to have aspects in common with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's understandings of the rhizome. In On the Line (1983), these theorists describe the features of the rhizome as comprising the principles of connection and heterogeneity, multiplicity, a-signifying rupture, and cartography and decalcomania (11-28). Connection and heterogeneity refer to the rhizome's capacity to connect any point on its surface with any other point, which it must do (11). Deleuze and Guattari assert that this expands its features as individual characteristics combine into new and different compounded permutations. They write,

> none of [the rhizome's] features necessarily refers to features of the same kind. . . . [It] doesn't allow itself to be reduced to the One or the Many. . . . It is not made of units but of dimensions, or rather of shifting directions. It has

neither beginning nor end, but always a middle, through which it pushes and overflows. (47)

Rhizomic multiplicity refers to a lack of structure in which the rhizome is "neither subject nor object - only determinations, sizes, and dimensions" (14) and the understanding that lines of segmentation and stratification are dimensions as well as "lines of flight or of deterritorialization as the maximal dimension according to which, by following it, the multiplicity changes its nature and metamorphoses" (48).

These rhizomic lines may rupture. Deleuze and Guattari see this as an important feature as this allows the rhizome to be cracked and broken at any point in order that it may start "off again following one or another of its lines, or even other lines" (17-18). As such, the rhizome has no beginning or ending - it "is always in the middle, between things, interbeing. . . . The tree imposes the verb 'to be' but the rhizome is woven together with conjunctions: 'and . . . and . . . and'" (57). In other words, the rhizome is open and unlocated. It proceeds by "avoiding every orientation towards a culminating point or external end" (49).

Finally, Deleuze and Guattari understand the rhizome in terms of cartography and decalcomania. By this they mean that it is "a map and not a tracing" (25) at the same time that "the tracing must always be transferred onto the map" [their emphasis] (28). By means of such cartography and "collage," they propose a product which is produced or constructed and is "always detachable, connectable, reversible, and modifiable, with multiple entrances and exits, with its lines of flight" (48-49).

By melding Kristeva's, Allen's and Deleuze and Guattari's theory together, it becomes possible to productively speculate on possible female subjectivities beyond presently available models. In Tales of Love, Kristeva asks:

Are we to build a psychic space, a certain mastery of the One, at the very heart of the anguished, suicidal, and impotent people? Or on the contrary are

> we to follow, impel, favour breakaways, driftings? . . . We should . . . [let the psyche] remain floating, empty at times, inauthentic, obviously lying. Let it pretend, let the seeming take itself seriously, let sex be as unessential because as important as a mask or a written sign - dazzling outside, nothing inside.
>
> (379- 80)

Kristeva's disregard of a mastery of the One may be aligned with Deleuze and Guattari's notions of connection and heterogeneity in terms of the rhizome's characteristic of not allowing itself to be reduced to either the One or the Many. Kristeva's favouring of breakaways, driftings, floating, emptiness, inauthenticity, and lies, may be aligned with Deleuze and Guattari's other understandings of rhizomic multiplicity in terms of its being neither subject nor object, a-signifying rupture in terms of a certain cracking, breaking, and starting off again, having no beginning or ending, being always in the middle, and cartography and decalcomania in ways which are detachable, connectable, reversible, and modifiable, with multiple entrances and exits along lines of flight. These aspects may also be connected with Allen's views concerning the curving, winding, folding nature of female subjectivity and its capacity for endurance, resistance, survival, and risk taking.

Kristeva also writes in Tales of Love that "in the rapture of love, the limits of one's own identity vanish, at the same time that the precision of reference and meaning becomes blurred in love's discourse" (2). Kristeva's psychoanalytic-postmodern understandings of the fragility of subjective boundaries and meanings may be aligned with Deleuze and Guattari's understandings of connection and heterogeneity in which the rhizome comprises shifting directions, without beginning or end, but rather a middle, through which the rhizome pushes and overflows, rhizomic multiplicity in terms of the breaking down of lines of segmentation and stratification, and a-signifying rupture in which there is an emphasis on interbeing.

Kristeva also writes of love's impossible vision in Tales of Love in which

> love . . . expand[s] me to the dimensions of the universe. Which one? Ours, his and mine mingled, enlarged. Expanded, infinite space, where, out of my lapses, I utter, through the interpolated loved one, the conjuring up of an ideal vision. Mine? His? Ours? Impossible and yet maintained. (5)

Kristeva's understandings of expanded and mingled tenuous subjectivity may be aligned with Deleuze and Guattari's understandings of connection and heterogeneity in which the rhizome pushes and overflows its limits, rhizomic multiplicity in terms of a lack of structure, a-signifying rupture in that there is no beginning or ending, only an inter-being, openness or unlocatedness, and cartography and decalcomania in that it is something that is produced or constructed, something that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, and modifiable. It also evidences correspondences with Allen's pattern in which women reach out to each other in motions of trust, care, touch, love, and freedom.

The types of possible female subjectivities that meldings of all these aspects suggest are clearly beyond the possibilities of the Kristevan vision alone. Kristeva only hints at the possibility of such subjectivities in *"'Bataille' l'experience et la practique"* (1973), by writing of "the possibility of a new subject which . . . gives it back its heterogeneous negativity and at the same time gives it back its pleasure [*jouissance*]" [Kristeva's emphasis] (287). At the same time, in The Kristeva Reader she asserts: "A woman has nothing to laugh about when the symbolic order collapses" (150).

Such a possibility, referring to the theorised combined vision suggested above, may be partly recognised in Marion Campbell's text, Lines of Flight: A Novel (1985). Campbell's "character" seeks out her subjectivity:

> So you have come to Europe to find yourself
>
> they say. Ha.

Your egosystem.

No room for anyone else.

Too choked on you you you. . . . (26)

[At the same time] The glass need not send back a victim face. The train that takes her need not say THANATOS THANATOS with its wheels. [Campbell's emphasis] (208)

Campbell's "character" indicates a Kristevan subjectivity comprising subjective breakaways, driftings, floating, emptiness, and inauthenticity. The limits of this identity vanish and precision and reference blur. Such subjectivity is rhizomic to the extent that it comprises points which cannot be reduced to either One or Many. It is made of dimensions or shifting directions. It has no beginning or ending, only a middle through which it pushes and overflows. It lacks structure and comprises lines of segmentation and stratification which also function as lines of flight or of deterritorialisation, multiplicity and metamorphosis. It is prone to cracking and starting off again, openness and unlocatedness, and exhibits characteristics of the detachable, connectable, reversible, and modifiable, and has multiple entrances and exits with its lines of flight. It also evidences patterns akin to those described by Allen, as tough, strong, angry, revolutionary, and with a hint of *jouissance* to come.

Other aspects of sinuosity, especially in terms of connectedness and dynamic structure in which female subjectivity undulates, ripples, slithers, billows, waves, rolls, and flows, may be recognised in Campbell's passages:

Antoine's teeth are so perfect, white, and the lips part and those eyes, are they still reading it all, following mine along the jagged caprice of cracks in the wall, losing their way in the leafless tangle around that attic window. . . . (35)

and

I wouldn't worry about Sébastien. . . . Here the projection blurs as they ruminate on either side of the table. No, Rita cannot reclaim Raymond's

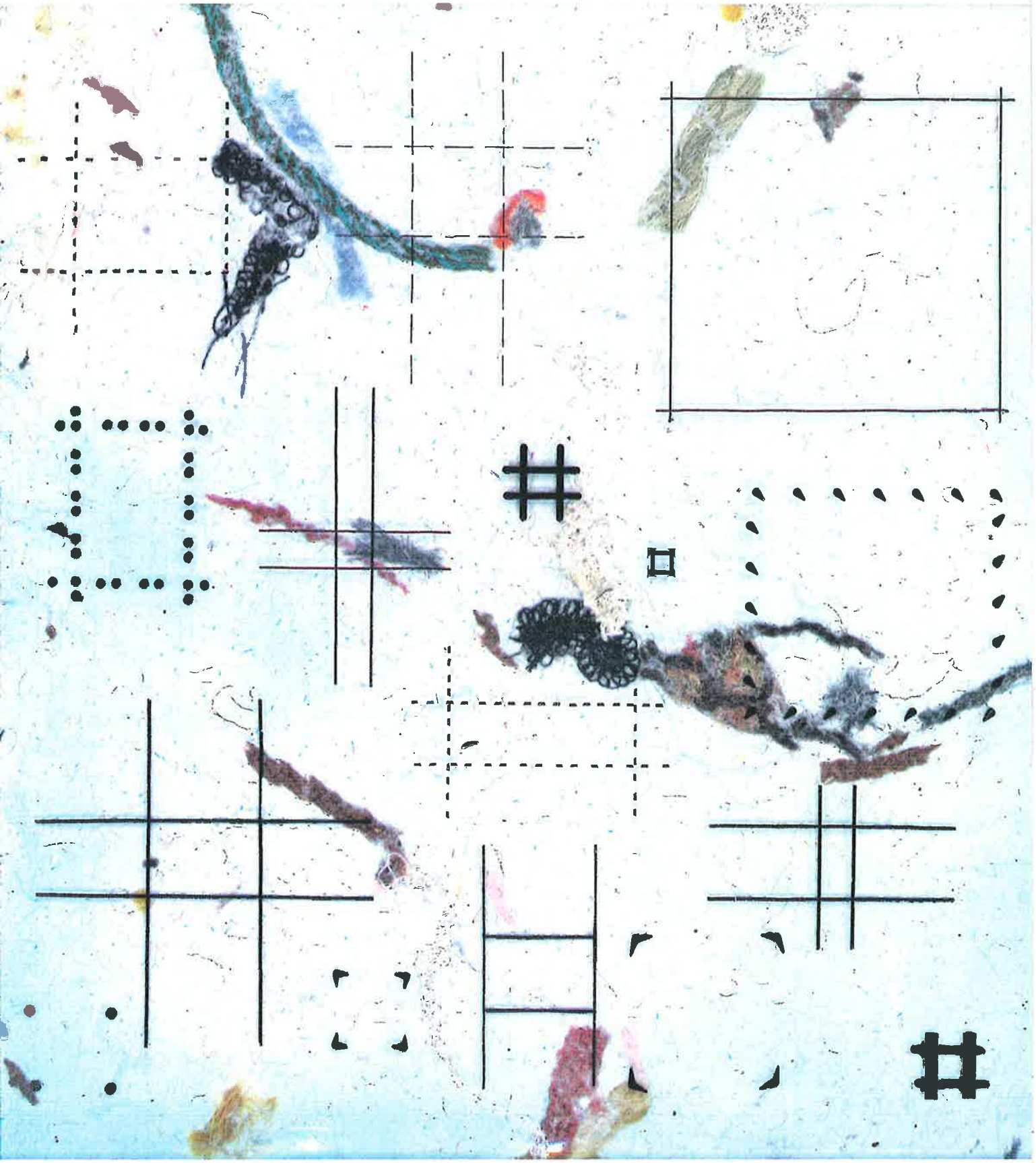
> intimacy. . . . Got a lover in my borrowed bed. . . . She should fix herself an address closer to Sébastien to receive this new life. . . . There need be no solitude like after Jean. . . . [Then she observes] The deep pores in the swarthy neck of the man at the bar. (208)

Campbell's "character's" subjectivity also represents an "ideal" Kristevan subjectivity in which there are breakaways and inauthenticity, the vanishing of limits of identity, precision of reference and the blurring of meaning as there is a mingling of subjectivities from that of Rita to the clown's to a compounded Rita / clown melding. This embodiment comprises hers / the clown's / theirs. It is what Kristeva refers to in Tales of Love as an expansion, mingling, and motion towards larger and infinite forms in which "I" becomes "ours" lost in an "impossible yet maintained" form of Being (5). There are also characteristics, familiar from the work of Deleuze and Guattari, which include a pushing and overflowing of subjectivity, interbeing, openness, unlocatedness, the production or constitution of subjectivity understood as detachable, connectable, reversible, and modifiable, as well as indications of lines of segmentation and stratification becoming lines of flight or deterritorialization. All these can be recognised in Campbell's passage:

> In this further corridor, we were affronted by one last garish gimmick: a dozen Rita Finnertys as side-show alley clowns. . . . This ventriloquized, ill-synchronized chorus of clowns was calling another game:
>
> To find the exit, follow the lines.
>
> But in this white passage, there were no markers. Once again it seemed, one was required to plot one's own. [Campbell's emphasis] (291)

20: "A woman has nothing to laugh about when the symbolic order collapses"

"A woman has nothing to laugh about when the symbolic order collapses. She can take pleasure in it if, by identifying with the mother, the vaginal body, she imagines she is sublime, repressed forces which return through the fissures of the order. But she can just as easily die from this upheaval, as a victim or a militant, if she has been deprived of a successful maternal identification and has found in the symbolic paternal order her one superficial, belated and easily severed link with life."
Kristeva, Kristeva Reader (150)



Speculations on alternative utopian and dystopian visions of female and feminist lives and futures

The possible female subjectivities considered above must necessarily be located within a female and feminist context. This motion is in keeping with Kristevan tendencies. In "Julia Kristeva and the Traversal of Modern Poetic Space" (1977), Verena Andermatt writes: "In the generative flow of Kristeva's declaration, space comes after bodily drive" [Andermatt's emphasis] (67). However, it is not yet possible to describe this space as it is only presently a speculative possibility. This circumstance has much in common with that of contemporary feminist theatre as described by Dinah Luise Leavitt in Feminist Theatre Groups (1980). In this text, Leavitt asserts:

> It is too soon to identity an original form in feminist drama precisely because women are still experimenting with and searching for forms that appeal to them. . . . [As Woolf asserts A Room of One's Own] 'masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people, so that the experiences of the mass is behind the single voice.' (99)

This assertion may seem dated[4] but in "Women's Performance Art: Feminism and Postmodernism" (1990), Jeanie Forte concludes that it is only recently that "women's performance art provides a visible basis for the construction of a feminist frame of reference, articulating alternatives for power and resistance" [My emphasis] (269).

I now search for an appropriate female and feminist space in which to insert possible female subjectivities. This is an experimental gesture towards a yet to be realised form and my personal contribution towards a future, collective, feminist solution. I suggest this model as a poetic space after the models of Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde. This allows the use of the powerful tools of Symbolic logic and

language to release female and feminist "forces" and otherwise name the "unnameable."

In On Lies, Secrets and Silence: Selected Prose, 1966 - 1978 (1979), Rich asserts:

> Poetry is, among other things, a criticism of language. . . . Poetry is above all a concentration of the *power* of language, which is the power of our ultimate relationship to everything in the universe. It is as if forces we can lay claim to in no other way, become present to us in sensuous form. [Rich's emphasis]
>
> (248)

And, in "Poetry is Not a Luxury" (1977), Lorde writes:

> Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. . . . Poetry coins the language to express and charter this revolutionary awareness and demand. . . . In the forefront of our move toward change, there is only our poetry to hint at possibility made real. (126-27)

In using poetry in this way, I suggest a particular "type" of poetic space considering the priorities located by Grosz in "Women and Writing" (see p.75 above), a motion backwards to Kristevan understandings of poetic, avant-garde, or revolutionary texts (see pp.5-7 above), and an engagement with feminist science-fiction writing and "cyberspaces."

In the first case, Grosz clarifies that it seems that contemporary women have no choice but to engage with Symbolic logic and language. They may do so either in ways which challenge grammar, syntax, or sense, or break codes or otherwise deal innovatively with language. They may fracture and challenge notions including such aspects as heroes, plots, or points of view. Alternatively, women may engage more clearly with straight-forward and accessible language. They may create female heroes to engage with women's "activities" and "interests." They may figure sexual reversals or reversals of content. It seems that radical possibilities may be approached by either

method. In the case of the second model, Kristeva's understandings of the poetic, avant-garde, or revolutionary (in which the archaic pre-Oedipal Mother emerges in language and subjectivity as the "feminine" or *jouissance*) may effect a challenge to Symbolic Law at the same time that it may be melded with more recent theory such as feminist science-fiction writing and "cyberspaces."

This is an especially important gesture as in Introduction (1976), Pamela Sargent asserts that:

> Science fiction conveys conditional, hypothetical, or 'lived-through' futures. . . . The science fiction writer can show how these future worlds might feel. Once the reader becomes, even if only for a short time, a part of the world he or she reads about, a psychological acceptance of certain future possibilities is created. [Sargent's emphasis] (xii)

Within the context of feminist science-fiction writing, cyberspace has a particular potential. In "Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?: Boundary Stories about Virtual Cultures" (1991), Alluquere Rosanne Stone defines cyberspace as

> a three-dimensional consensual locus or . . . a 'consensual hallucination' in which data may be visualized, heard, and even felt. . . . [In these spaces there is] the collapse of the boundaries between the social and the technological, biology and machine, natural and artificial that are part of the postmodern imaginary. (84-85)

In "The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace" (1992), Michael Heim writes of the essentially Gnostic aspect of cybertech culture in which cyberspace makes "flesh feel like a prison, a fall from grace, a sinking descent into a dark, confusing reality. From the pit of life in the body, the virtual life looks like the virtuous life" (75).

In order to suggest ways in which to climb out of the present "prison" or "pit" of female subjectivities towards "new or strange surroundings" into a "consensual

hallucination" in which women may visualise, hear, or even feel more "true" female subjectivities, I refer to three other critical texts. These are Susan Howe's poem "Pythagorean Silence" (1982), Peter Middleton's "On Ice: Julia Kristeva, Susan Howe and the avant garde poetics" (1991), and Oliver's Reading Kristeva.

In the first case, in "Pythagorean Silence," Howe writes of an "oceanography" which may be compared with Kristeva's "cosmogony." Howe's "oceanography" is evident in the following passage:

> Intellectual idea and (Real) being
> Perpetual swipe of glaciers dividing
>
> pearl (empyrean ocean)
> Text of traces crossing orient
> and occident . . .
>
> what ships I have seen
> Sails filling or falling
> horizons wandering real world
>
> and yet a dream world
> (immediacy) hold fast to this. . . . (56)

In "On Ice," Middleton describes the "oceanography" of Howe's visions as a sea as

> text crossed by traces (or composed of traces) while philosophy (or theory) waits faithfully at home . . . this is not just any sea, this is an empyrean ocean, sky, heaven and ocean at once. The text itself is an ocean where glaciers divide the pearl, the precious jetsam of the sea, where idea and the Real cut through one another as they melt into one another. . . . (87)

The Kristevan "cosmogony" may be understood as an empyrean sky in which the pre-Oedipal Mother, Symbolic Father, abjection, *jouissance*, and the True-Real engage with each other in dramatic ways across the thetic (see pp.8-11, 16, 33-36, 22-23 above). Such interactions may be refigured beyond Kristevan understandings by means of a poetic approach and after the model provided by Oliver in Reading Kristeva. In this text, Oliver asserts the Kristevan prefigured Oedipal situation as operating between "the child (the narcissistic subject), the abject mother (the mother's body), and the imaginary father (the mother's love)." She refigures these terms to correspond to what she calls "the mother's breast (maternal body), the mother's sex (birth), and the mother's womb (conception)" (15).

On the basis of a combined model, I propose that Kristeva's "characters" be considered as that which they are, refigured as abjection and *jouissance* (the pre-Oedipal Mother), contemporary female circumstances and feminisms (the Symbolic Father), and utopian and dystopian visions of female and feminist lives and futures (the struggling, non-specific, abject, and *jouissant* Kristevan subject). Or the pre-Oedipal Mother may be reflected upon as an originary regulator prior to paternal functions evolving into politically correct feminist consciousness, the Symbolic Father may be pondered as an originary prohibition devolving under feminist pressure, the struggling, non-specific, abject, and *jouissant* Kristevan subject may be contemplated in terms of sexual functions and sexual difference, or the pre-Oedipal Mother may be speculated upon as representing a feminist utopian or dystopian goal effected by the Symbolic Father and contemporary female roles and circumstances.

Even if a less radical approach is pursued, the "characters" of the Kristevan imagination are particularly dramatic in that they are oppositional and conflicted in their pursuits of different objectives and are not complex "personalities." In the first case, in Tales of Love, Kristeva describes the archaic Mother as both desirable and frightening. She writes that she is "a mother who knows no taboo, she is preoedipal, the archaic holder of my possible identity" (371). In "The True Real" Kristeva

describes the Symbolic Father as uncertain and ambiguous consequent to the irruption of the True-Real as well as symbolising the Law ruling the acquisition of language (216-36). Likewise, the "madness," "Holiness," and "poetry" of the struggling, non-specific subject's *jouissance* as described by Grosz in Sexual Subversions (52) contrasts with abjection as described by Kristeva in Powers of Horror as that which "disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4).

In the second case, these "characters" are so undeveloped in terms of their "personalities" that they would provide excellent materials for cameos or tableaus after the model of Chardi Christian's "Soul Dolls." In an Unpublished Lecture (1994), Joan Kirby spoke of Christian's Soul Dolls as figuring women's "imaginal inner world" which she then abjects through "the sacred vagina as shaman to the inner world." In an advertising flyer for her workshops, Christian quotes Clarissa Pinkola Estés: "The doll is . . . the symbol of what lies buried in humans that is numinous. It is a small and glowing facsimile of the original self. . . . In the doll is the voice. . . . The one who knows" (app. 2). Christian's Soul Dolls could be easily refigured to depict the movement of the pre-subject into the Symbolic order, the eruption of *jouissance* into abjection, a hidden femininity, and the residual power of the archaic, pre-Oedipal Mother.

Another possibility may be the use of Kristevan theory in pursuing utopian and dystopian visions of female and feminist lives and futures. In Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination (1986), Tom Moylan clarifies the general importance of the utopian imagination. He writes:

> The power of subversive imagining to move people beyond the present towards a more fulfilling future is now expressed and understood as a more complex mechanism than those writing and working for radical change during the last wave of utopian discourse in the 1890s might have experienced. . . . Present time is provincial and empty. If humanity becomes too much taken

> with the present, we lose the possibility of imagining a radically other future. We lose the ability to hope. We lose . . . the unexpectedly new, that which pushes humanity out of the present toward the not yet realized future. . . . [But] The utopian moment can never be directly articulated, for it does not yet exist. It must always speak in figures which call out structurally for completion and exegesis in theory and practice. [My emphasis] (15-23)

He particularly emphasises that writers should

> reject utopia as a blueprint while preserving it as dream. . . . Dwell on the conflict between the originary world and the utopian society opposed to it so that the process of social change is more directly articulated. . . . [And] focus on the continuing presence of difference and imperfection within utopian society itself and thus render more recognizable and dynamic alternatives. (10-11)

It seems that Moylan's assertions link with those of Leavitt in Feminist Theatre Groups and Forte in "Women's Performance Art." All three theorists assert common desires for more fulfilling, radically other futures which are not yet realised. Leavitt differs from Moylan to the extent that she asserts belief in "masterpieces" whereas Moylan understands the utopia as a "blueprint" but necessary "dream." Forte's understandings of contemporary women's performance art seem particularly close to Moylan's earlier vision. Beyond this, in "From The Female Man," Bonner clarifies that utopian and dystopian visions are clear in all major streams of feminist science-fiction writing but are not presently developed in their own rights. She writes: "I have not declared this a fourth strand" (6). Bonner understands this as a deficit as the utopian vision in female writing seems to be one of the aspects of most political interest to contemporary feminisms. She asserts: "The form that proved most productive for the earliest feminist writers - the utopia or its obverse the dystopia - is that which seems most absent in the survey of women's sf I undertook for this paper" (5-6).

Elsewhere in feminist literature, utopian and dystopian visions are common but lack full realisation. In *Les Guérillères*, Wittig describes women's struggles towards utopian goals by means of a fragmentary series of confrontations between autonomous, lesbian peoples and men in attempts to change the world as it is presently constructed. Women's names printed in capital letters, poems, and three large circles representing the vulva accompany the written text (in much the same way that I include twenty-one reproductions of my collages in this thesis as a fictocritical gesture). Wittig asserts in her utopian visions that women's "violence is extreme. . . . No one can restrain them" (99). However, the precise nature of life after female victory is unclear. Some female "characters" stress feminist struggle by admonishing women: "Awake / take courage / the struggle is long / the struggle is arduous / but power is at the end of a rifle" (141). Others seek to "re-educate" young men by asserting "now you understand that we [women] have been fighting as much for you as for ourselves. . . . [And now] all trace of violence must disappear from this earth, then the sun will be honey-coloured and music good to hear" (127). One woman cries "let us remember the women who died for liberty" (144).

Ania Walwitz figures a dystopia and utopia in conjunction in "fairytale" (1988). In this genre, Walwitz humorously describes some of the difficulties associated with marriage for contemporary, intelligent, educated women. She writes of three princesses, two of whom are ugly but clever. These ugly but clever princesses want to get married after they finish their doctorates but do not like handsome princes because they are not clever enough. They also do not like clever princes because they are not attractive enough. The ugly but clever princesses eventually produce "perfect" partners out of the different parts of all their suitors. These constructions are "versions" of Frankenstein's monster. Eventually, the two princesses kill their constructions when they discover that they enjoy work more than marriage (57-58).

Less humorously, in "Living Alone: The New Spinster (Some Notes)" (1988), Inez Baranay describes her female and feminist experiences of living alone as a best

possible utopian solution to the organisation of living arrangements. She writes:

> Everything stays the way you left it. The good chocolate you've been saving for the next craving remains in the fridge. You can be obsessively neat or disgustingly messy and no-one cares. You can watch TV at 3am, sleep at 7pm, red wine in the morning and breakfast at night and no-one cares. . . . How modern to love living alone for that. For no-one to care. . . . (Loneliness etc notwithstanding) I still prefer it. (15-16)

At the same time, Baranay acknowledges the dystopia inherent in such a vision. She agonises over the issues of not living with men, gloominess, exhaustion, old age, poverty, and death, while her friend contemplates a reunion with her ex-husband (16-18).

Antonia Bruns figures the utopia and dystopia in conjunction with each other in terms of lesbianism and heterosexual relations. In "the Diary of Embraces" (1988), Bruns describes the tenderness and union of love-making with a man and a woman. She concludes the dystopia of intimacy with a man and the utopia of lesbian relations. She writes:

> We embrace, we are joined at head and heart. He says he feels great tenderness. . . . We embrace and she is my twin. My head is at her feet. . . . He embraces me as a man who cannot forget his authority. . . . We embrace and she is my heart. . . . He stabs me with his embrace. We hide in our [lesbian] embrace. We are covered in blood, we are covered in blood. (22-23)

Readings of Leavitt's Feminist Theatre Groups allow the conclusion that all the utopian and dystopian visions cited above are efforts towards "consciousness raising" or "political change" by means of feminist action / violence (93-94). The utopia of my different vision is beyond this. It is something that is yet to be realised. It is a possibility that is yet unclear. All that is evident is that it is a poetic space and somewhere beyond the Kristevan thetic (comprising the Oedipus complex, the related castration threat, and the imaginary Mirror stage). In the first case, Bonner warns in

"From The Female Man," that it seems best to omit consideration of the Oedipal moment as this seems to refer mainly to male subjectivities. She asserts that "it is mainly male writers who insist on causing their fictional creations to undergo Oedipal crises" (8). And Wittig describes the (different) impasse of women's fixating on the imaginary Mirror stage in *Les Guérillères.* She writes that women first

> move over the smooth shining surface. Their movements are translation, gliding. They are dazed by the reflections over which they pass. Their limbs gain no adhesion anywhere. Vertically and horizontally, it is the same mirror neither hot nor cold, it is the same brilliance which no-where hold them fast. They advance, there is no front, there is no rear. They move on, there is no future, there is no past. . . . They are prisoners of the mirror. (30-31)

The possible utopian space that I propose is hinted at by Middleton with regard to Howe's work. He writes of Howe's work as showing an

> exceptional grasp of the complex intersections of poetry, philosophy, history and sexual politics, manifested in a brilliant attention to the histories of sound and sense in poetic language. . . . [And] her poetry would seem to offer itself as a paradigm of that kind of formal literary experiment which uses linguistic disruption to challenge the existing symbolic order. (81-82)

However, my vision would exceed Howe's vision in that it would also sustain Kristevan thought. It could not be criticised in the way that Middleton refers to Howe's work as

> preoccupied with almost the same topographies of the symbolic and its others, shares the same criticisms of Hegelian negativity, and takes up the textual materials of specific historical periods and subjects them to various deformations. . . . [But it] doesn't sustain Kristeva's theory because the ice has melted into the history of texts. . . . (93)

Final conclusions

In Sections One and Two of this thesis, I respond to the fact that feminist theorists have previously had difficulty interpreting Kristeva's theories and contextualising her thought. I clarify radical differences between Kristevan theory and French feminist views, aspects of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, and postmodernism. I particularly stress Kristeva's idiosyncratic use of some psychoanalytic and related terms, her roots in, or resonances with existential philosophy, and her explorations of some assertions and losses of subjectivity.

It is obvious that it is important to interpret Kristeva's theories and contextualise her thought. It is less clear that her French "essentialism," psychoanalytic, and postmodern leanings are also important. I use these aspects to inform my own speculations on possible female subjectivities. I particularly stress Kristeva's roots in, or resonances with existential philosophy as no one has made this connection before. This helps explain why feminists have previously had difficulty contextualising Kristevan thought. It also provides me with another source for my speculative feminist activities. I demonstrate connections between Kristevan subjectivity and Sartrean Being, subjective non-specificity and existential nothing, nothingness, and negativity, and Kristevan abjection and Sartrean dread, anguish, and nausea, and Kristevan semanalysis, herethics, and existential ethics. Then, I link some of these aspects with Kristeva's explorations of some assertions and losses of subjectivity within broader postmodern, feminist, and other explorations of the borders of subjectivity.

I conclude the fluid nature of female subjectivity and that although Kristeva recognises and encourages such subjectivity in her psychoanalytic theory and practice, she does not go far enough or relate it specifically to women. In Section Three of this thesis, I suggest feminists further "liquefy" the division between self and other(s) by means of combined models comprising aspects from the theories of Kristeva, Allen,

and Deleuze and Guattari. This allows the "type" of subjectivity that I recognise in Campbell's text. Other theorists may further develop and liberate such possible female subjectivities in related models in ways that none may achieve alone.

Such subjectivities necessarily require a female and feminist context. However, it is not yet possible to describe this space as it is only presently a speculative possibility. Feminists are now experimenting with a variety of forms as the common experiences of women have not yet been figured in any paradigmatic models. As a contribution towards this possibility, I suggest a fundamental shift in the way that Kristevan theory is read by contemporary feminists. I suggest aspects of Kristevan thought be conceptualised as a "cosmogony" in which the pre-Oedipal Mother, Symbolic Father, abjection, *jouissance*, and the True-Real interact with each other across the thetic. This allows a poetic position after the models suggested by Rich and Lorde and akin to the "oceanography" of Howe's vision.

In this space there may be dramatic reformulations of Kristeva's "characters'" relations after Oliver's model of reformulation of the Oedipal situation or cameos or tableaus after Christian's example. This may create a particular "type" of feminist science-fiction writing and an particular "type" of cyberspace in which women may climb out of the "prison" or "pit" of their present subjectivities into "consensual hallucinations" comprising "new and strange surroundings" in which women may visualise, hear, or even feel more "true" female subjectivities informed by the theory of Sargent, Stone, and Heim.

The content of such writing is clear only in some aspects. Moylan clarifies the general importance of the utopian vision and Bonner asserts its particular importance in relation to feminism. Bonner and Wittig suggest an avoidance of different aspects of the thetic. However, all such theorists do not go far enough. Their utopian visions only motion towards "consciousness raising" or "political change" by means of feminist action / violence.

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My own gesture is beyond this. It is a vision in which Kristevan theory is used in a fundamentally "practical" way. In another context, Andrew Joyner asserts in "Towards 'Herethics': Feminism and its Maternal Limits in the Writings of Julia Kristeva" (1991), that the "continuity of Kristeva's theoretical project lies, then, in a fundamental concern with practicality" (38) and the strength of Kristeva's feminism "marked by a polyvalent (impossible?) transcendence, rests in the possible futures of this feminine creativity, in a disruptive speech that inhabits even God and the logos" (41).

My own form of "practicality" aims at reading Kristevan theory in ways such as Oliver suggests - in "recuperative reading[s], against the grain . . . in order to make them more useful for feminism" (17). I suggest that this allows the best possible "use" of Kristevan theory at the place where female essentialism, non-essentialism, psychoanalysis, existentialism, postmodernism, history, philosophy, feminism, texts, and other theory intersect. Feminists may proceed from this "trope" by pursuing any number of fantastic imaginings in order to eventually arrive at what Woolf describes in A Room of One's Own as "masterpieces" or "the experience of the mass . . . behind the single voice" (98).

Such activity is not the postmodernism engagement of Jean Baudrillard. In "Interview: Game with Vestiges" (1984), Baudrillard writes of playing with the pieces and "living with what is left" as "survival among the remnants" (24-25). My gesture is a "serious" postmodern engagement in which I formulate some questions and fewer answers requiring further feminist speculative consideration and response.

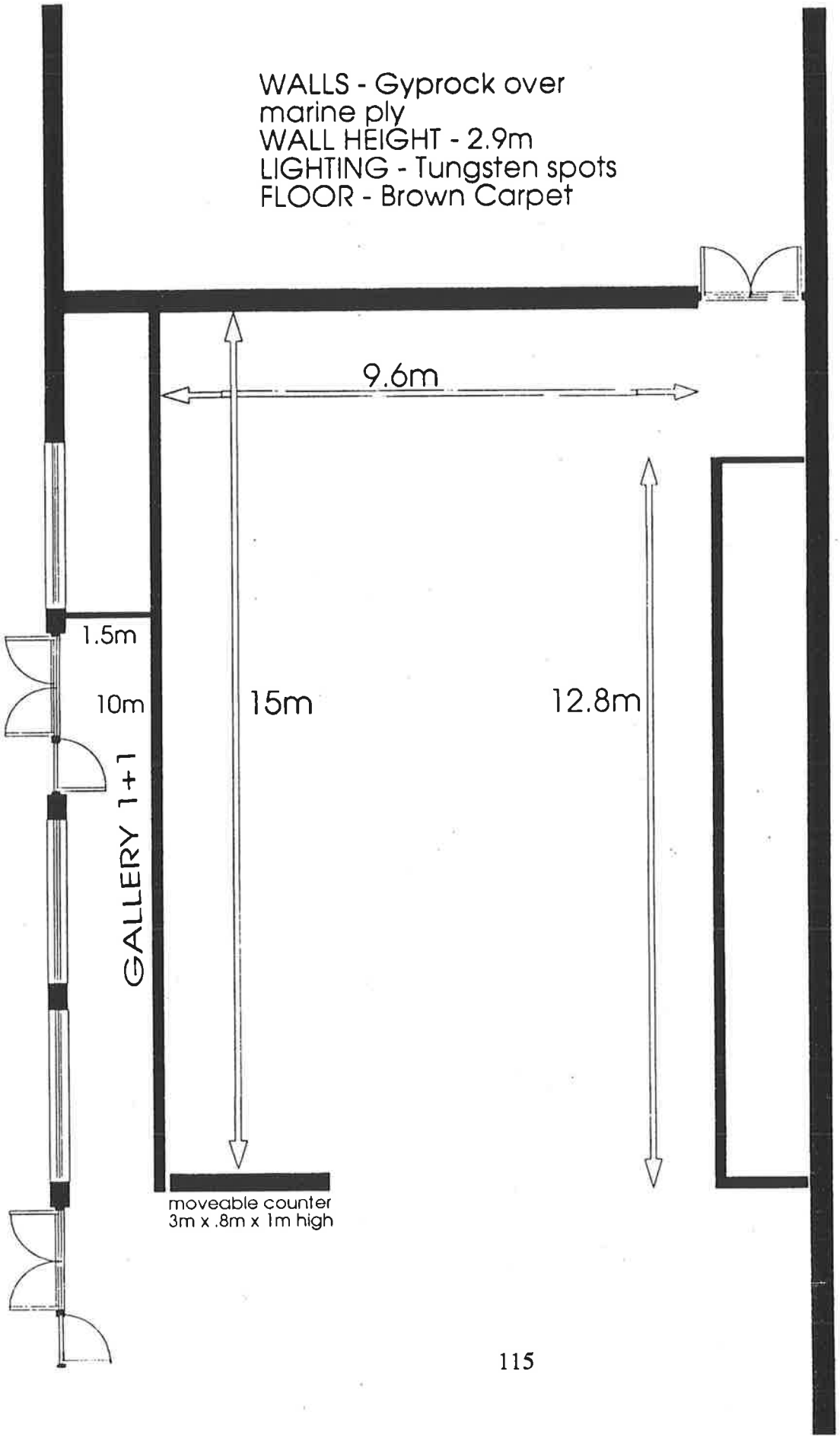
Appendix 1:
Some comments on the exhibition of the art-work

The collages from which the reproductions in this thesis are derived, were originally made by myself and exhibited at the University of Adelaide Union Gallery 1+1 between 8-27 June 1994.

At that time, the pamphlet "Notes on the Work" was distributed to my audience for their general information. This text is included below. Since the exhibition, I have reordered the images for insertion in this text and decided that direct quotations above the images locate them most precisely within this thesis. The fictocritical nature of this gesture is detailed in Section One (see pp.1-3 above).

For my readers' further information, I also include details of the University of Adelaide Union Gallery, an invitation to the exhibition, a review by Suzanne Treister, and a letter about the exhibition from Paul Hewson, who was the Director of the gallery at the time of the exhibition.

THE UNION GALLERY
Level 6 Union House The University of Adelaide SA 5005 telephone (08) 303-5013 fax (08) 223-7165



ADELAIDE UNION

Adelaide University Union
GPO Box 498 Adelaide, 5001
South Australia
Tel: (08) 228 5013
Fax: (08) 223 7165

Gallery

16 September 1993

Ms Pam Illert
12 Hill Road
Eden Hills
SA 5050

Dear Pam,

GALLERY 1+1

I am pleased to offer you an exhibition of the 20 collages relating to your Thesis work, in Gallery 1+1 in 1994.

The proposed dates are June 8-23; you will be showing concurrently with 3 sculpture graduates (Alice Vivian, Jim Cummick and Dean Farrow).

There are no costs levied on the artists who show at The Union Gallery. The gallery takes one-third commission on any sales. The gallery is not able to insure the works.

You should install your work on Monday and Tuesday June 6 and 7. Some assistance is available for this. The opening is from 6-8pm on Wednesday June 8. Gallery hours are weekdays, 9-5.

The gallery will prepare a photocopied catalogue based on the texts which accompany each image.

The dates given above are subject to slight change - I will inform you should this occur.

Please contact me if you need any further information, we shall of course communicate as time wears off.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Hewson
Director
The Union Gallery

SHIFT

Dean K FARROW, Jim KUMNICK, Alice VIVIAN

GLOBAL POSTAGE PAID

OPENING 6pm WEDNESDAY June 8

8 - 23 June, 1994
The Union Gallery
Level 6 Union House
The University of Adelaide SA 5005
weekdays 9am - 5pm

The Union Gallery is supported by Foundation South Australia

GALLERY 1 + 1
RESIDUES
Pam Illert

Pam Illert

RESIDUES

"These collages were originally created as illustrations for my Ph.D. thesis, to be submitted in December 1994. I have called this exhibition *RESIDUES* to emphasise that they (and my text) are the physical objects left behind me in my feminist journey."

Pam Illert, May 1994

Notes on the Work

Frontispiece: Lines on a plateau ($450)
Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari construct a model of the rhizome as analogous to the text. This model has broad feminist implications. For instance, any point in the rhizome can be connected with any other; it is multiple and comprises shifting directions; it has no structure- only lines of flight or deterritorialization; it is strong - but once broken, starts off again following one or another of its lines or other lines. As such, the rhizome is a model of interbeing comprising a series of plateaus of vibrancy and continuity that develop by avoiding all tendencies towards culminating points or ends.

1. The Symbolic, the thetic and the semiotic ($350)
Julia Kristeva uses the term Symbolic in three ways: to refer to the organisation of the social order regulated by paternal, phallic authority; the signifying order governing culture (as language organised in relation to the subject); and the foundation of the repression of the imaginary. She understands the semiotic as a pre-subjective state, time and pleasure comprising formlessly circulating energies associated with the female, the feminine and the maternal. These energies animate the pre-subject's movements and map out a space for it to later occupy. Such aspects are separated by the thetic.

2. The pre-subject ($350)
According to Kristeva, the pre-subject develops inside a pre-Symbolic womb called the *chora* at an unfixed location within the semiotic. This container comprises an endless flow and pulsion of the drives prior to the subject's entry into Symbolic speaking subjectivity.

3. The thetic ($350)
Kristeva asserts the thetic (or boundary between semiotic and Symbolic aspects) as comprising the Imaginary Mirror Stage and the Oedipus complex/castration threat. The Mirror stage provides the pre-subject with its first access to the Symbolic by giving it its first spatial location or position. It allows the pre-subject to constitute itself as both a separate and distinct identity, and a reflection of its mirror/mother/other. Upon entry into language, the subject is split a second time, between the subject in language - or the subject of what is said - and the subject who produces language - or the subject who speaks.

4. Abjection ($500)
Kristeva locates three forms of abjection relating to food, waste and sexual difference (corresponding roughly to oral, anal and genital forms of sexuality). She writes that these abjects require examination in order that the speaking subject may understand the spaces on either side of the inside and outside of the body, between the self and the other, and the means by which the subjects's body becomes a bounded and unified whole.

5. Beauvoir's disembodied woman (NFS)
Simone de Beauvoir understands the female condition as conflicted. She sees biological facts as invested with values in human society at the same time that she understands Woman as something "more" than her body. Woman's struggles between these two contradictory aspects - basically non-essential and essential positions - is the basis of what Beauvoir understands as female "conflict".

6. The abyss (($350)
Friedrich Nietzsche asserts that man [sic] is a rope across an abyss of irrationality. On one side of this abyss is "animality" and on the other side is the "overman". Because "God is dead", man [sic] can achieve transcendence through a "will to power". Heidegger also senses that we live in a time of suspension over an abyss. He suggests that at least some of us should reach into this abyss and endure feelings of suspension perhaps more consciously and faithfully than others. Language and speech are asserted as a means by which subjects may fall upwards into a height and experience some sort of paradoxical exaltation from "letting go" or leaving behind a wilful and self controlled stance.

7. Semiotic pleasure (NFS)
Kristeva theorises the gestural, rhythmical and pre-referential language of the poetic text as a manifestation of an archaic pre-Oedipal, maternal, space, time and pleasure released from the semiotic, into and against the Symbolic.

8. Derrida's ideal world ($500)
Jacques Derrida writes of a possibly ideal process and state of being in which relationships are "sexually otherwise". In his proposed model, there is a multiplicity or indeterminable number of sexually marked voices which multiply the body of each subject beyond all present understandings.

9. The "Look" ($350)
Many individuals have theorised the "Look" or Gaze in a variety of diverse ways. Feminists have generally concluded that the experience of apprehending the look from man to woman in patriarchal society involves a maintenance of the oppression of women by means of an oppressive kind of seeing of Woman. This "Look" distances women from positions of power, makes them objects of male sexual desire, and seeks the destruction of women as free subjects. Adrienne Rich describes the effects of such looks on women. She writes of hiding behind her eyes like "a woman waiting behind grimed blinds slatted across a courtyard / she never looks into" or when facing the force of the stare feeling her "eyes like wounds / raw in my head / so postal-clerks, I thought, must stare".

10. The female unconscious viewed through the window of psychoanalysis ($350)
Since the late 60s and early 70s, French feminists have tended to emphasise Woman as fundamentally "different" from man. This unlikeness is usually seen in terms of Woman's biological variance and functions unique to those distinctions. Some French feminists have incorporated psychoanalysis into literary theory in order to emphasise discourse - particularly women's language and writing - as a key to gaining entry into the female unconscious in order to assert and liberate this female particularity.

11. Woman as "pastiche" and "schizophrenia" ($350)
Fredrich Jameson locates two important features of postmodenism which he names "pastiche" and "schizophrenia". These elements locate Woman as a representative postmodern subject. As such, she is a "pastiche" of prior concepts and a container of "schizophrenic" aspects such as temporal discontinuity and physical fragmentation. Her body becomes a construction of prior prejudices at the same time that it is fragmented into bits and pieces, unconnected to each other and any other historical, political and social frameworks.

12. Woman in and beyond the Symbolic (NFS)
To deny Symbolic structures entirely would be to render oneself politically ineffective. Kristeva's methodology allows the use of (rational/masculinist) thought structures and models to resist and subvert such structures and models. For instance, she uses Symbolic language to describe an exclusively female pleasure which is a direct re-experience of the pre-Oedipal and later jouissance repressed but not obliterated by Symbolic law. This leads her to sketch an "ideal" human subjectivity by means of her simultaneously adopting seemingly opposite or contradictory aspects, or oscillating fruitfully between these oxymoronic extremes. The subjectivity that she describes is necessarily always tenuous and unstable - especially when it refers to the female, the feminine and Woman.

13. Feminist windows on the world ($350)
In the cyber-world, it is difficult to discern between the limits of the human body and its environment. The boundaries of nature and technology can no longer be seen as separate spheres. In terms of human subjectivity, the cyborg becomes a construct in which boundaries are transgressed, categories are collapsed, and a joint kinship with animals and machines is established. At the same time,. permanent partial identities and contradictory standpoints become clear. Within this, Woman as cyborg is both a creature of social reality and fiction. She can either put on cyberspace in order to penetrate and merge with Symbolic systems as she sees fit, or turn to navigate treacherous new worlds, as a flexible, lively and practical way of responding to her present circumstances.

14. Blending the natural and the mechanical in the cyberworld ($350)
However, Woman as cyborg risks lapsing into some sort of boundless difference and losing all possibility of making partial, real connections in the world. To stop this happening, a new and different feminist-cyborg politics is required. This politics should refer to such things as female essentialism, the communications sciences and biologies, and class, race and gender. This multi-faceted approach should allow the proposition of an exclusively female subjectivity - decentred, unstable, and accessible - whose political counterpart is affinity rather than identity.

15. Mystical surrender to/in /with God ($350)
As the cyborg subject surrenders its Symbolic subjectivity in favour of an alternative embodiment, so some Symbolic subjects seek to lose their subjectivity in a variety of ways. One of these ways is mystical surrender to/in/with God. These subjects seek to annihilate themselves in some sort of "truth" beyond the possibilities afforded by the traditional representations of classical reason. In both cyborg subjectivity and mystical surrender to God, the flesh comes to feel like a prison, a fall from grace or a descent into the dark. From this perspective, virtual life becomes the paradigmatic, virtuous, ideal life, and the religious aspirations to being equal to, indistinguishable from, and in God, can be understood as cyber-goals.

16. Blending with an other ($350)
On another level, secular lovers sometimes seek to blend themselves in each other. This desire and its actual realisation would necessarily result in violence and death. Rebellion against the Law and revenge against partners and Fathers - as well as violence against women - might well be a reaction against the impossibility of the happy realisation of this desire. At the very least, Kristeva asserts that hatred is always the keynote of couple realtionships. She suggests that women are particularly prone to this violence because it is through the symbolic murder of one's own Mother that a woman turns herself into a mother.

17. Female "bisexuality" ($350)
In Kristevan theory, there are four aspects of sexuality - phallic femininity and masculinity in man as different from phallic femininity and masculinity in Woman. This view contrasts with more traditional understandings of androgyny in which the androgyne - supposedly comprising both masculine and feminine aspects - was originally cut in two by the Gods as a sexualisation.

18. Narcissism ($350)
The church originally encouraged introspection in order that subjects might mystically unite with or reunify themselves to/in/with God. With the modern realisation that "God is dead", Narcissus has been forced to understand that s/he always was the Source, the One, and that there is no other. Narcissus turns inwards, by means of meditation, introspection, being alone with oneself and psychic solitude. This creates a division between internal and external life and an awareness that subjectivity is an incomplete, raw, gaping, mortal wound.

19. The flows between literature and science ($350).
Contemporary thought shows that "truth" cannot be arrived at solely on the basis of any exclusive adoption of any one model or point of view. A wide variety of different models have been used at the same time that the limitations of all models must be recognised. Likewise, concepts of "truth" and "falsity" are largely irrelevant within broader , strategic, feminist models. Feminist philosophy becomes a strategy of wide ranging and provisional commitments and recognitions in which theory is a form of textual, conceptual and educational practise. Reason is expanded to include that which has been previously expelled- that which has been traditionally associated with the female, the feminine and Woman. This allows for the production of new methods of knowledge, analysis, writing, textual objects and texts.

20. The elusive object of "truth" ($350).
It is difficult to predict a feminist future. We live in times which we understand that there are no evident distinctions between living and non-living systems, and there is great uncertainty about conclusions, even a belief in the impossibility of concluding.

Acknowledgments

The photograph included in an altered condition in collage number two was originally composed and taken by Lynda Plummer. And, the photograph included in an altered condition in collage number twenty was originally composed and taken by Lita Los Angelis.

REVIEWS

A troubled journey through childhood

Undercarriage Swizzle
Dean K Farrow

Wedge
Jim Kumnick

Shift +
Alice Vivian

Residues
Pam Illert

Union Gallery
University of Adelaide

Suzanne Treister

If one entered the Union Gallery through the back door, this group show could almost function as a troubled journey through childhood, adolescence, the second World War and then (ironically) around into a poststructuralist corridor (1+1) where one could purchase 8. *Derrida's ideal world* for $500 but where unfortunately 7. *Semiotic pleasure was* NFS. I'll take the slow boat, or could take a trip in Dean Farrow's plastic blow-up plane and never get there at all. Farrow's *Undercarriage swizzle* was magic: an arrangement of tableaux within tableaux, if one flew down low enough to behold the word *Abracadabra* on the tiles. On a grid of sixty-six white tiles weresixty-six miniature scenes involving cocktail umbrellas and corks in various stages of undress all looking poolside and tropical sixty-six times over... except no alcohol, nor pool. I remember my grandfather giving away these paper umbrellas as free gifts with soap powder or Sarsons Malt Vinegar from his Suffolk grocery/off licence in the sixties to brighten the lives of local war widows (at least that's what I remember thinking at the time). He also gave away large blue plastic poppies but the cork stayed firmly in their bottles except for a dry martini or a sherry before lunch. In the late seventies I picked up from a jumble sale a set of cocktail sticks with little plastic bathers on their ends who perched on the end of the glass, under the umbrella if you had happened to have both.

Now that the human figure has become a cumbersome subject for so many of the artists of the object-based school, these little poolside scenarios are left to play out their own lonely psychodramas *sans* imbibers/consumers, except the audience of course. These *baroom doodles* all laid out on the slab suggest a perverse distortion of the *natural* order of things (in a most unassuming manner). There has been some short circuiting whereby decoration (the umbrella) is attached in various ways to the object (cork) supposedly designed to separate or distance it from the subject of its embellishment (alcohol). Who has been sitting in the back bar constructing Molotov cocktails?

Jim Kummick's work suffered beside Farrow's piece for its lack of humour: not that humour is a necessary pre-requisite for success. *Wedge* consisted of rows of infant chairs cast in plaster, mostly crumbling, with an overhead tape-machine emitting ... train noises? Anyway, a kind of old-fashioned rumbling sound, machinery from hell, the train rattling through eastern Europe towards the camp, the whole thing looking like a classroom (uninhabited again) from Siberia or the Warsaw ghetto. All too readily we read a tragic loss of innocence.

Kitsch is found in the strangest of all places. The piece was burdened with a weight it unfortunately seemed unable to carry. There was an all-too-easy pathos seeping out of every crack, causing problems for those who keep a close watch on the mechanisms of their own nostalgic and sentimental drives.

From here one moves along to adolescence, hence the title *Shift* +, a group of works by Alice Vivian. For all its well meaning attempts to chart, or rather blur, or rather chart the blurs (if this is possible) of the shift into adulthood, Vivian's work emerges as an aestheticised blur of much current practice. Part scatter art, Karen Kilimnic, L.E. Young, Kiki Smith, Craige Andrae all getting on one's bike to visit *Mon Oncle* through the looking glass (the last/first piece being a stabilised bike which one could *cycle* endlessly towards a wardrobe mirror propped up beyond a sign directing one to the sea (signposted *mer*)).

The work began or possibly ended with what appeared to be a young girls ballet dress gone seriously awry, part-lilac netting, part-cracking plastered calico: more lost innocence. The next piece, *Exercise in detecting movement* was more engaging: a large flowerpot hung high on the wall with a lumpy purple woollen root growing down to the ground. What the pot contained no one could say unless they happened to be an over seven-foot adult, tall enough to peer into its depths, possibly the beginnings of a beanstalk?

And so, through the mirror and on to adulthood in Gallery 1+1 where I have to confess I was just not grown-up enough to be able to fork out $500 for *Derrida's ideal world* crafted beautifully from collaged, hairy, hand-made paper.

Suzanne Treister, "A Troubled Journey through Childhood," Broadsheet 23. 3 (September 1994): 24.

Paul Hewson
PO Box 34
Sempahore
SA 5019

June 1995

telephone 08 431 6998
email parallel@camtech.com.au

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

PAM ILLERT had a very successful exhibition in Gallery 1+1 at The Union Gallery, The University of Adelaide, in June 1994. I was director of the gallery at the time.

The exhibition, *Residues*, presented investigative works relating to her PhD.

The image and text series was rigorously determined and gracefully presented.

An estimated 2500 persons viewed the work. The response to the exhibition was generally very favourable.

Residues fitted very comfortably into my program, where an emphasis was placed on art research.

I was very pleased to have been given the opportunity to present Pam's work to a wide public, a public including Adelaide's most interesting contemporary artists and writers.

Paul Hewson
curator, **Parallel** internet gallery
co-editor, **Parallel** internet journal
http://www.camtech.com.au/parallel/

Appendix 2:

An advertising flyer for Chardi Christian's workshops

SOUL DOLLS

"The doll is ...
the symbol of what lies buried in humans that is numinous.
It is a small and glowing facsimile of the original Self....
In the doll is the voice, in diminutive, of old La Que Sabé,
The One Who Knows." - Clarissa Pinkola Estés.

****

- ongoing workshops -

for individuals or groups

with

Chardi Christian

Using metaphor games we come to to our imaginal inner world.
We then bring the images into the world as visible forms.
We will draw, paint, sew, quilt and decorate these images.
Finally we will have a sacred storytelling time.

Cost: $50 materials plus
$50 per day until doll is complete
(approx. 3 -5 days)

To arrange a day and time to suit you,
contact Chardi 810 6147

Chardi has worked as a professional storyteller since 1984, telling stories in Australia, New Zealand, America and the U.K. She has studied at the Psychodrama Institute in Rozelle for two years and has been involved with Jungian work and study for many years. She now also works as a visual artist. Her work is curently exhibited at Eaglehawk Gallery, St Johns Road, Glebe.

Chardi Christian, Soul Dolls (Sydney: n.p, 1994).

Notes: Section One

[1] For similarities and differences between Kristevan theory and some other recent, representative, French feminist views, see Grosz, Sexual Subversions 100-234. For details of Anglo-American-Australian tendencies towards female experience, see Jean Baker Miller, Towards a New Psychology of Women (Boston: Beacon P, 1976); Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender (Berkeley: U of California P, 1978); Jessica Benjamin, "The Bonds of Love: Rational Violence and Erotic Domination," Feminist Studies 6. 1 (1980): 144-74; Mary O'Brien, The Politics of Reproduction (Boston: Routledge, 1981); and Carol Gilligan, In Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1982).

[2] I have included Grosz's understandings of the Symbolic, feminine writing, maternity, the Mother and woman in Kristevan theory as they accord with my own readings of the same material.

[3] For some feminist views which are hostile to Kristevan theory, see Jones, "Julia Kristeva on Femininity" 66-71; Russo 29-35; Jennifer Stone, "The Horrors of Power: A Critique of 'Kristeva,'" Barker 38-48; and less so, Grosz, "Women and Writing" 34. For a concise categorisation of most of the extreme views expressed in the secondary literature on Kristeva, see Oliver 1-2.

[4] For an historical account of the feminist movement in France, see Dorothy Kaufmann-McCall, "Politics of Difference: The Women's Movement in France from May 1968 to Mitterand, "Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 9. 2 (Winter 1983): 282-93.

[5] I have included Wenzel's understandings of French feminist essentialist views as they sum up my own readings of the same material.

[6] In my view, the Oedipus complex and castration threat are linked but distinct phases.

[7] I have included Fuchs' understandings of Freudian theory as they accord with my own readings of the same material.

[8] Conversely, some theorists understand existentialism as patriarchal and unhelpful to broader feminist projects. See, for instance, Allen 75-78. Allen proposes a "way out of existential patriarchy" 78-83.

[9] For an elaboration of Symbolic and semiotic relations in terms of master and slave aspects, see James Creech, "Julia Kristeva's Bataille: Reading as Triumph," Diacritics 5. 1 (Spring 1975): 62-68.

[10] I have included Grosz's understandings of Kojeve's work as they accord with my own readings of the same material.

[11] I have included Graybeal's understandings of Heidegger's and Nietzsche's theory as they accord with my own readings of the same material.

[12] For a new "French" reading of Nietzsche, more consistent with Kristevan understandings of sexual difference than earlier less radical readings - such as those of Mary B. Mahowald, ed., Philosophy of Woman: An Anthology of Classic and Current Concepts (Indiana: Hackett, 1983) 70-79; and Osborne 229-30 - see also Rosalyn Diprose, "Nietzsche, Ethics and Sexual Difference," Radical Philosophy 52 (1989): 27-33.

[13] I have included Pilardi's understandings of this material as they accord with my own readings of Beauvoir's text.

[14] For a view of Beauvoir's discourse as different from that of Sartre, see Toril Moi, "Existentialism and Feminism: the Rhetoric of Biology in the Second Sex," Oxford Literary Review 8. 1 and 8. 2 (1986): 88-95.

[15] For a related view of ethics as a way of life or practice, see Michele de Certeau, The Practise of Everyday Life (Berkeley: U of California P, 1984).

Notes: Section Two

[1] For the view that postmodernism is not a theoretical ally of feminism, see Jones, "Julia Kristeva on Femininity" 66; and Sabina Lovibond, "Feminism and Postmodernism," New Left Review 178 (1989): 5-28.

[2] For Kristeva's development of the notion of hatred of others who do not share similar origins, and hatred of oneself, see Nations Without Nationalism.

[3] Kristeva misreads Shakespeare's word "I" as "He."

[4] Kristeva's version of Shakespeare's text is incorrect. It is also set as prose, not poetry.

[5] For the fetishist view of woman recreated in the image of man as woman plus phallus, woman minus phallus punished and humiliated, and woman as phallus, see Laura Mulvey, "You Don't Know What is Happening Do You, Mr Jones?" Spare Rib Reader, ed. Marsha Rowe (New York: Penguin, 1982) 48-57.

[6] For a suspicious view of the cyborg body, see Nick Smith, "Feminism, Postmodernism and the Cyborg," Honours essay, U of Adelaide, 1993, 13-15.

Notes: Section Three

[1] Walker wrote the text and Hewson took the photographs.

[2] For understandings of the obverse of narcissism, the self under "the Gaze" of the other, see Kristeva, Tales of Love 341-64; Sartre 340-400; and Julien S. Murphy "The Look in Sartre and Rich," Allen and Young 101-12.

[3] For Sartre's view of transcendence, see 238-98. For a feminist methodology of transcending existential patriarchy, see Allen 78-83.

[4] This view may be held by those who understand Lesbian or Queer theory as historically subsequent to feminist theatre as described by Leavitt.

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