

# Julia kristeva a prominent structuralist english literature essay

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



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\n[/toc]\n \n\nIn her *New Semiotics*, *Intertextuality* or what she would later refer to as *Transposition*, Kristeva transforms Saussurean stability of the process of signification and efforts to find the essential relation between literacy, philosophical, and political thought. Through her theoretical assumptions it becomes possible to analyze characters which are just like her own self both ' a stranger' and a centre as a " theorist of textuality" (Allen 31). The unsettling nature of Kristeva's work is explained by Barthes as displacing " the already-said... signified [the fixed, cliché meaning]," and subverting " authority- the authority of the monologic science, of filiation" (qtd. in Allen 31). She presses on the notion that utterances are made not in some void but in a specific context; that they " are plural [and] replete with historical meaning" (32). The supposed stability of the relationship between the signifier and signified is only the function of the dominant ideology on the army of signifiers in the process of signification that " undermines the apparent centrality and transparency of the meaning of major signs which are meant to stabilize the discursive system in question" (33). To Barthes, Kristeva brings forth the " critique of communication" of varied sciences such as philosophy, linguistics, psychoanalysis, and politics (33). As she says: Developed from and in relation to these modern texts the new semiotic

models then turn to the social text, to those social practices of which 'literature' is only one unvalorized variant, in order to conceive of them as so many ongoing transformations and/or productions. (Kristeva qtd. in Allen 34) Her finding is on different discourses in communication as well as those standing against such communicative discourses to be in constant opposition together; a "struggle between science, or the logical, and the language or force of imagination and desire" (35). From this moment on she comes to see that a new text is in fact nothing but the fruition of social, ideological, and cultural discourses that are already in existence and challenging with each other. There is no such thing as originality in texts and Kristevan semiotics studies "text, textuality, and their relation to their ideological structures" out of which text becomes both "a practice and a productivity" of the space where the meanings of words are constantly being challenged; hence the "'otherness' within the text itself" (Kristeva qtd in Allen 36). Words and utterances that are constantly struggling outside the text find momentary reconciliation within it; this leads Kristeva to take the idea of their "dual meaning" into account originally presented by Bakhtin: one inside the text, and the other within "'the historical and social text'" the existence of which causes the meaning to be there simultaneously inside and outside the text ending up in the dialogue among them (37). She designates 'horizontal' and 'vertical' aspects of meaning to words, the former belonging to "'writing subject and addressee'" and the later "'oriented toward an anterior or synchronic literary corpus'" (Kristeva qtd. in Allen 39).

## **Kristeva, the Semiotic Subject, and Poetic Language**

Kristeva's Semiotics includes her psychoanalytic presentation of two stages of normative development: Semiotic (based upon Freudian Primary Stage), and Symbolic (centring on Lacanian definition of the stage). What differs in Kristevan presentation is the shift of attention from the domain of Symbolic, language, and law to the prior one, the pre-lingual realm of Semiotic, abjection, and the process of exit from Chora. The psychoanalytic view of the notions above is to be reviewed later on. What matters in this section is how subject and subjectivity are understood as a bridge between Kristevan Semiotics and its relation to feminine psychoanalytic analysis of the subject. Kristeva changes the importance of the subject's place " from the socio-symbolic contract to the body, from the public sphere to the intimate domain" (Sjöholm 1). Emphasizing on heterogeneity, she undermines the stability of identity as defined by culture and society, presenting a subjectivity based on the subject's negative " fragility and vulnerability" which is on the verge of collapse at any moment (2). Such heterogeneous nature of subject would " resist submission under any symbolic authority" (2). Focusing on the semiotic importance of the pre-lingual stage, she finds that in language the discourses of the marginalized are closely interrelated with the political; such marginal discourses include the unconscious as a realm which shelter the exiled within it, the drives and wishes that are positioned outside the norm and conventions of law, stability, and fixation. The political aspect of revolt then, is in close distance with the asocial, multiple, and maternal of " intimate spaces" (i). As a constituent of her semiotics, Kristeva defines ' subject' and ' subjectivity' in terms of the

position of the subject, the author, the character, and the linguistic pronoun (I, we, etc.) as the medium of reference. She presents two distinct subjects of 'utterance' and of 'enunciation,' the former referring the utterance to "its human originator," and the latter regarding the words as "independent from their association with a human subject" (Hawthorne qtd. in Allen 40). This becomes the beginning of a poststructuralist trend where 'subject' gets "lost in writing" and generally in language (40). What sounds to be firmly personal to individuals appears to a great degree apersonal within the written text due to the essentially substitutable nature of language. In reading texts, the reader is gradually distanced from the subject of utterance and nearing instead to the subject of enunciation, getting away "from personal ('I') to collective ('we') to third-person ('he' or 'she')" (42). The 'I' of the text turns out to become an 'other'. That is why for Kristeva what matters is not the subject outside, but the one inside the text with its all plurality and heterogeneity. In language, our subject positions shift while in writing, the subject is lost. Therefore, the long held Aristotelian assumption of indubitable unity as the pillar of Western logic is forever kept at bay and the subject is presented as 'subject' equalled with 'not-subject,' (in other words, its own other) the common denominator between Kristevan and Derridean instability of the transparent relation between the signifier and the signified. Poetic language stands opposed to logic and becomes "at least double" which later on becomes an important issue in defining 'femininity in text'. It "struggles to express the non-logical" within the wrongly assumed "unquestionable authority... of monologic power," being forever subversive to such ideas as logic and unquestionability (45). What Kristeva discovers is the

"progression" towards a "modality of transformation" (qtd. in Allen 47). Gradually Kristeva draws her sort of linguistics, intertextuality or transposition, towards a more interdisciplinary field of study that she terms 'Semianalysis,' a area of transposition where semiotics and psychoanalysis function jointly to end up in plurality, multiplicity, anti-theology, and anti-totalitarianism; a condition where the "unity of speaker and of meaning" is missing and a new "theory of the subject in language," in the signifying system which is embedded in culture is brought forth drawing out meaning out of the mask of subjectivity and of structure (Allen 47).

### **Kristeva, Psychoanalysis, and Femininity**

Kristevan discussion of semiotics practice emphasizes on the historical and cultural aspect of language, "on the nature of poetic language and the structuralist notion of the sign, while also including the extralinguistic factors of history and psychology" (Davis and Schleifer 273). In her interview with Susan Sellers Kristeva elaborates on her psychoanalysis, about the "moments where language breaks up in psychosis, [or] ... where language doesn't yet exist" (qtd. in Eagleton 351). Subject as presented by Kristeva is constantly in the process of becoming. To her the process through which the individual acquires language entails the "identity of linguistic signs, the identity of meaning and, as a result the identity of the speaker," the three notions entailing the ins and outs of the present study of Marlowe's dramatic text (351). In this sense what she terms as the 'subject-in-process' defines the word 'process' as being both the psychological process of normative development in addition to "a legal proceeding where the subject is

committed to trial, because our identities in life are constantly called into question, brought to trial, over-ruled" (351). She conceives that the ' process of becoming' is always one of becoming an ' other' to the discourses of control and domination where the individual incorporates the dictates of their society as well as acquiring traits forever at odds with the demands of the society. The peculiarities of the individual make them incorporated others to their surroundings and the quest towards liberation, therefore, becomes almost equivalent to breaking free, and opening up to new possibilities to act and think. Central to Kristevan psychoanalysis are the domain of the (m)other, Chora, and abjection. She studies the field through a new perspective mainly to oppose the phallogocentric psychoanalysis previously presented by Freud and Lacan who had claimed the climactic role of the father in shaping the subjectivity of the infant individual. Kristeva does not negate the importance of the role of the father, yet is of the conviction that the essential notions of ' lack' and ' desire' emerge during a stage far before the law of the father being presented to the child. The force of the paternal law comes to be of importance after the loss of the Choric unity and following desire to preserve the mentioned unity is experienced by the child. In " Talking about Polylogue" she assumes unconscious to " ignore negation and time" and following Freud's idea, shaped by " displacement and condensation" in their lieu (qtd. in Eagleton 301). That makes the strongest tie between her theory of " linguistic symbolization" and the pre-lingual stage of psychological normative development, the former inevitably separating the " eternally premature baby" from Choric unity with the (m)other (301). Consequently the question of identity becomes one of sexual

essence constantly at the mercy of " play of signs" (302). Kristeva's Chora contains " flow of energy... [it is] the nonexpressive totality [which is] formed by the drives in motility" (McAfee 18). The mother's body is " the source of orientation for the infant's drives" which has to do with the same fluidity of *Écriture Féminine* where the exiled energies threaten the phallogentric coherence (19). Within Chora the boundaries between the selfhood of the infant and the objectivity of the (m)other have not yet been shaped. What remains is only the flow of energy and the polyphony of voices. Kristeva defines this (m)other as " heterogeneous; a non-me within me with which I can identify, the text" (29). Chora, in this view, is not regarded as a passive container as Plato used to call it, the ground which is only acted upon and has no entity of its own. She borrows the term from Plato's *Timaeus* where he defines it as a receptacle; of " what the universe is before and as anything exists" (McAfee 19). However, she is in disagreement with the ancient philosopher's conviction that this receptacle " has no qualities of its own (20). What she finds there as its peculiarity is the condition of motility as she defines Chora to be " the quality of exhibiting or being capable of spontaneous movement (18). It is where the " identity becomes multiple [and] unstable" (Bray 114). The multiplicity and heterogeneity within Kristevan chora is the condition of polysemy and intertextuality, the site where abjection of the excluded mother can never altogether take place; where the other is not totally " an other to [the] self"; in other words, there exists some proportion of otherness inherent in the assumed ' self' (Oliver 149). Choric abjection, then, turns to an elongated moment of becoming; the territorialisation where according to Deleuze instability, multiplicity, and



energy can flow freely through the " virtual body" (Bray 114). There are, for Kristeva, two distinct definitions of ' Other,' and ' other'. In her " Talking about Polylogue" she defines " an other [as] (another person or sex, which would give us psychological humanism) or an Other (the absolute signifier, God) ... in a dynamic and enigmatic process. As a result, a strange body comes into being, one that is neither man nor woman, young or old" (302). She interprets feminine sexuality in terms of the abjection of the Choric unity. Other acts rebelliously and destructively against the supposed phallogentric homogeneity of Self.

### **Kristeva, Writing the Body, and Femininity**

Kristeva defines ' body' to be located in a domain which is positioned outside that of signs. The exclusion of body from this realm renders the core of it a non-masculine quality and since the domain of the semiotic is feminine essence (being located in the pre-lingual stage which is to be struggled with the symbolic law), she estimates that writing the body would also fall under such realm, though not only is this femininity not restricted to the feminine, but in fact it is quite aplenty to the masculine as well. This leads Kristeva to have an alternative view towards ' Poetic Language' in general and claim it to be more connected to the semiotic stage of normative development, breaking the rules of the symbolic. There are moments in poetic language where the rigid law of the language structure is overruled by the traces of the semiotic. Distinguished from everyday language, it becomes an other to the law-abiding language within the Symbolic. It embeds contrasts and contradictions; real and unreal, good and evil, masculine and feminine, being

and non-being all coexist, all transcending the force of law. This entails the very fact that to her the semiotic revolutionary nature of poetic language is not radically segregated from the domain of the symbolic but in constant struggle with it striving to reconcile towards equilibrium. She focuses upon "certain stylistic and thematic elements" which are peculiar to feminine writings (be the authors women writers, the socio-culturally marginalized subjects, the hysterics, etc.), and what she discerns are "social projects... disguised by the culture of the past" (302 Eagleton). She finds no specific goal or meaning in these feminine writings and assumes that "single Other" could be totally dissatisfactory content-wise. She defines such femininity as "dissenting, disillusioned, or apocalyptic" (302). This urges her to turn back to the "archaic relationship which a woman has with her mother" where she hopes to gather a more sufficient network of signifier uncharged with essentially phallogocentric discrimination (302). Kristeva stresses that in feminine writing if there is any structure, it is imposed upon the text artificially and in most other instances silence takes the place of such artificial structure. She borrows the term "poverty of language" from Blanchot to approve what she means (303). Kristevan concept of femininity is elaborated in an unconventional way, recognized regardless of gendered or ungendered appearance of the matter presented through linguistic and psychoanalytic descriptions of the non-phallogocentric notion of subjectivity that are theorized by Kristeva's writings and pre-linguistic world of Chora and the abject mother, in addition to the idea of 'Otherness.' Fragmentation, disintegration, and heterogeneity in Kristeva's view are definable through femininity. Being able to grow the other (baby) within her womb, eventually

the maternal feminine and the infant undergo separation right after the choric world opens up to the thetic one. (M)other being the ground for such pre-lingual harmony and rhythm, in this sense, functions as a " metaphor for those subversive exiled energies which threaten the coherence of the phallogocentric thought" (Bray 74). In " Women Can Never Be defined" Kristeva claims that a woman cannot even " be;" that it " does not even belong in the order of Being" just along with the fact that in ' woman' there is " something that cannot be represented... not said" (Eagleton 267). This claim necessitates her theory of subjectivity to that of Gilles Deleuze's idea of feminine ' Becoming' which entails part of the present study. She also admits the fact that " there are certain ' men' who are familiar with this phenomenon," those who question " the limits of language and society" (268). In fact she refers to avante-garde writers in whose works identity and especially sexual identity is dissolved. In this respect, *Écriture Féminine* as defined by Kristeva is better suited to the nature of the present study than what was originally defined and studied by Helene Cixous in that the former French feminist does not mainly focus on women as such, but considers a wide range of individuals belonging to the category of ' women.' Kristevan *Écriture Féminine* is the realm of the maternal in that " it is capable of translating those moments when language fails us and the body attempts to speak... [communicating] the space between language and the body, [the] space of the (m)other" (Bray 37). Her claim is in harmony with the link she finds between any theory of language and the construction of subjectivity. The practice of *Écriture Féminine* is a form of linguistic dissidence through which Kristeva believes that " one can attempt to bring about multiple

sublations of the unnameable, the unrepresentable, the void" (qtd. in Bray 47). The feminine is where desire can become creative, productive, and free. It is taken as absence to phallogocentric presence; there the repressed " possesses the potency which is to be liberated" (52). Kristevan femininity also shares attributes to her definition of Carnavalesque, the term she borrows from Bakhtin and reintroduces him accordingly. It is the space of subversive upheaval, a " state in which hierarchies, including those constructed on gender, are rendered topsy-turvy in a violation of the established order"; the " low culture", the fluidity which brings about transformation (Gamble 176). Woman and feminine body, therefore, function metaphorically for all the repressed dissident energies than a mere physical sexuality of female humans. In this sense one may regard Marlovian text as a container of all such forces which rise up against the world of the Phallus. His plays using language as a part of signifying process are in accordance with what Kristeva attributes to such a medium: that through language " bodily drives and energy are expressed" (McAfee 14). Kristevan semiotic Chora, the abjection of what simultaneously belongs and does not belong to the subject (who necessarily comes into being through enunciatively signifying process of language), and the fluidity of the repressed energy freed in the non-coherence of *Écriture Féminine* require an analysis which is not based on the polarity of positivities and negativities; therefore, the forcefully-imposed borderlines of the realm of the essentially patriarchal Symbolic which means to shatter the choric universe of *Écriture Féminine* is challenged by Julia Kristeva. Writing, Kristeva believes, is one of the ways of becoming the other. Writing about the other and bringing it to the limelight so much so

that it gradually absorbs the authority of the self can implicitly refer to the feminine writing. The signifying medium of language approximates Kristevan Choric world to Marlowe's text which is constituted of the fluidity, drives and the urge to delimit the already unstably-defined world of fixed ideas. In accordance with such definition the aim is to lead the present research toward the hypothesis of how Marlovian text as a virtual body can be gendered as feminine along with the possibility of taking it as *Écriture Féminine* in Kristevan terms, and how the motility of the body of text attempts to return to semiotic Chora of the maternal. Marlowe's protagonists all are in one way or another alienated from the body of society and stand in simultaneous distantiation and relation to the society's Other. His carnivalesque language cries out the voice of the other which being marginalized strive in their own terms to find place in the centre of the already fragmentarily-established phallogocentric world. Marlowe's characters are the essentially excluded subjects which are brought forth to the centre stage. The feminine tapestry of Marlowe's drama lies in the centralization of the other, which constantly desires to move back into the mother's body. It is as though the plays are striving to undo the characters' given subjectivities by rewinding back to their choric maternal atmosphere. In this respect Marlowe's body of drama is going to be studied as a metaphor which stands for a feminine body, the society and the detailed elements regarded as the constituted sections of this collective mother who is impregnated with the abject characters and in inevitable, constant opposition and attraction with them. It is aimed in this research to define the universe of Marlowe as being constantly in the fluidity which defies the fixed structure of the Symbolic and

how he attempts to present his universe as a receptacle for ‘ anything [that] exists’. The fluidity is to be studied as a feminine quality. The hope is to render some new scope for the understanding the Marlovian world in accordance to the present poststructuralist issues of subjectivity and the external effects behind its fashioning.