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Hasibe Ambarcıoğlu

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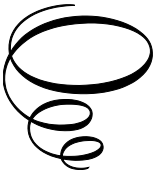

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To the memory of my beloved father
Erol Ambarcıoğlu…

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PREFACE

Women's struggle to be subjects in a male-dominant world has been going on since creation. This study aims to display the change in female subjectivity over time by analyzing three different novels starting from the Victorian period. Feminism has changed in terms of its approaches starting from the first wave until modern times. In this study, selected novels will be analyzed according to Kristeva's theory of subjectivity focusing on the female subjects in process and/or on trial passing through a psychological crisis because of patriarchal oppression weighing on them. Charlotte Bronte's *Villette* (1853), Iris Murdoch's *The Time of Angels* (1966) and Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* (1985) have been analyzed to examine the female characters' struggles against the patriarchy to obtain their own desires for their profession, love, sexuality and freedom within the society and the family. The first novel is chosen from the Victorian period as an example of first-wave feminism, the second novel stands as an example of second-wave feminism and the third novel represents third-wave feminism including such themes as being a single middle-class woman in the patriarchal society, female sexuality, incest, and gender roles imposed by the society.

As for the theory, the psychoanalytical feminist theory of Julia Kristeva (1941-) will be used to analyze the progress of the female characters, focusing on their semiotic and symbolic phases, and especially the abject theory, melancholia, love and loss of the subjects leading them to obtain a new identity. In her theory, Kristeva focuses on the psychosexual development of the infant to emphasize maternal functioning in the pre-Oedipal phase. She asserts that an infant must experience abjection from her/his mother to have access to the symbolic order of language, empowering the Law of the Father. Instead of the symbolic phase of the child in which s/he accesses the language by the rule of the father, she focuses on the pre-Oedipal phase called the semiotic chora during which the child still feels unified with and unique to the mother. As language is the hegemony of patriarchy controlling the symbolic, meaning-making dimension, the semiotic stays out of the control of the patriarchal programming so it is repressed by patriarchy. Kristeva points out that our earliest drives and connections to our mothers are repressed by our entrance into language. She asserts that men and women can get beyond patriarchal thinking and patri-

archal language by employing a semiotic dimension of language. According to Kristeva, women become abjected in society as they are the "other" in society. "The abject harkens back to the shadowy beginnings of our prehistory, both individual and collective" says Megan Becker-Leckrone while explaining that abjection can occur at any time when the subject is in crisis within the symbolic system which recalls the primal struggles. For her, like love and melancholy, abjection is brought into relief by bringing into crisis the lines that distinguish the self from others thus questioning the symbolic norms of the self and the culture (30). Elizabeth Gross in her article "The Body of Signification" expresses that for Kristeva there are three different kinds of abjects against which various social and individual taboos are erected: food, waste and the signs of sexual difference, that is, oral, anal and erogenetic drives. The subject's reaction to these abjects is visceral: it is shown in retching, vomiting, spasms and choking, in short disgust. These reactions represent the bodily functions that are not accepted by a "rational consciousness", but the subject cannot ignore them either as the body is in revolt (89). For Gross, abjection is what disturbs identity, system and order, disrupting the social boundaries demanded by the symbolic.

What these novels have in common is the fact that female protagonists are in psychological crisis or melancholia as a result of their loss and search for their semiotic chora in search of their absent mothers. They change because of the abjection haunting them to go on with their lives with their new identities as subjects in the process as the identity is never stabilized in Kristeva's theory. The three novels might be interpreted as representations of abjection including a melancholy of a single middle-class teacher, Lucy Snowe, who is a member of the "other" in the Victorian society in *Villette* (1853), an incestuous relationship between an eccentric preacher father, Carel and his niece, Elizabeth, who is, in fact, his daughter in *The Time of Angels* (1966), and a lesbian girl, Jeanette, struggling for her sexual choice in a conservative community and trying to separate from her mother and the Church in *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* (1985). These three novels will be analyzed from different perspectives of Kristeva's theory such as abjection, melancholia, love, loss and the cult of the Virgin Mary, and the search for semiotic chora in the dialectic of the semiotic and symbolic.

The book is organized as follows:

The book begins with a brief introduction. In the first chapter, Julia Kristeva's theory of subjectivity with its relation to Lacan and Freud is provided within a theoretical framework.

Each of the following three chapters will include the analysis of one novel focusing on the plot and the characters. In the second chapter, after a historical and literary background of Victorian literature, the abjection of Lucy in *Villette* will be explained as a middle-class single teacher from a psychoanalytical feminist perspective. In the third chapter, incest will be analyzed in Iris Murdoch's novel *The Time of Angels* in terms of its importance in the psychosexual theory of the psychoanalytical feminist theory of Kristeva. The fourth chapter will deal with Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* in terms of abjection and the cult of the Virgin Mary, explaining Kristeva's ideas on motherhood and focusing on the revolt of the protagonist, Jeanette, because of her sexual difference. In the last part, the final analyses of the novels will be presented in the conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

I.1 Julia Kristeva (1941-)

The "Holy Trinity" of French feminists, Luce Irigaray (1930-), Hélène Cixous (1937-), and Julia Kristeva (1941-), have studied psychoanalysis, especially Lacan's reinterpretation of Freud and Lacan's theory of language and the symbolic order, for different explanations of sexual difference to deconstruct the accepted binary opposition of man/woman which positions the woman as inferior in Western thinking. Stuart Sim points out that "what unites the work of Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva is the shared view that 'woman' as a signifier is a deeply problematic category; one simultaneously overdetermined and yet invisible within a patriarchal system" (263). In other words, French feminists have focused on the processes of becoming a woman oppressed in "an economy of phallocentric sameness that consigns femininity to a negatively inscribed margin of body and matter" (Sim 264).

As one of the "Holy Trinity", the poststructuralist psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva has studied borderline patients to show that subjectivity is a dynamic process which never ends. Noëlle McAfee explains that subjectivity is the identity that the person attains at the end of his/her psychological development, taking care to be an autonomous being having reason and intellect. Like Lacan, she asserts that "the subject" which is used instead of "self" makes use of language as a medium to explain her/his ideas. In Kristeva's terms, subjects are not mindful of their thoughts but their desires. She displaces the term "self" with "subjectivity" as the person as a subject often obtains identity unconsciously, rather than consciously as in the self (1-2). Anne-Marie Smith conveys that Kristeva's theories on subjectivity can be seen as her "commitment to an ethics of identity and difference which is clearly psychoanalytic and Freudian" (qtd. in Gambaudo 1). For Kristeva "the unconscious" is the inaccessible part of the psyche which contains desires, tensions, energy, and repressions not found in the consciousness. Furthermore, she prefers to study language, not as a tool used by the self but as the producer of the subject. She was one of the first thinkers of poststructuralism in the 1960s and 1970s to study how language functions when people speak, write, and create; and how they communicate with "the other".

Kristeva, in her theory, systematizes a theory of language which is at the same time a theory of subjectivity. In *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974) she explains the basic difference between the semiotic and the symbolic. Stacey Kelltner highlights that the symbolic and the semiotic are two different dimensions of language; that is, the symbolic denotes any social and historical sign schema of the meaning-making of speakers whereas the semiotic is the affective, material dimension of the language that aids meaning without signifying in the same way as signs. Furthermore, the semiotic and symbolic produce meaning in their dialectical tension with regard to their exchange of semiotic energy in the symbolic and the symbolic form and meaning to the semiotic (19-20).

Terry Eagleton argues that, albeit Lacan's influence on Kristeva, it is controversial for a feminist thinker to support the symbolic order as explained below:

> For the symbolic order of which Lacan writes is in reality the patriarchal sexual and social order of modern class-society, structured around the 'transcendental signifier' of the phallus, dominated by the Law which the father embodies. There is no way, then, in which a feminist or pro-feminist may uncritically celebrate the symbolic order at the expense of the imaginary: on the contrary, the oppressiveness of the actual social and sexual relations of such a system is precisely the target of the feminist critique. (163)

As a result of this, in her book *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974) Kristeva objects to the symbolic, but not to the imaginary which she calls semiotic. Eagleton underlines that semiotic is what comes before the symbolic and is repressed by the beginning of the latter; nevertheless, it can still be seen as a kind of pulsional pressure within language itself, in tone, rhythm and bodily and material qualities of language, but reflecting meaninglessness, disruption, silence and absence. In addition to this, Eagleton defines the semiotic with the following words:

> The semiotic is the 'other' of language which is nonetheless intimately entwined with it. Because it stems from the pre-Oedipal phase, it is bound up with the child's contact with the mother's body, whereas the symbolic, as we have seen, is associated with the Law of the father. The semiotic is thus closely connected with femininity: but is by no means a language exclusive to women, for it arises from a pre-Oedipal period which recognizes no distinctions of gender. (163)

As stated above, the semiotic is the "other" within the language, which is related to the child's connection to its mother's body. Although it is

particularly related to femininity, it is not a kind of language which is special to women as it emerges from the pre-Oedipal period during which there is no awareness of gender. Employing the semiotic, Kristeva deconstructs the binary opposition of masculine and feminine as it is a bisexual kind of writing aiming to blur the distinctions between all the strict binary oppositions in societies such as "proper/improper, norm/deviation, sane/mad, mine/yours, authority/obedience" (Eagleton 164). Lastly, Eagleton founds the connection between the semiotic and the feminine with the following words:

> One might see the semiotic as a kind of internal limit or borderline of the symbolic order; and in this sense, the 'feminine' could equally be seen as existing on such a border. For the feminine is at once constructed within the symbolic order, like any gender, and yet is relegated to its margins, judged inferior to masculine power. The woman is both 'inside' and 'outside' male society, both a romantically idealized member of it and a victimized outcast. She is sometimes what stands between man and chaos, and sometimes the embodiment of chaos itself. This is why she troubles the neat categories of such a regime, blurring its well-defined boundaries. Women are represented within male-governed society, fixed by sign, image, meaning, yet because they are also the 'negative' of that social order there is always in them something which is left over, superfluous, unrepresentable, which refuses to be figured there. (165)

For Eagleton, women's position in society changes according to the conditions, occasionally idealizing them or victimizing them. Within this regard, women are always represented negatively in the social order which can become chaotic for the male-oriented society.

Considering the significance of the theoretical assumptions of French feminists, Katherine Goodnow conveys that Hélène Cixous foregrounds the binary oppositions that the patriarchal system pinpoints as overlapping with the dichotomy of male and female such as active/passive, sun/moon, culture/nature, and day/night. Cixous remarks that the feminine side in this dichotomy is always the less powerful side of the pair. As declared before, Kristeva explains that a subject constructs and has a sense of personal and social order by the distinctions between binary oppositions like self/other, me/not me, living/dead, male/female, and infant/child. Kristeva does not use the common oppositions as she thinks that the boundaries and meanings are unstable (6). Language is the founder of this order which shapes the subject and leads it to incorporation in the outer world. Furthermore, Anna Smith states that Kristeva is the interlocutor of the relationship between the self and the other. She asserts that in order to become a subject, the child must initially separate from its first object, the mother. As a con-

sequence of this primary separation, the child begins to recognize the other and distinguishes between what is inside the self and the world outside. After the loss of the mother as the object of pleasure, Kristeva states that language compensates for this lack and the psyche becomes mature by speaking of other objects and experiences. According to Kristeva, a child cannot grow up if it cannot recover from an original loss or separation from the mother. She proposes that the entry of the infant into the language helps it repress its desire for its mother and evacuate its shock by speaking. For Kristeva, literature enables the psyche to express its blinding shocks denoting that it is the language which renews the subject (13).

Another French feminist, Luce Irigaray proposes that to get beyond patriarchal language, women's groups should be founded to develop nonpatriarchal thinking and speaking. She puts forward her concept of woman's language "womanspeak", taking its source from the female body especially showing the difference between male and female sexual pleasure. She defines female sexual pleasure as more diversified and complex and so is "womanspeak" which has more multiple meanings than patriarchal language. In contrast, Kristeva does not believe in the necessity of "écriture feminine" or "womanspeak" as she renders that any theory that essentializes women positing the biological characteristics of women misrepresents their diversity. Bearing these assumptions in mind, Kristeva underlines that the feminine cannot be defined as there are many definitions of the feminine, only emphasizing that femininity is oppressed and marginalized (Tyson 102-103).

Within this regard, Nick Mansfield expresses that Freud and Lacan as the representatives of phallogocentric Western thinking concluded in their theories that subjectivity is stable and fixed by utilizing a masculine construction over the Oedipal and symbolic phases. In response to Lacan's symbolic, Irigaray proposes "a 'female imaginary', matching the Lacanian transcendental signifier with something of equal applicability and dexterity" (79). However, Kristeva brings out a theory about the subject of the abject postulating subjectivity as a process which is incomplete and discontinuous. The abject aims to resolve what is ambivalent, unresolved, and dangerous in the unconscious of the subject. Accordingly, Nick Mansfield explains that Kristeva founds her theory of subjectivity on the theory of the fathers of psychoanalysis, that is, Freud and Lacan:

> The fathers of psychoanalysis are committed to stability, order and a fixed and constant identity. The daughter, on the other hand, is able to develop a detailed model that reveals, beneath the father's ordered world, a host of uncertainties and unresolved images and emotions. (80)

For Kristeva, subjectivity never stabilizes and the subject always experiences a crisis of subjectivity. Although the subject tries to stabilize her/his identity, it changes because of the hovering material of the unconscious disturbing the consciousness in order to change it.

I.1.1 Kristeva's theory of language: The Semiotic and the symbolic

Assuming that subjectivity is a constant work in progress, Kristeva following Lacan prescribes a model that structurally expects "what will be me." She interprets Lacan's mirror stage as a partial story and Lacan does not make distinctions between these phases by leaving them incomplete. Concerning this, she keeps away from the male-centred structures used by Lacan and Freud while she is forming the dynamics of subjectivity. Sylvie Gambaudo writes that while discussing the role of the parent for the infant, the Freudian model has tried to foreground the father; on the other hand, the Kleinians have focused on the mother (4). Instead of the name-of-father, Oedipus complex, phallus, and castration she focuses on the role of the mother, the maternal body and pre-Oedipal phase (Becker-Leckrone 27). Gambaudo explains the difference between the traditional approach and the Kristevan approach with the following words:

> The traditional approach stages a pre-Oedipal 'family' dynamic, that is a triad constituted by the infant, the pre-Oedipal father and mother. The role of the latter two is, in early psychoanalytic theory, played by the actual mother and father. Kristeva's work is a continuation of this theoretical legacy, but also accounts for a contemporary reality where the definition of sexual categories is being questioned and modified. Hence, Kristevan theory testifies to a struggle to move away from biologism and towards a metaphorisation of parental categories. (4)

This means that Kristeva does not theorize her principles solely depending on actual parents. In her theory, "the father" turns into a paternal function and the mother into a maternal abject. Kristeva is strictly connected to the Freudian model of subjectivity which is later reinterpreted by Lacan with the subject's access to the language and Kleinian theory to study the significance of the maternal object, "the loss of which engenders the subject's anxiety and depression" (Gambaudo 3).

Studying the abstract theories of contemporary philosophies of language, in her doctorate thesis and her whole career Kristeva amends that subjectivity and language are co-extensive which means it is improbable to speak of one without the other. For her "the subject, she insists, is a speak-

ing being; a being who means; a being who always intends something and speaks to another in a social and historical context" (Kelltner 21). She renders that subjects are constituted through language:

> Because of its specific isolation within the discursive totality of our time, this shattering of discourse reveals linguistic changes constitute changes in the status of the subject – his relation to the body, to others, and to objects; it also reveals that normalized language is just one of the ways articulating the signifying process that encompasses the body, the material referent, and language itself. (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 16)

Kristeva especially criticizes linguistics for only studying the kinds of languages that are practical, institutional social structures but not discourses that are found at the margins. In opposition to linguistics, units of poetic language appear in all kinds of discourses. In place of linguistics, she offers poetic language that contains certain modes of literary language as well as other discursive domains providing a way to shatter normative structures of meaning. She defines discourse in "Prolegomenon" in *Revolution in Poetic Language:*

> lf there exists a 'discourse' which is not a mere depository of thin linguistic layers, an archive of structures, or the testimony of a withdrawn body, and is, instead, the essential element of a practice involving the sum of unconscious, subjective, and social relations in gestures of confrontation and appropriation, destruction and construction – productive violence, in short – it is 'literature,' or, more specifically, the text. (16)

Kristeva sees discourse as a totality of the unconscious reflected in the text by means of poetic language. For Kristeva, language is a process of signification to produce meaning, in the meantime presenting a theory of subjectivity. In the text, a fundamental differentiation is seen between the semiotic and symbolic dimensions of language. The semiotic and symbolic put out the trials, failures and successes of meaning and identity. Kristeva prioritizes these two phases by associating the former with the pre-Oedipal which is the imaginary in Lacan's theory. In her theory, the reason why she criticizes the theories which only focus on the instinctual drives and operations such as displacement, condensation, vocalic and intonational differentiation is that these theories are unable to consider the syntactico-semantic functioning of language. Despite making use of the fragmented body, that is the pre-Oedipal associated with semiosis, she claims that these theories fail to express a transitional link to the post-Oedipal subject and his always symbolic and/or syntactic language (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 22). She is analogous to Melanie Klein as she explores Freud's

infantile experience of the feminine-maternal and the pre-Oedipal foregrounding the fragmented body. She goes beyond Klein in her theory while reinterpreting the relationship between this body and the speaking subject, the feminine-maternal and language (Margaroni 10). "Melanie Klein for instance speaks of the breast as the infant referent for the whole of its mother: the part object refers to the whole" (Gambaudo 4). Instead, Kristeva acclaims that two trends are becoming two modalities for the same signifying process in language:

> We shall call the first 'the semiotic' and the second 'the symbolic'. These two modalities are inseparable within the signifying process that constitutes language, and the dialectic between them determined the type of discourse (narrative, metalanguage, theory, poetry, etc.) involved; in other words, so called "natural" language allows for different modes of articulation of the semiotic and the symbolic. On the other hand, there are nonverbal signifying systems that are constructed exclusively on the basis of the semiotic (music, for example). But as we shall see, this exclusivity is relative, precisely because of the necessary dialectic between the two modalities of the signifying process, which is constitutive of the subject. Because the subject is always both semiotic and symbolic, no signifying system he produces can be either 'exclusively' semiotic or 'exclusively' symbolic, and is instead necessarily marked by an indebtedness to both. (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 24)

For Kristeva, the semiotic and symbolic are inseparable to complete each other in the signification constituting the dialogical discourse in language which makes language "natural" in this way. The dialectic between the semiotic and symbolic also constitutes the subject, as the subject can neither be solely semiotic nor symbolic. Maria Margaroni explains that semiotic is always "an organization and structuring of the drives" (13). Furthermore, she warns that semiotic must not be confused with Lacan's order of the real. The real for Lacan is what is always stable in its position and resistant to any process of transfer or mediation and so thoroughly unknowable (13). Sara Beardsworth explains that Kristeva is different from Lacan as she tries to define the units of something outside the realm of the symbolic order, which is outside the realm of given structures of meaning and values. For her, Kristeva aims to study what is not yet symbolized. In the chronological and logical order, the semiotic is prior to the symbolic and "semiotic functioning is in excess of symbolic functioning, and heterogeneous to it, so that neither the semiotic nor the symbolic can fully overcome or subsume the other" (42). Kristeva defines the semiotic and its function and then explains the meaning of semiotic chora:

> This modality is the one Freudian psychoanalysis points to in postulating not only the facilitation and the structuring disposition of drives, but also the so-called primary processes which displace and condense both energies and their inscription. Discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development, they are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body – always already involved in a semiotic process – by family and social structures. In this way the drives, which are 'energy' charges as well as 'psychical' marks, articulate what we call a chora: a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated. (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 25)

Kristeva takes the term "chora" from Plato's *Timaeus* where it refers to a level of being rejecting to be named or thought of as such, but compulsively takes place in the experience of the phenomenal world shaped by the intercourse of chora and forms. Chora is defined by Timaeus as "an invisible and characterless sort of thing, one that receives all things and shares in a most perplexing way in what is intelligible, a thing extremely difficult to comprehend" (qtd. in Kelltner 29). About this definition, Kristeva renders chora as nourishing and maternal, but not taking place in an ordered whole because the deity is absent from it. Despite lacking unity, identity, or deity, the chora passes through a regulating process [reglementation], which is not the same as symbolic law but eventuates discontinuities by articulating them temporarily and then starting over repetitively (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 26).

Bearing these assumptions in mind, Kristeva pinpoints that before the acquisition of language, concrete operations put preverbal semiotic space into order within logical stratifications which are shown to preface language. These operations undermine a preverbal functional condition that governs the connections between the body, objects and members of the family structure. She acknowledges that the kinetic functional phase of the semiotic comes before the establishment of the sign via symbolic operations, and hence it is not cognitive in the sense of being admitted by a knowing, already constituted subject. According to her, the root of these functions ordering the semiotic process can only be put forward with a theory of the subject that does not see the subject as one of understanding, but handles the subject with pre-symbolic functions in the light of Kleinian theory, which stems from Freud's positions on the drives (Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* 26). Stacey Kelltner points out that the rhythmic nature of semiotic chora determines the semiotic/symbolic relation. The semiotic chora is not directly exposed to the symbolic order of meaning; but it experiences an ordering by natural, social, and historical restrictions.

The semiotic chora is controlled by the symbolic in mediated form. This mediated form that arranges the semiotic chora is the function of the maternal body as the maternal body is the place where the semiotic chora is organized as the place where the subject will become (30). Kristeva defines the semiotic chora as "an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation" (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 25) which is found in the juxtaposition of language and biology through the playful transmission between two bodies: "the infant's confused mass of body parts and the mother's always already socialized body" (Margaroni 19). Oral and anal drives are structured on the maternal body and Kristeva underlines that these drives are said to be disunited and contradictory structures rejected by the semiotic chora, being both positive and negative at the same time, as they produce a dominant destructive wave with the death drive. This means that drives are waves of attack against stases, which are formed by the repetition of energy charges, as a result of which charges and stases lead to no identity (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 28). For Kristeva within the semiotic chora, the dialectic of semiotic and symbolic brings out the subject:

> This is to say that 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. We shall call this process of charges and stases a negativity to distinguish it from negation, which is the act of a judging subject. (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 28)

For Kristeva, the chora is the safe place where the subject is both protected and judged. Noëlle McAfee explains the development of the infant in the semiotic chora:

> At first the child is immersed in this semiotic chora. It expresses itself in the baby talk of coos and babbles. It uses sounds and gestures to express itself and to discharge energy. It does not yet grasp that an utterance can express something – or that there is any salient difference between various things and itself. Yet, as this awareness occurs and deepens, everything changes. The child begins to realize that language can be used to point out objects and events. At the same time, the child begins to realize its own difference from its surroundings. It becomes aware of the difference between self (subject) and other (object). It comprehends that language can point to things outside itself, that it is potentially referential. Kristeva calls this the thetic break. (21)

In the semiotic chora as a counter to imaginary order, the infant cannot talk. Instead, he imitates the sounds of the things he sees, for example, the sound of a dog and when he starts to speak, he notices the dog as a separate object. Kristeva states that this recognition and a speaking act demonstrate an attribution, suffice to say, a positing of identity or difference (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 43). For Kristeva, the thetic phase can be seen both as the starting point for signification and as a stage in the development of the child's subjectivity:

> In our view, the Freudian theory of the unconscious and its Lacanian development show, precisely, that thetic signification is a stage attained under certain precise conditions during the signifying process, and that it constitutes the subject without being reduced to process precisely because it is the threshold of language. (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 44)

McAfee explains that the conditions mentioned above are Freud's Oedipal stage during which the infant realizes that the mother is not strong as she lacks a penis and Lacan's imaginary order in which the child sees its image in the mirror and identifies with the fictive unity it sees in the mirror to constitute the primordial notion of being an "I" (22). At the end of these conditions, the infant distinguishes the other from itself. Kristeva has written the thetic phase as:

> we view the thetic phase – the positing of the imago, castration, and the positing of semiotic motility – as the place of the Other, as the precondition for signification, i.e., the precondition for the positing of language. The thetic phase marks a threshold between two heterogeneous realms: the semiotic and the symbolic. (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 48)

Kristeva borrows the term "thetic phase" from Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) to initiate the symbolic order. It shows the break-up of the symbiotic-mother-child relationship, leading to the claim of negation, the formation of identity and a subject-object relationship (Schippers 28).

Within this context, Maria Margaroni suggests that the negativity of semiotic chora can be seen as the principle of a qualified antagonism keeping the subject one with himself/herself which results in a split in the psyche. She points out that this negation is not the binary opposition of life, joy, beauty, or delight. For Margaroni, "Kristeva's subject is split because semiotic motility erupts from within its speaking position, destabilizing and rendering it inhospitable to any One" (31). As for Anna Smith, "the identity and space of Kristeva's subject are simultaneously destroyed and recreated by the pressures exerted on language from an affect-driven

body" (5). Her subject is restive with his speech and wherever he is becoming a stranger to all origins and habitual pursuits. Kristeva examines whether this negativity of the drives results in rejection. She explains that drives appear in a social space and are part of the signifying process. Rejection occurs as a reaction to the anal-aggressive drive which is experienced by the infant before the mirror phase and is tantamount to the separation of the subject from the mother through the expulsion of the maternal object. Suffice it to say, the child's separation from the mother referring to the interdiction against incest articulates a consequence of this rejection which is the precondition of the symbolic. If the rejection is not regulated and the discharges of the drive are not repressed by the Oedipal phase, the formation of symbolicity can be seriously inhibited causing psychosis. Therefore, language acquisition connotes the suppression of the densely pleasurable anal drive which separates the subject from real objects. All in all, the separation from the maternal object is also constitutive of the object-in-reality (Lechte 136-137). Another critic, Michael Payne conveys that Kristeva explains in *Revolution in Poetic Language* that she took the concept of negativity from Hegel. Kristeva underlines that instead of being "reified or repressed, negativity is there introduced into every textual reality" (180). Payne examines that by means of the instinctual drives passing through the thetic structure of the text, where meaning is revealed by what stays outside the text. For him, as the human body is imprisoned within the text, the process and/or trial of the object occurs within it as the semiotic is energized within the symbolic function of the language (ibid). Kristeva explains the importance of the symbolic function of the language:

> Language as symbolic function constitutes itself at the cost of repressing instinctual drive and continuous relation to the mother. On the contrary, the unsettled and questionable subject of poetic language (for whom the word is never uniquely sign) maintains itself at the cost of reactivating this repressed instinctual, maternal element. If it is true that the prohibition of incest constitutes, at the same time, language as communicative code and women as exchange objects in order for a society to be established, poetic language would be for its questionable subject-in-process the equivalent of incest: it is within the economy of signification itself that the questionable subject-in-process appropriates to itself this archaic, instinctual, and maternal territory; thus it simultaneously prevents the word from becoming mere sign and the mother from becoming an object like any other-forbidden. (*Desire in Language* 136)

As seen above, poetic language shakes the stability of symbolic order making the subject-in-process equivalent to incest and emancipating the mother from being a forbidden object. Kristeva asserts that by using the

symbolic function of language women become the objects of the society constituted by the patriarchal norms to obey the accepted constraints of love, marriage and sexuality. Kristeva renders that poetic language is seen as evil as it puts the subject on trial with incest in literature showing that great literature has nothing to do with the hypostasis of incest. However, the incestuous relation presents itself in language as disappointed, demystified, and deprived of the support of law (*Desire in Language* 137).

Kristeva proposes poetic language because it creates a heterogeneous space for signifying structures and subjective identity. In this aspect, when language becomes dense with phonic textures and semantic associations, that is, when it becomes poetic, it acts "as an entry-point for the drives to transfer their psychic imprints from the unconscious directly into signification, causing it to falter and renew itself" (Smith 5). Therefore, the subject of poetic language is the product of this discharge into signification. In *Desire in Language* (1980), Kristeva explains the features of poetic language:

> [the signifying economy of poetic language is specific in that the semiotic is not only a constraint as is the symbolic, but it tends to gain the upper hand at the expense of the thetic and predicative constraints of the ego's judging consciousness. Thus in any poetic language, not only do the rhythmic constraints, for example, perform an organizing function that could go so far as to violate certain grammatical rules of a national language and often neglect the importance of an ideatory message, but in recent texts, these semiotic constraints (rhythm, phonic, vocalic timbres in Symbolist work, but also graphic disposition on the page) are accompanied by nonrecoverable syntactic elisions; it is impossible to reconstitute the particular elided syntactic category (object or verb), which makes the meaning of the utterance undecidable. (134)

She adds that although the symbolic function is attacked and corrupted, it goes on to exist in the poetic language due to the semiotic processes. The poetic language aims to form a new ideological or formal writer's universe, that is the production of a new space of significance. For Kristeva, the signifying process can be accepted as a "catastrophe" because of the dialectic between the symbolic and semiotic dispositions. She analyzes the signifying process through two features of literary text as stated below:

> The signifying process may be analyzed through two features of the text, as constituted by poetic language: a phenotext, which is the language of communication and has been the object of linguistic analysis; a genotext, which may be detected by means of certain aspects or elements of language, even though it is not linguistic per se. Different kinds of writing are

> variously affected by this heterogeneous process, theoretical treatise in mathematics is almost pure phenotext; some of Artaud's pages display a genotext that is nearly visible to the naked eye; fiction, in its traditional narrative guise, was dominated by the symbolic (it was mainly a phenotext), but in recent times it has increasingly been affected by the semiotic (i.e., the genotext plays a greater role). (*Desire in Language* 7)

While a phenotext is the language of communication and subject to linguistic analysis, a genotext is not linguistic. This implies that traditional fiction is accounted as a phenotext because of the rule of the symbolic in the text whereas recent literature is affected by the semiotic, making it a genotext.

> What we shall call a genotext will include semiotic processes but also the advent of the symbolic. The former includes drives, their disposition, and their division of the body, plus the ecological and social system surrounding the body, such as objects and pre-Oedipal relations with parents. The latter encompasses the emergence of object and subject, and the constitution of nuclei of meaning involving categories: semantic and categorial fields. (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 86)

In genotexts, however, the subject is out of the engendering of meaning and the significance of the genotext (Lechte 128). The semiotic significance of the genotext includes the energy flow and the drives with the social environment around the body, while the symbolic which is associated with the phenotext is the meaning production part with semantic and categorial fields. Kristeva explains that the genotext in a literary text is found in the repetition of phonemes and melodic tools like intonation or rhythm:

> Designating the genotext in a text requires pointing out the transfers of drive energy that can be detected in phonematic devices (such as the accumulation and repetition of phonemes or rhyme) and melodic devices (such as intonation or rhythm), in the way semantic and categorial fields are set out in syntactic and logical features, or in the economy of mimesis (fantasy, the deferment of denotation, narrative, etc.). (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 86)

In addition to this, she explains that a genotext and a phenotext combine to form a literary text giving rise to the generation of the subject within the flow of the narrative:

> The genotext is thus the only transfer of drive energies that organizes a space in which the subject is not yet a split unity that will become blurred, giving rise to the symbolic. Instead, the space it organizes is one in which the subject will be generated as such by a process of facilitations and marks within the constraints of the biological and social structure. (86)

As can be deduced, Kristeva founds her notion of the semiotic in a developmental overlook of the constitution of the subject in "[exposure to otherness, an exposure and an appearance of otherness whose registration gives us the nonsymbolic aspects of the development of selfhood and the capacity for meaning" (Beardsworth 79). On the other hand, these registrations are moulded into symbolic forms by means of discourses of love that retrieve and reshape primary idealization. John Lechte defines Kristeva's subject-in-process as a subject of flows and energy charges, of jouissance and death. Kristeva's theory of the semiotic emerges contrary to the symbolic (124). The semiotic is the more archaic and unconsciously driven order, displaying the subject's lack of unity, in contrast to the symbolic. On the other hand, the symbolic associated with the law of the father is "the orderly aspects of our signifying practices, never triumphs over what she calls the semiotic" (McAfee 43). All in all, Kristeva denotes that subject-in-process changes by means of the relationship with the other as a consequence of the transference of energy, desire and memory. An interaction between the two in a love affair or the relationship between the patient and the analyst brings out a new identity for the subject:

> As implied in modern logical and biological theories dealing with so-called 'open systems' (von Forster, Edgar Morin, Henri Atlan), transference is the Freudian self-organization, because the psychic functioning of transference is fundamentally dependent on the intercourse between the living-symbolic organism (the analysand) and the other. It has already been observed that this opening up to the other plays a decisive role in the evolution of species as well as in the maturing of each generation, or in every individual's particular history. But it can be said that with Freud, for the first time, the love relationship (imaginary as it might be) as reciprocal identification and detachment (transference and countertransference) has been taken as a model of optimum psychic functioning. (*Tales of Love* 14)

As a result of transference, the subject forms a new "self" as the subjectivity cannot be constructed once and for all as life that is subjectivity is not stable.

I.1.2 The abjection: The power of horror

In her essay on abjection *Powers of Horror* (1980), Kristeva presents her interest in the psychoanalytic status of the mother. *Powers of Horror* is the first series of her studies discussing three strong emotional states, or structuration of subjectivity seen as the symptoms of the times in which we feel: horror, love and melancholy. Abjection as the psychoanalytical demonstration of universal horror is associated with the "times of dreary crisis". The control forced by horror, that is, the abject can only be greater if it remains hidden, unknown, and unanalyzed (Lechte 158).

Kristeva, founding her theory on Lacanian and Freudian psychoanalysis infers that the mirror stage is not sufficient to explain the psychic improvement of an infant during the pre-Oedipal stage. For her, the Lacanian mirror stage is secondary repression after the earlier primary repression of undifferentiated being in the chora. While in the chora, the child becomes a receptacle of all beings, and in the mirror stage the child resembles another to become himself. With regard to this, the subject/object dichotomy, that is difference, does not occur until the child represses the chora. In order to achieve this, the child puts out part of itself from itself. To create itself, the infant spits out the warm milk, the mother's body, psychically and physically (McAfee 118). Kristeva defines abjection via the narration of the child as:

> Food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection. When the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk-harmless, thin as a sheet of cigarette paper, pitiful as a nail paring – I experience a gagging sensation and, still farther down, spasms in the stomach, the belly, and all the organs shrivel up the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to perspire. Along with sight-clouding dizziness, nausea makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. 'I' want none of that element, sign of their desire, 'I' do not want to listen, 'I' do not assimilate it, 'I' expel it. But 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. (*Powers of Horror* 3)

Concerning this, Sara Beardsworth explains that "abjection is the most primitive of the three moments of presymbolic subject-formation and is closest to the function of the destructive wave of the drive in the constitution of the subject" (80). The idea of abjection can be connected to the psychoanalytic thinking of Lacan on aggressivity and an extension of Freud's discovery of the bond between love and hatred in object relation.

Abjection is a rarely visible dynamic of aggressivity that is used to support identities that institute and maintain existing power relations in oppressive social and political affairs (Beardsworth 80). Kristeva gives examples of abjection below:

> It is thus not lack of cleanliness of health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite. The traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience, the shameless rapist, the killer who claims he is a savior…Any crime, because it draws attention to the fragility of the law, is abject, but premeditated crime, cunning murder, hypocritical revenge are even more so because heighten the display of fragility…Abjection, on the other hand, is immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that dissembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you… (*Powers of Horror* 4)

Regarding these examples of aggressivity including abjection, Estelle Barrett conveys that abjection is ambivalent from the beginning, although the mother remains a vital support; separation from her underlines the frightening beginnings of otherness. Abjection is connected both to biological processes and psychic functioning, it serves as the border between life and death, expelling or jettisoning what threatens life. The corpse is the most abject of all objects, a border from which the body must untangle itself so as to live. "Faeces, urine, vomit, pus and blood in an open wound are abjected or expelled from the body to protect it from contagion and death" (Barrett 95). To understand why the corpse is the most abject, Kristeva's thoughts on the importance of "the body" should be understood. Normally, to have an autonomous selfhood, a subject expects to be identified with her/his unique and separate individual body. For Kristeva, the physical body is the stage of subjectivity and its meaning. She names the unique and separate body "le corps propre" which as an adjective first means clean, then shows ownership in French. It is the phrase that defines the body as something owned by the subject and must be kept in hygienic order. This clean and proper body is the one demanded by social institutions from the citizens to be sure that they are clean, honest, and hard-working. However, subjectivity is unstable and never constituted out of idealism and ideology. The subjects take a defensive position setting a barrier between inside and outside, but the correct perimeters of the clean and proper body are forever broken by the physical flows that get out of them: flows of urine, tears, excrement, vomit, blood (particularly menstrual blood), and sweat. Kristeva interprets that this hopeless evacuation of what the body produces, that is the gag reflex that shows bodily rejection,