MATRICES AND MAVERICKS

A KRISTEVAN ANALYSIS OF

THE POETRY OF SHELLEY

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"I, Neville Aumann, declare that the Master by Research thesis entitled *Matrices and Mavericks: A Kristevan Analysis of the Poetry of Shelley* is no more than 60,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work."

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

Kristeva, in her work, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, analyses nineteenth-century avant-garde poetic texts as exemplars of the manifestation of the otherwise repressed semiotic *chora*. This thesis involves an analysis of Percy Bysshe Shelley's poetic texts in a similar critique. Shelley's poetry, though not as fully as that of avant-garde poets such as Stéphane Mallarmé, responds to a Kristevan reading. This reading involves the maternal as being both significant and transgressive. The Introduction opens the thesis with a discussion of the methodology that marks Kristeva's analysis of the poetic texts of Mallarmé, which is used here as an exemplar for a reading of Shelley's texts. A survey of the last two centuries of Shelleyan criticism, together with a discussion of how this analysis differs from the critical legacy, is provided in the first chapter. The second chapter gives a fuller description of Kristeva's theory of the poetic text, which forms the basis for the analysis of Shelley's poetry in the succeeding chapters. These chapters form the body of the thesis, as Kristevan theory is applied to a reading of Shelley's poetic texts, in terms of the maternal. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the partial interpenetration of Shelley's poetic texts with Kristeva's theoretical texts, which act gives the title to this thesis: Matrices and Mavericks.

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GLOSSARY

Note: The key terms/concepts of Kristeva's theory of poetry are developed in detail in Chapter Two, Kristeva's *Theory of the Poetic Text.*

Abject, Abjection

The abject resides on the border. It is neither subject nor object, but that which threatens identity and distinctions. Abjection manifests as the child struggles to separate from the maternal body—the mother is abjected, one body separating from another: '[the] prototypical abject experience...is the experience of birth itself' (Oliver. 1993a 56-57). It is the 'in-between, the ambiguous, the composite' (Kristeva. 1982. 4).

Castration

Framed within the theory of the Oedipus Complex where the father threatens the child with castration if he does not give up the maternal pre-object. Castration is necessary for the child to enter the symbolic. 'Castration must have been a problem, a trauma, a drama, so that the semiotic can return through the symbolic position it brings about' (Oliver. 2002. 45).

Economy of drive motility

The state of the ebbs and flows of the primary drives which in their stoppages and motilities give rise to and destroy, yet within a regulated symbolic context. The drives are subject to order: 'Checked by the constraints of biological and social structures' (see Kristeva. 1984. 28 ff).

Jouissance

Jouissance is a French term, lacking an English equivalent, denoting 'extreme pleasure'. It partially manifests with the transgression, disruption, and exceeding of laws, rules, and the symbolic element, for example, in texts, especially poetic texts, where it is present as a surplus (Wright. 1992. 185).

Genotext and phenotext

The designations genotext and phenotext correspond to the 'distinctions between semiotic and symbolic' (Oliver. 2002. 25). The genotext, like the semiotic underlies the text, in a space which is the

result of drive forces, and is therefore not strictly linguistic (Kristeva. 1984. 86). The phenotext, on the other hand, is 'a structure... [obeying] rules of communication and presupposes a subject of enunciation and an addressee' (Kristeva. 1984. 87).

Semiotic motility

Spontaneous movement of semiotic elements characterised by their fluidity and transgression of order, syntax and symbolic delineation.

Sublime

The existence of the semiotic element in poetic texts is due to the re-emergence of the repressed, archaic, maternal *chora* through sublimation. Kristeva's sublime, as an effect of the text, however, is perceived as 'a *something added* that expands us, overstrains us...' (Kristeva. 1982. 12). It is in these effects that the maternal is reinscribed as sublime.

Symbolic

The symbolic order is the social realm/society, heterogeneously composed of semiotic and symbolic elements, which are in dialectical tension. It is the place of signification within which the semiotic works. The semiotic can only be represented within the symbolic, although it also, at times, exceeds it.

Thetic

The thetic is the border between the semiotic and the symbolic. This threshold generates the semiotic/symbolic differentiation which is evident in the words, sentences etc., of the poetic text. The heterogeneity of the two modalities is first composed by the thetic phase, which is active whenever the symbolic occurs. The semiotic signifies through breaking the thetic by entering it, and using its borders, laws, marks, to transform the same.

INTRODUCTION

Shelley's poetry has generated and continues to generate interpretations and critiques. Julia Kristeva's theoretical works, similarly, are involved in the dialectics of readings; as Nietzsche said 'there are no facts [Tatsachen], only interpretations' (From Nietzsche's, *Unpublished Notes*. In Danto 1965, 76). Julia Kristeva's engagement of theory with poetic texts focuses on texts that she considers foreground the semiotic process:

> Among the capitalist mode of production's numerous signifying practices, only certain literary texts of the avant-garde (Mallarmé, Joyce) manage to cover the infinity of the process, that is, reach the semiotic *chora*, which modifies linguistic structure...It has only been in very recent years or in *revolutionary* periods that signifying practice has inscribed within the phenotext the plural, heterogeneous, and *contradictory process of signification encompassing the flow of drives, material discontinuity*, political struggle and the pulverisation of language (Kristeva. 1984. 88) [my emphasis].

My thesis adds Shelley to the list. Not only were many of his poems influenced heavily by the French Revolution, but also his texts demonstrate markedly 'material discontinuity' in the phenomena of metaphor and musicality, plurality, contradiction in paradox, and other ambiguity in verse. Shelley's texts, although not as fully as those of a Mallarmé, foreground a partial manifestation of the maternal, semiotic *chora*. The relationship of Kristeva's theorising to Mallarmé's work is summed up by Patrick ffrench, who comments that Mallarmé's poetry 'offers Kristeva an exemplary reflection of that process [of her criticism] and of its consequences' (ffrench. 1998. 18).

Of Mallarmé's work, ffrench comments, that, "'Un coup de dés n'abolira jamais le hasard' ['A dice throw will never abolish chance'], [is] the one text by him which operates as a constant reference throughout Kristeva's work, [and] functions as a crucial example" (ffrench. 1998. 183). Kristeva engages Mallarmé's poem in two directions. First, as a theoretical gloss on the disorder of language which she proposes in her theory that the semiotic signifies in language. For example, commenting on the last line of *A Dice Throw*: 'Every Thought Gives Forth a Throw of the Dice', Kristeva relates the logical-irrationality/madness of the madman of *Igitur*, as an inscription/ signification in the text, and weaves this into the practice of critical theorizing underlying her theory of the signification of the semiotic element in poetic language:

> This 'last point which sanctifies' the throw of the dice is what we have called a thetic moment of the signifying process and is precisely what makes this game a practice. But this practice (this 'Act') is acted upon by 'chance' *—the nonsymbolic expenditure, the very semiotic game of dice*: this is what poetic practice means to Igitur, the logical madman (Kristeva. 1984. 228) [my emphasis].

The second of Kristeva's engagements with Mallarmé's text is on the level of the phoneme. She pays attention to the materiality of the text in all its composition and musicality. In the words of ffrench, Kristeva delineates Mallarmé's verse, in terms of 'the image of a fine network of rhythm, alliteration, assonance, repetition stretched across the typographic lozenge of the poem' (ffrench. 1998. 194).

My method/approach to an analysis of a selection of Shelley's poetic texts utilises these two Kristevan approaches to poetry: approaches that she demonstrates in her analysis of Mallarmé's poetic texts. Kristeva views/identifies, in her engagements with Mallarmé's texts, the emergence of the maternal *chora*, the reactivation of the drives, foregrounded by the presence of the semiotic element in poetry.

The first chapter of this thesis, the *History of Shelley's Reputation*, traces Shelleyan criticism, both negative and positive, through nineteenth-century to twentieth-century critiques to the present. The nineteenth-century commentators, although divided on the worth of Shelley's poetry, agree that flights of fancy, rather than reference to the world of objects, characterise Shelley's poetic texts. This element of Shelley's poetry was rejected by the New Critics, who presupposed a static, unified object of criticism: the closed text. Conversely, Kristeva's assignment of significance to the apparently incoherent in poetic verse (the semiotic), may be applied to Shelley's poetic, giving value/significance to its flights of fancy: the semiotic signifies.

Twentieth-century Deconstruction of texts opened criticism to plural interpretation(s), opposing *the* single meaning and its corollary: the closed text. Deconstructionism's emphasis on a continuum of signification, that signifiers refer to nothing but other signifiers, undermines the object-referent model of New Criticism, having much in common with Kristeva's ideas of the semiotic and the 'subject in process/on trial'.

Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi among contemporary critics offers the theoretical approach to Shelley which is most compatible with this thesis' reading. She approaches Shelley's poetry from a consistent, though at best partial, Kristevan trajectory with her emphasis on the maternal. However there are significant differences between Gelpi's and Kristeva's approaches to poetic texts, differences that gravitate to a question of the diachronic versus the synchronic. Chapter One's survey of Shelleyan criticism is developed to give a context to my incursions into the arena of interpreting Shelley's poetry.

Chapter Two, *Kristeva's Theory of the Poetic Text*, gives a detailed discussion of the theoretical framework on which I build this thesis. It indicates the elements of Kristeva's theory that have informed my readings of Shelley. In particular it explores the central Kristevan concept of the *chora*. Kristeva's theory of language as heterogeneous, composed of two elements, the semiotic and the symbolic, forms the basis of her subsequent theorising regarding the semiotic *chora*. The *chora's* poetic manifestation is identified by Kristeva as occurrences of excesses, materiality, and the presence of a poetic subject in the phenomenon she calls the *text*. Kristeva's concept of the *chora* and its dynamic in the poetic text is what she proposes to explain the forces of the reciprocal relations intermediate to the symbolic and the semiotic (Payne. 1993. 167). The *chora* is the place where the 'subject is both generated and negated'. Kristeva's concept gives context to her theory of the subject, who, in opposition to the Cartesian, unified subject of Western metaphysics, is unstable, changing, not static but in process (Kristeva. 1984. 28).

Kristeva's theory of the 'subject in process/on trial' is fundamentally based on the theory of the primary processes of Freud's drive economy, his theory of the unconscious and the split subject, and its Lacanian rewriting. This chapter also emphasises, as opposed to the unified Cartesian subject, Kristeva's idea of a subject which is in process-ion (change) (Kristeva. 1984. 30).

Kristeva's theory of the poetic text is one which deals with the 'process of its productivity' not as 'a finished product' (Kristeva. 1984. 7). This process, partly seen in linguistic modifications, involves the re-emergence of the drive economy of the semiotic *chora*, where the relationship between the poetic text and the maternal *chora* is primarily one of *production*. In the words of Roland Barthes, Kristeva's theory of the poetic text changed his thinking 'from a semiology of products to a semiotics of production' (Kristeva. 1984. 10).

In Chapter Three, *Body Spaces*, I have endeavoured to engage Kristeva's theory of the poetic text as a partial disclosure of the archaic maternal *chora*, with two of Shelley's poems, *Laon and Cythna* and *Prometheus Unbound*. The maternal body does occupy a space, and in my analysis this space can be seen in very concrete terms of the materiality of the poetic text; 'linguistic distortions such as metaphor, metonymy, musicality' (Kristeva. 1996. 134). As I underline in Chapter Two these textual articulations give the *chora* a representation in language, even though it 'precedes evidence, verisimilitude, spatiality, and temporality' (Kristeva. 1984. 26).

In Chapter Four, *The Pursuit of Fantasy*, I analyse three of Shelley's poems, *Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude, The Witch of Atlas*, and *Mont Blanc*. The analyses seek to emphasise Kristeva's concept of poetic excess as an instance of the re-emergence of the maternal. This excess, while transgressive of syntactical, logical order, and thus pursuing fantasy, like the maternal *chora* can be situated but never given 'axiomatic form' (Kristeva. 1984. 26). The fantastical as a surplus in Shelley's texts is responsive to, and ultimately dependent on, a juxtaposition of the poetic texts with Kristevan theory, and does not actively follow any logical system of identification, but rather is a reminder that remainders can be pursued through matrix-centred theory. This thesis is an enterprise not a destination. That is, my reading is an attempt to view textual excesses as both demonstrative of continuity in the synchronic mode of production and of the dynamics/process of the textual production.

At the end of his article 'Revolution in Poetic Language? Kristeva and Mallarmé', Patrick ffrench makes the observation that Kristeva's relation to Mallarmé's texts is one which is 'a curiously circular operation whereby Mallarmé offers Kristeva an opportunity to legitimate and found the theory she uses to read Mallarmé, or other writers' (ffrench. 1998. 197). ffrench's criticism can also apply to my Kristevan approach to reading Shelley's texts, albeit of a secondary order; that is I justify my application of Kristevan theory by inscribing it in Shelley's poetic texts. As ffrench relates, 'This may be the shape of theory itself, or of reading itself, which must always involve a *participation* in the text read' (ffrench. 1998. 197). Participation is an apposite description for what Kristeva has done in her theoretical and analytical project of poetical criticism and I claim a derived and dimly reflected

participation in the texts of Kristeva, Shelley, and many others. Any reading or interpretation is an act which cannot lay claim to a transcendental truth, which it negates by virtue of its very process; the process which Kristeva's theory of the poetic text addresses. My reading of Shelley's poetry offers a textual instance of an engagement with Kristevan poetic theory, partially useful to unravelling/interpreting the text-ure of Shelley's works. It makes no major claim for a single truth.

CHAPTER 1: HISTORY OF SHELLEY'S REPUTATION

The historical debates around Shelley's poetic verse have polarised around the judgements of it as being poor because it is considered vague or non-referential, respecting the world of objects, or, conversely, deemed as significant in its very elusiveness. O'Neil, writing in 1993, describes the 'resurgence of interest in his [Shelley's] poetry over the last thirty years or so' (O'Neil. 1993. 1). He attributes this to the text's 'responsiveness to theoretical approaches now in favour' (O'Neil. 1993. 1). One of these approaches is that offered by a reading according to Kristevan theory. My application of Kristevan analysis to Shelley's texts inserts an alternative inscription into Shelley's verse: a maternal space. Kristevan analysis offers a reading which recognises signification as a result of the re-emergence of the otherwise repressed maternal *chora*.

Shelley's Contemporaries

As we shall see, 'It is a striking fact that the most famous literary critics writing in English during and since Shelley's lifetime–William Hazlitt, Matthew Arnold...and F.R. Leavis–have expressed strong reservations about the success and significance of his poetry' (O'Neil. 1). This claim that Shelley's poetry lacks significance/import can be first seen in many literary critics who lived in the nineteenth century.

William Hazlitt (1788-1830) wrote many critical essays on literary figures including Shelley (DNB. Vol. IX. 132). As O'Neil writes, 'Hazlitt...detects in the poetry [of Shelley] a perversely heterodox rejection of "the probable or the true"' (O'Neil. 2). For example, in an article in the *Edinburgh Review* (Vol. XL. July 1824) Hazlitt writes:

> Mr. Shelley is the maker of his own poetry–out of nothing.... Instead of giving a language to thought, or lending heart a tongue, he utters dark sayings, and deals in allegories and riddles. His Muse offers her services to clothe shadowy doubts and inscrutable difficulties in a robe of glittering words, and to turn nature into a brilliant paradox...Mr. Shelley's mind was of 'too fiery a quality to repose (for any continuance) on the probable or the true—it soared 'beyond the visible diurnal sphere', to the strange, the improbable, and the impossible.

> (Hazlitt. 1904. 256).

Hazlitt voices an objection in which he is not alone. However, Kristevan analysis, can be seen to address the improbability of Shelley's poetic, for as M. Sarup writes, 'the [rupture of] the semiotic [being presymbolic]...results in an upheaval in the norms of the smooth understandable text. The semiotic overflows its boundaries in those privileged "moments" Kristeva specifies in her triad of subversive forces: madness, holiness and poetry' (Sarup. 1993, 124).

Madness and Shelley is a theme which Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) pursues. In 1888, Arnold comments:

> The man Shelley, in very truth, is not entirely sane, and Shelley's poetry is not entirely sane either. The Shelley of actual life is a vision of beauty and radiance, indeed, but availing nothing, effecting nothing. And in poetry, no less than in life, he is 'a beautiful *and ineffectual* angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain' (Arnold. 1903. 251-252).

However, Shelley's tendency towards non-referentiality, Arnold's charge of ineffectuality, is a claim which sees significance as existing only in the symbolic. For as Oliver says: 'The symbolic element is what makes reference possible' [Oliver.12/8/2003]. However, the semiotic in language, in Kristevan theory, is far from being insignificant. For as Oliver explains, 'without the semiotic, all signification would be empty and have no importance for our lives' [Oliver.12/8/2003].

A less-known nineteenth-century critic, Sir Henry Taylor (1800-1886) voices a similar critique of Shelley's poetry to Hazlitt's and Arnold's. In 1834, in *Tennyson's Poems*, he writes:

> Mr Shelley seems to have written under the notion that no phenomena can be perfectly poetical, until they shall have been so decomposed from their natural order and coherency, as to be brought before the reader in the likeness of a phantasma or vision. (Davies. 164).

Taylor's charge is related to a logocentric view of a world of meaning, a strictly symbolic, referential viewing of Shelley's verse. Kristevan theory challenges this Western metaphysic, for 'while the symbolic element gives signification its meaning in the strict sense of reference, the semiotic element gives signification meaning in a broader sense. That is, the semiotic element makes symbols matter; by discharging drive force in symbols, it makes them *significant*' [Oliver.1/8/2003]. Shelley's poetic foregrounds this semiotic meaning, which is the very life of signification.

We have thus far taken note of three nineteenth-century literary critics who read Shelley in a negative light. Moving from these critiques towards a more positive assessment of Shelley's poetic, let us look at a more even-handed critic, Thomas Love Peacock (1785-1866). Peacock's main work on Shelley was his *Memoirs of Shelley*, in *Frazer's Magazine* where, in 1860, he writes that Shelley was

> a genius unsurpassed in the description and imagination of scenes of beauty and grandeur; in the expression of impassioned love of ideal beauty; in the illustration of deep feeling by congenial imagery; and in the infinite variety of harmonious versification (In Davies. 1962. 174).

However, he is not altogether an admirer of Shelley's 'impassioned' verse:

> What was, in my opinion, deficient in his poetry was...the want of reality in the characters with which he peopled his splendid scenes, and to which he addressed or imparted the utterance of his impassioned feeling (In Davies. 1962. 175).

Peacock had no problem with Shelley's fantastical imagery seeing it as an appropriate and clear expression of deep feeling. The deficiency he criticises is related to the characters in Shelley's poetry, which could be said to be often ostentatiously fantastical and complex in their relations to the poetic

narrative (cf. the 'poet' in *Alastor* or the 'witch' in *The Witch of Atlas*). In a Kristevan perspective, subjects, especially poetic ones, are never defined or unitary but a subject of the process of the text when,

> [T]he speaking subject is no longer considered a phenomenological transcendental ego nor the Cartesian ego but rather a *subject in process/on trial* [*sujet en procès*], as is the case in the practice of the text, deep structure or at least transformational rules are disturbed and, with them, the possibility of semantic and/or grammatical categorical interpretation.
> (Kristeva. 1984. 37).

Kristeva's 'subject in process' applies to Shelley's poetic subjects/ characters, in their subversion of the definable, unitary, transcendental/Cartesian ego. The poetic text being a process undermines all unities, except temporal ones, in a subversion of the stability of the subject as a *position* of expression. Shelley's character/subject's lack of unity is an indication of the 'subject in process/on trial', which Kristeva relates

> In...eroding...the very position of enunciation [i.e. the positing of the subject as absent from the signifier], poetic language puts the subject in process/on trial through a network of marks and semiotic facilitations.
> (Kristeva. 1984. 58).

Peacock's criticism proposes a failed Cartesian subject in Shelley's poetry, while Kristevan analysis dissolves any requirement for such a unitary subject.

A nineteenth-century critic who was favourable towards Shelley's verse was John Addington Symonds (1840-1893). In 1878, he writes in *Shelley*:

> In none of Shelley's greatest contemporaries was the lyrical faculty so paramount; and whether we consider his minor songs, his odes, or his more complicated choral dramas, we acknowledge that he was the loftiest and the most spontaneous singer of our language. In the range of power he was also conspicuous above the rest. Not only did he write the best lyrics, but the best tragedy, the best translations, the best familiar poems of his century. (In Davies. 1962. 183).

Symonds praises Shelley's musicality in verse, and says that its spontaneity was a hallmark. And such musicality is exactly what Kristevan theory addresses:

> Neither model nor copy, the chora precedes and underlies figuration and thus specularization, and is analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm.
> (Kristeva. 1984. 26).

Symonds, in his ascription of significance to Shelley's spontaneous singing, can be seen to foreground the semiotic modality.

Before leaving the literary criticism of the nineteenth century let us look at another admirer of Shelley's poetry, Francis Thompson, (1859-1907). In 1889, Thompson wrote in *Shelley*:

> he deviates from the true Nature poet, the normal Wordsworth type of nature poet: imagery was to him not a mere means of expression, not even a mere means of adornment; it was a delight for its own sake (In Davies. 188).

Thompson's description, 'delight for its own sake', can be seen as an aspect of Shelley's poetic which opposes/subverts object-referentiality and it is precisely this aspect which responds to Kristevan analysis in terms of the maternal body.

Thompson also ascribes significance to Shelley's poetry, when he writes:

> The coldest moon of an idea rises hallooed through his vaporous imagination. The dimmest-sparked chip of a conception blazes and scintillates in the subtle oxygen of his mind. The most wrinkled Aeson of an abstruseness leaps rosy out of his bubbling genius. In a more *intensified signification* than it is probable that Shakespeare dreamed of, Shelley *gives to nothing a local habitation and a name* (In Davies. 189-190) [my emphasis].

He strongly asserts that Shelley's verse signifies in a way which surpasses Shakespeare and signifies while giving 'to nothing a local habitation and a name'. Regarding the naming of that absence, Kristeva's remarks on denotation and the semiotic *chora*, in the disturbance of such indefinite limen causes (nothing has a name), are useful:

> when this subject re-emerges, when the semiotic chora disturbs the thetic position by redistributing the signifying order, we note that the denoted object and the syntactic relation are disturbed as well.
> (Kristeva. 1984. 55).

Such irruption of the symbolic by the semiotic puts into question the denotation of nominalism in the text, and this disturbance highlights the fact that definition, per se, is in a very precarious non–position, being subject to the very drives which underlie it: the place of the maternal *chora*. That is, the very drives which generate location or naming in the non–locus of the semiotic *chora* expose binaries, such as presence/absence, to processes manifest in the textual economy in the play of signifiers. Thereby 'nothing is given a local habitation and a name', while the very status of subject/object/definition is unstable:

> the entire gamut of partial drives is triggered within the chora underlying the text, endlessly 'swallowing'/rejecting, appropriating/expelling, inside/outside...As a provocation for the subject, instinctual rhythm posits and passes through the object (Kristeva. 1984. 99).

The critical perception that Shelley fails in terms of object–referentiality can be, conversely, viewed in Kristevan terms, as a positive revolutionary trait. Kristeva's tendency to equate poetical revolution with revolution in the historical process, notably expounded in her work, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (see e.g. 1984, 61), does not obscure her emphasis on the semiotic in textual practice which defies many of the borders/margins of symbolic, referential order. In this modality Shelley's texts revolt against conservative/phallocentric objectivity.

Of the nineteenth-century negative critics of Shelley's poetry that we have considered, their criticism can be seen to be continued by many twentieth-century writers who were to see Shelley's use of imagery as vagueness, a glaring fault. This element of Shelley's poetry (the ethereal imagery) irked the early modernist critics of the twentieth century: specifically the New Critics. It is however this very

aspect of his poetry that (I contend) is responsive to Kristevan theory which views such semiotic elements as a revolutionary trait.

Shelley was heavily influenced by the French Revolution, but more than that his poetry effects indefiniteness, an aspect which in readings of the New Critics appears incoherent, yet can be viewed as exposing the 'material discontinuity' of all poetic texts (Kristeva. 1984. 88). In Kristevan theory, this quality of Shelley's discourse is a facet which responds to a reading which inscribes the maternal *chora* into the equation.

New Criticism

In the New Critics' dictum that coherence and complexity are essential to good poetry, the value judgement *good* does not concern us but the implication that consistency is a theoretical *given*, does (O'Neil. 1993. 3). Coherence in complexity, implies that the poetry should be connected and consistent in all its relationships, parts to the whole (O'Neil. 3). In Kristevan theory, poetry in revolutionary periods is an instance of semiotic rupture which, in part, subverts order, consistency, and coherence. Kristeva writes,

> It has only been...in revolutionary periods that signifying practise has inscribed within the phenotext the plural, heterogeneous, and contradictory process of signification encompassing the flow of drives, material discontinuity... and the pulverisation of language (Kristeva. 1984. 88).

The New Critics require that poetry must have a unique meaning: that is the form and meaning cannot be disentangled (O'Neil. 3). Kristevan theory of the poetic text, as focusing on the materiality of the text (metaphor, metonymy, musicality)(cf. John Addington Symonds' 'spontaneous singer' in Davies. 1962), I argue can be fruitfully engaged with Shelley's poetic, at the level of theory, which in one sense, precedes the syntax of the text, while depending on it. In terms of the text per se, 'Our discourse—all discourse moves with and against the chora in the sense that it simultaneously depends upon and refuses it' (Kristeva. 1984. 26). This dialectical tension involves an infinity of possible interpretations, and its ultimate origins in the Freudian drives makes the idea of any supposed unique meaning untenable (Derrida. 1978. 280). The New Critics' criteria assume a poetic stasis which is not involved in the slidability of signifiers. In this they also assert a subject which is unified and stable. Kristevan theory, on the other hand, reinscribes into the poetic text 'the semiotic chora[which] is no more than the place where the subject is both generated and negated, the place his unity succumbs before the process of charges and stases that produce him' (Kristeva. 1984. 28).

F.R. Leavis is an exemplar of the New Critical approach to the poetry of Shelley for, as Barton writes, 'If one were to ask if all New Critics agree with Leavis's censures [of Shelley's poetry] ...the answer would be a resounding and unanimous yes' (Barton, 1973. 23). In *Revaluation*, Leavis says Shelley's poetry had 'little to do with thinking' (Leavis, 1998. 208) and sees Shelley's poetry as mindless and scattered words without unity of meaningful, coherent thought, lacking fusion of opposing meanings;

certainly not a achievement of 'critical intelligence' (Leavis. 1998. 215). Leavis regards Shelley's versification as 'innocent', that is simple and manifesting a habitual use of 'fondled vocabulary' and rote imagery (Leavis. 1998. 215).

Given this context it is interesting to note Kristeva's comments on the semiotic *chora*, which she describes as

> *contradictory, without unity*, separable and divisible...yet...the space or receptacle is called amorphous: thus its suggested rhythmically will be in a certain sense erased, for how can one think of an articulation of what is not yet singular but is nevertheless necessary? All we may say of it, then, to make it intelligible, is that it is amorphous...
> (Kristeva. 1984. 26 fn 13) [my emphasis].

The chora is manifest in the incoherent and contradictory. In poetry, it is marked, as it manifests in disunity and defiance of order and definitiveness. It is only intelligible in that it is amorphous. With this in mind let us look at some analysis, by Leavis, of Shelley's poem *Ode to the West Wind*. Leavis, after quoting lines 15-23, criticizes the poem for not fusing the language used into a unified whole. As this required coherence is, to Leavis, a mark of achieved poems, Shelley's metaphors don't work and so neither does his poetry (O'Neil. 3). In conclusion to his critique of *Ode to the West Wind*, Leavis explains,

> In the growth of those 'tangled boughs' out of the leaves, exemplifying as it does a general tendency of the images to forget the status of the metaphor or simile that introduced them and to assume an autonomy and a right to propagate, so that we lose in confused generations and perspectives the perception or thought... [behind the] imagery, we have a recognised essential trait of Shelley's: his weak grasp upon the actual (Leavis. 206).

Reason is to Leavis the main tool of the literary critic and indispensable in the reading of poetry. To him it is what unites metaphors to their referents, gives structure and order to verse, and *grasps the actual*. His essential judgement of the 'spontaneous' Shelley is that, 'feeling in Shelley's poetry is divorced from thought'. (Leavis. 211). However, Kristevan theory, in contrast, as we have noted, sees such phenomena of poetic metaphor as a result of the fluidity of the drives (Kristeva. 1984. 28). Metaphor, as drive based, is subject to the *chora*, as is the poetic subject, where meaning is posited 'but then immediately exceeded by...*the discontinuity of real objects*' (Kristeva. 1984. 100). The object–referent/grasp of the actual which Leavis requires metaphor refer to, is, according to Kristevan theory, a *process* rather than a sign, for with the primary processes, 'we find the principles of metonymy and metaphor indissociable from the drive economy underlying them' (Kristeva. 1984. 28).

Object/subject/referent dichotomies are signified by a tension between the symbolic (posited) and the semiotic (exceeding). The lack of reason in the disunity of metaphor and referent is simply, when read by Kristevan theory, an expression of drive activation manifest in textual practices like Shelley's, which partially defy the object-referent requirement of critics like F. R. Leavis.

Leavis' perspective was not uncontested at the time of writing even among New Critics. Rene Wellek, a New Critic and Leavis's contemporary, reviews Leavis's book *Revaluation* in his essay 'Literary Criticism and Philosophy' for *Scrutiny* in 1937. Wellek writes in this review that Leavis's emphasis 'on a firm grasp on the actual' is a philosophical assumption which is in a 'realist' direction and does not consider a 'whole phase of human thought: idealism as it comes down from Plato' (Wellek. 1937. 376). Wellek's main point in the review is that the philosophy of Shelley is 'astonishingly unified and perfectly coherent' (Wellek. 382). Yet Kristevan theory emphasises that in the poetic text and, I contend, patent in Shelley's poetic:

> Logical syntheses and all *ideologies* are present, but they are pulverised within their own logic before being displaced toward something that is *no longer* within the realm of the *idea*, sign, syntax, and thus *Logos*, but is instead simply semiotic functioning.
> (Kristeva. 1984. 63) [my emphasis]

In that Wellek contradicts Leavis we have a departure from the canon of New Criticism, yet it is still a view which asserts a logo-centrism, through a philosophical perspective. Kristeva's 'subject in process' concerns the materiality (musicality, metonymy, metaphor) of the text rather than a tendency towards stasis. However this process is still regulated for,

> the *irruption* of the semiotic within the symbolic is only relative. Though permeable, the thetic continues to ensure the position of the subject put in process/on trial. As a consequence, musicality is not without signification; indeed it is deployed within it.
> (Kristeva. 1984. 63) [my emphasis].

The attention given to this irruption by Kristevan theory radically differs from the New Critical reading of Shelley's poetry: both from Leavis's insistence on the 'grasp of the actual', in all its static logocentrism, and from Wellek's emphasis on Platonic idealism. The concept 'subject in process/on trial' refuses both New Critical approaches, seeing fragmentation and division where they (the New Critics) see unity and coherence.

Bloom

While building on the New Critics' axiom–*Nothing but the Text*– Harold Bloom traverses a path of criticism which has something in common with the Deconstructionists. Bloom is a major literary critic of the Romantic poets, especially a critic of Shelley's poetry. Like the Deconstructionists, Bloom sees a blurring of the 'usual hierarchical distinction between creative and critical writing' (Lodge. 1988. 240). This strategy separates him from the object–referent doctrine of Leavis. Bloom is also a spiritual writer in the sense that he frequently makes use of theological concepts to expostulate on poetic texts. It is in this vein that he approaches Shelley in the work I consider– *Shelley's Mythmaking.*

In *Shelley's Mythmaking* (1959), Bloom draws upon the theologian Martin Buber's differentiation between two basic 'words 'I-Thou' and 'I-It'' The first being an 'imaginative world' relating humans to reality, and the second calling on 'a world of experience and separation' (O'Neil. 5). In relation to

poetry, the imaginary relationship of the 'I-Thou' involves poetic verse which is real in the sense of having a visionary referent, which is not just a product of vagueness as critics such as Leavis claim (O'Neil. 1993. 6). Bloom, in *Shelley's Mythmaking* considers Shelley as 'a mythopoeic [mythmaking] poet', and he emphasises Shelley's 'visionary drama' as he finds it in his verse (O'Neil. 5). To Bloom, Shelley's text is a matter of the question of perspective. For Shelley's verse, according to Bloom, highlights a process in the sense of the mind's perception of an imaginary referent.

Bloom sees Shelley's verse as generating (in the reader) a visionary reality rather than a vague effect. The pertinent question, to Bloom, is not one in which reality per se is questioned, 'but whose reality?' (O'Neil. 6). Bloom's reading of Shelley is a questioning of reality of perspectives. His view engages a 'subject in process/on trial' of sorts; in Bloom's own words the 'I-Thou' relationship. It is interesting that in questioning the positionality of the poetic subject, Kristeva writes that

> only the subject, for whom the thetic is not a repression of the semiotic chora but instead a position either taken on or undergone, can *call into question* the thetic so that *a new disposition* may be articulated.
> (Kristeva. 1984. 51) [my emphasis].

In *Ode to the West Wind*, Bloom sees an 'I-Thou' presence evoked by Shelley which has a reality in the verse achieved there and thus, belief, as such, need not be required of the reader if he/she comes to the poetry without preconceptions (O'Neil. 6). In that 'belief...need not be required' it is interesting to draw a parallel with Plato, whom Kristeva quotes in a footnote regarding the *chora*,

> Space[*chora*], which is everlasting, not admitting destruction; providing a situation for all things that come into being[perspectives], but itself apprehended without the senses by a sort of bastard reasoning, and *hardly an object of belief.*
> (Kristeva. 1984. 26 fn. 12) [my emphasis]

Having noted Bloom's idea of an imaginary reality, regarding Shelley's verse—its 'I-Thou' relations–let us consider some of Bloom's detailed critique of Shelley's verse. Bloom in *Shelley's Mythmaking* also critiques the second stanza of *Ode to the West Wind*. He writes that Leavis' close reading is in fact a simple misreading (1959. 79). He then goes on to say that Shelley does not actually make a comparison between the leaves and the clouds, but that he does parallel their shedding 'process'. The leaves are shaken loose by the wind and then carried along. Likewise the loose clouds are borne along by the same wind while the 'larger clouds (not loose) remain relatively still' (1959. 79). Of the 'tangled boughs'– Heaven and Earth in their intermingling give this perception. The clouds derive from the Ocean and the Sky just as organically the tree bears leaves (1959. 80). Hence, as opposed to Leavis' critique of this imagery, Bloom sees a coherent, complex and unified poem using intelligible metaphors.

Bloom's critique of Shelley's verse is similar to Rene Wellek's. Bloom likewise claims Shelley's metaphors are 'intelligible', and offers a critique of *Ode to the West Wind* which in many aspects parallels Wellek's. However while Wellek finds coherence in Shelley's alleged philosophical Platonism, Bloom leaves the issue of metaphorical reference as an open question, approaching the poetry as an instance of the 'mythopoeic'. Bloom sees a 'visionary reality', rather than a linguistic (Leavis) or

philosophical/idealistic (Wellek) one. Bloom's theorising of mythmaking, in Shelley's verse, is opposed to any system per se and in this he demonstrates his Deconstructive methods. Bloom does, however, still write of Shelley's verse as a unity, albeit still open to a question of perspective(s). However, he can be seen to still maintain the formula object–referent in a sophisticated guise, in that he does imagine a resolution to Shelley's reference problem as proposed by Leavis.

As I have noted, the ambivalence of Shelley's poetic text, in particular in regard to metaphors, is, from a Kristevan perspective, a manifestation of the otherwise repressed archaic, maternal *chora*. As we have seen, metaphor is necessarily linked to the primary drives underlying it and, as such, metaphor is an irruption within the symbolic by the semiotic. In that logic and structure belong to the symbolic, in syntactical manifestation, and more obscure metaphors are transgressive of linguistic order, there need not be any rational/unified reading of *Ode to the West Wind*. I have considered the New Critics, and Harold Bloom, not so much to analyse their readings of Shelley's poetry but to show how a Kristevan reading fundamentally differs from an object–referent perspective.

Deconstructionism

The decentring of the logos, as it exists in the Western metaphysic, is prominent in a school of criticism referred to as Deconstructionism. The poetry of Percy Shelley readily responds to this literary criticism. Many Deconstructionists appropriate the linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, who can be said to be the first linguist to challenge traditional notions of language as a communication of determinate meaning. The Deconstructionist movement as a whole, has used discoveries of his such as the arbitrary relationship between signified and signifier, in the sign, to treat the poetic text as an artefact to be studied apart from any external factors or supposed absolute interpretation. As O'Neil notes of Deconstructionism,

> Its pivot is the view that the structuralist model of a system of internal differences seeks an illicit stability; for Derrida, the structuralist's differences cannot resolve into determinate meaning since they are also forms of 'differance'; not only do they differ from each other, but they endlessly defer the possibility of meaning. There is nothing, according to Derrida, outside the text, no transcendental signified which will stabilise the play of signifiers.
> (O'Neil.10).

Derrida and his modern adherents see the poetic text as having no external rational, no object outside the text in contrast to the resolute emphasis on object–referentiality of the New Critics. The impossibility of determinate meaning, so much a touchstone of Deconstructive critics, opens the hither-to closed text to the ingenuity of interpreters. A closed text·was the literary product of the assumption that meaning was guaranteed by a transcendental signified. Since such meaning has been decentered or Deconstructed, the Deconstructive critic brings play to the interpretative process (O'Neil. 10).

We can contrast Deconstructive criticism with the literary criticism of Shelley we have so far considered, in terms of its denial that the text has a determinate meaning and thus there is no limitation

of the interpretations possible. Deconstructionism opens the possibilities of interpretations. With this in mind let us look at some major Deconstructive readings of Shelley.

Paul de Man, a well-known Deconstructive literary critic, writes within the tension of *theory* which denies that one can make sense or give a determinate interpretation of a text. Romanticism is seen by De Man as dominantly a rhetoric which uses figures and tropes to persuade (O'Neil. 10). He feels that literary critics of the past have erred in not analysing Romantic poetry as texts in which play exists due to its indeterminacy and in believing that the poetry performs the accomplishment of a unified wholeness or presence (O' Neil. 11).

De Man's essay 'Shelley Disfigured' is a Deconstructive approach to Shelley's poem, *The Triumph of Life*. In this essay, De Man writes,

> *The Triumph of Life* warns us that nothing, whether deed, word, thought or text, ever happens in relation, positive or negative, to anything that precedes, follows or exists elsewhere, but only as a random event whose power of death, is due to the randomness of its occurrence.
>
> (1999. 69).

However, this does not preclude the interpretative process, but rather, as De Man writes, 'The process is endless, since the knowledge of the language's performative power is itself a figure in its own right and, as such bound to repeat the disfiguration of metaphor' (1999. 66).

Commenting on lines 361-366 of *The Triumph of Life*, regarding the arbitrariness of the poetry in relation to the congruence of its parts, De Man says,

> If, for instance, compelling rhyme schemes such as 'billow', 'willow', 'pillow'...occur at crucial moments in the text, then the question arises whether these particularly *meaningful movements* or events are not being generated by random and superficial properties of the signifier rather than by the constraints of meaning (1999. 60)[my emphasis].

The movement, in Kristevan terms, is a partial manifestation of the semiotic *chora*, and its significance results from a relation of the semiotic and the symbolic. De Man calls into question meaning qua meaning, the randomness of the chain of signifiers being arbitrary. He sees this as a linguistic phenomenon, whereas Kristevan theory plots it back to a biological origin, the archaic mother–child dyad, of which musicality in verse is a revelation. Thus the central difference between Kristeva and De Man is that to De Man the language itself has a 'performative power', while Kristeva sees the language as a tension between the semiotic and the symbolic, where the semiotic *chora* is the site of the Freudian drives.

J. Hillis Miller, another notable Deconstructionist, assents to De Man's position that an error regarding interpretation is unavoidably engaged in the composition of meaning and also in accordance with De Man, Hillis Miller assigns to poetry a prominent consciousness of this necessity. O'Neil (1993) suggests that to Hillis Miller, the Deconstructive act involves the discovery that the reading of the text exposes the text's self-reflective awareness of its own delusions of a unity of meaning . Hillis Miller's

method of poetical analysis is 'resolutely textual', and he sees Deconstruction not as an unravelling of a

piece of writing but as a recognition that it has 'dismantled itself'. This is a radically different notion of

attention to the text from that of the New Critics, for he undermines the requirement of definiteness

within object/referent relations, and unity and coherence are deemed a 'delusion'. The poetic text,

being considered unstable and self fragmentary, is hardly closed to *the* correct interpretation

(O'Neil.13).

Kristeva differs from Hillis Miller and De Man, in that she emphasises the influence of the maternal

body, partially manifested as the semiotic modality of the otherwise repressed archaic maternal *chora*,

in language. Being 'resolutely textual' (O'Neil. 13) in Hillis Miller's sense, is to Kristeva to leave out

the vital/essential phenomenon of the maternal body.

Hillis Miller demonstrates his Deconstructive approach to the analysis of poetry in his work, *The*

Linguistic Moment: From Wordsworth to Stevens. 1987. He analyses Shelley's poem, *The Triumph of*

Life, in a way which struggles with the extent of the text's self awareness. Hillis Miller is very keenly

aware of the poem's own movements in which meaning is 'disfigured' and is hence, by virtue of such

reflexivity, indeterminate (O'Neil. 13).

After quoting a rather lengthy section of *The Triumph of Life*, ll. 118-137, Hillis Miller says:

> This extraordinary passage, the reader can see, is the prisoner of its binary oppositions. Each pair
> vanishes as it is formulated, only to be replaced by a new one, which vanishes once more before the
> levelling power of Life. Power or misery, action or suffering, weal or woe, fruit & flower(or and
> coming here oddly to the same thing, since the or is not a true dialectical antithesis), fame or
> infamy, form & name, the sacred few or those who followed them or (went) before–the passage
> generates itself as a continual chain of melting antitheses. What for example, is the difference
> between a thing's form and its name? This is one of the chief issues of the poem. Does naming give
> form, or does form precede name, or is form another kind of name, the seeing of the
> undifferentiated as a sign...
> (1987. 122-123).

Hillis Miller approaches the text as an instance in which meaning is dissolved by the very ambivalence

of its positing and the deferral of a definite position. To him, the binary oppositions highlight the

impossibility of absolute referents in the chain of the language. He emphasises Derrida's contention

that there is no transcendental signification, only play within a text which goes on indefinitely (Derrida.

1978. 280) (O'Neil. 13-14). This he inscribes by his questioning of form and naming. Hillis Miller

sums up his position at the end of his analysis of *The Triumph of Life* with the words,

> At the end of all my commentary, I find myself where I began. As a reader of *The Triumph of Life* I
> am the next in a chain of repetitions without beginning or end...watching a sequence of shapes all
> light, projecting in my turn figures...figures that fade even as they are traced, to be replaced by
> others, in an unending production of signs over signs...
> (1987. 179).

Interpretations are ongoing, much like Kristeva's 'subject in process'. The limitless nature of the

Deconstructive project ensures that the poetic text will never be resolved. Signs give way to signs and

the creative process is indeterminate. Kristeva sees this *process* as a mark of the poetic text. However, she does propose, contrary to the Deconstructionists, an origin for signification in the Freudian drives, which underlies poetic production; being both the creation and destruction of the 'subject in process' (Kristeva. 1984. 28).

The Deconstructionists see a linguistic artefact which enacts a pluralism, a self-referentiality, and a play, which extends the possibilities of interpretations infinitely. As Derrida, speaking of the rise of Deconstructionism, says:

> Henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no centre...that the centre had no natural site... (that it was) a function...in which an infinite number of sign–substitutions came into play. This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a centre or origin, everything became discourse....

> (1978. 280).

Derrida's disavowal of a transcendental origin, however, highlights the central difference between Deconstructionism and Kristevan theory. While Deconstructionism holds to discourse without any closure or intervention at all, Kristeva proposes an origin of sorts. She derives much of her poetic theory from Freudian psychoanalytic theory and its Lacanian developments which are largely based on a biological model of the drives and the child's archaic relations with its mother. However, as we shall see, this origin, contrary to Freud and Lacan, is seen in maternal rather than paternal terms.

Gelpi

In Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi's work *Shelley's Goddess: Maternity, Language, Subjectivity*, she eclectically utilises both Kristeva and Lacan, along with other linguistic theorists, post-modernists and psychoanalysts. She subjects theories to what she describes as a feminist appropriation, making use of their pertinence to a reading of subjectivity in Shelley's poetry, particularly *Prometheus Unbound*. Her assumption is that the historical context in which Shelley was raised, the mother as primary caretaker, informed his poetic subject, which she (Gelpi) claims, can be read relative to the primary documents on mothering of the era, and in light of Shelley's relationship to his mother in its early, formative years.

As she writes:

> Because historically... [the] nutrient task was being assigned to mothers with special emphasis around the time of Shelley's birth, it is not surprising that he himself experienced women in...two ways–as possession and as muse. The drama of *Prometheus Unbound* involves his repudiation of the first and his exploration of the liberating potential of the second, but it does not transcend those categories. It is in the mother's immanence in language, that his consuming interest lies.

> (1992. 27).

Writing of her definite and extremely specific (re)construction of Shelley's historical/cultural maternal experience, while asserting this formed /informed his poetic subjectivity, in relation to his perceptions

and conditioned his experience of the maternal, as the primary caretaker, Gelpi explains that she uses 'texts on and about motherhood long pooled in microfilm collections and in brackish estuaries of the British Library, but once a torrential spate foaming from English presses' (1992. 30).

It is in such a context that Gelpi reconstructs subjectivity in Shelley's poetic texts, informed by the historical, linear narrative, from which she gleans that, 'Behind the form of social control in which Shelley came to experience himself as a subject stands a particular conceptualisation of the mother' (1992. 31).

Gelpi does acknowledge the Kristevan theory of the *chora*, recognising that,

> because this pleasure (language for its own sake) is so closely fused to the state of the 'semiotic chora', in which the infant being is experienced as the maternal presence, the writing of poetry is by its very nature an incestuous pleasure, an incestuous play. (1992. 10).

Yet in this Gelpi does not follow Kristeva's drive based theory of the maternal–infant space, at least not in emphasis, and certainly not as a theory of the generation of language and poetic subjectivity. She finds a key to the linguistic in Shelley's poems within the texts on mothering from his era, identifying his poetic subjectivity as closely related to/informed by his perception(s)/experience of the maternal, rather than as being a manifestation of a repressed semiotic *chora* (Gelpi. 1992. 20).

The difference between Gelpi's approach and Kristevan theory can be seen as one of *form*. The Kristevan chora 'can never be definitely posited' and in this it is synchronic or ahistorical (Kristeva. 1984. 26). Gelpi, on the other hand, writes of a definite, personal mother–son relationship which has historical–factual effects on Shelley's poetic texts. For as Kristeva explains of the *chora*: 'one can situate the chora and, if necessary, lend it a topology, but one can never give it *axiomatic form*'. (Kristeva. 1984. 26)[my emphasis].

In respect to form, Gelpi sees a historical, Western narrative, which forms subjectivity in Shelley's poetry, where:

> The strength...of Elizabeth Shelley's own personality took on even greater power through the mystique of motherhood current at the time of Shelley's birth. Moreover, maternity carried a specifically erotic ambience...with the result that...the Mother Goddess...then made her presence felt with particular force, and Shelley's family background led him to feel it with peculiar intensity and to describe it with extraordinary frequency...Sometimes she is the overt subject of a poem, as in *Adonis* or as the figure of Asia in *Prometheus Unbound*. Cythna is avatar of the 'foam-born' in *Laon and Cythna*; in the 'Ode to Liberty' the Goddess is 'written' iconographically over the prayer that Liberty may lead forth Wisdom 'as the morning star / Beckons the Sun from the Eoan wave'. Indeed...one can only say that she is scrawled iconographically across all of Shelley's work (1992. 128-129).

This reading, and the theoretical, historical dialectic which informs it, Gelpi asserts is a 'much more liberating space than the paternal one provided by Kristeva' (Gelpi. 1992. 21). However, the diachronic reconstructive reading of subjectivity in Shelley's texts does not emphasise the maternal apart from a patriarchal, historical discourse, and as such, somewhat begs the question of patriarchy.

My analysis of Shelley's poetry differs from Gelpi's in that, while making use of Gelpi's focus on the maternal, I apply Kristevan theory, itself synchronic, in a synchronic process rather than using a diachronic/historical approach as she (Gelpi) does. Kristevan theory, especially of the *chora*, is at the centre of the critique of Shelley's poetic in this thesis. I fully subscribe to Kristeva's ahistorical theory rather than Gelpi's approach of making the historical maternal relationship of Shelley and his mother the defining factor. Gelpi's analysis in *Shelley's Goddess: Maternity, Language, Subjectivity*, in many ways is the closest reading to the approach I pursue in analysing Shelley's poetry. Gelpi does utilise Kristevan theory and her treatment of Shelley's texts is grounded in the maternal, albeit a diachronic maternal. As such, I end this survey chapter with a recognition of her work. The next chapter will focus directly on Kristevan theory, which is the basis for the reading of Shelley's poetry that I pursue in the two following chapters.

CHAPTER 2: KRISTEVA'S THEORY OF THE POETIC TEXT

The Context: The Semiotic and the Symbolic

The Symbolic order is the system of signification: the province of the social. This domain consists of the dialectical tension of the semiotic and the symbolic elements (Oliver. 1993b. 101). Oliver further points out that signification, according to Kristeva, is composite, in that the Symbolic, 'is always [and necessarily] heterogeneous' (Oliver. 1993b. 102). The semiotic is not inside the symbolic, but rather their heterogeneity, and opposition generates 'the dialectical tension that keeps society [The Symbolic] going' (Oliver. 1993b. 101).

Kristeva in an Interview with Susan Sellers, remarking of 'creativity...where language, or the signs of language, or subjectivity itself' are unstable, explains:

> In order to research this state of instability–the fact that meaning is not simply a structure or process, or that the subject is not simply a unity but is constantly called into question– I proposed to take into account two modalities or conditions of meaning which I called 'the semiotic' and 'the symbolic' (Kristeva. 1996. 133).

In her ground breaking PhD thesis of 1974, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva explores these two modalities/elements of the signifying process, which work heterogeneously, inseparably, in tension, to produce significance: primarily the text. As Kelley Oliver comments Kristeva's 'major thesis...is that the speaking subject is heterogeneous, the result of the signifying process with its two heterogeneous elements: the semiotic and the symbolic' (Oliver. 1993a. 95). Kristeva proposes that the poetic text is manifest in the dialectical heterogeneity of the constant tension existing between these two necessary but warring elements of signification.

Kristeva infers the notion of the semiotic

> from the Greek term σεμιου, signifying 'mark' or 'trace', as in *Antigone*. This mode [the semiotic] is familiar to Freudian psychoanalytic theory concerned with the structures of drives and with the primary processes of their displacement and condensation... (Payne. 1993. 167).

However, despite Kristeva's Freudian roots, Kelley Oliver argues that Kristeva

> is not in any way a biological determinist. Even her most famous notion, the semiotic, is always already tied to signification; it is the drives as they are manifest in signification. She does not talk about any experience prior to *signification*.
> (Oliver. 1993b. 103) [my emphasis].

Kristeva does give representations of the semiotic modality:

> What I call 'the semiotic' takes us back to the pre-linguistic states of childhood where the child babbles the sounds s/he hears, or where s/he articulates rhythms, alliterations, or stresses, trying to imitate her/his surroundings. In this state the child doesn't yet possess the necessary linguistic signs and thus there is no meaning in the strict sense of the term.
> (Kristeva. 1996. 133).

She marks the 'pre-Oedipal' nature of the semiotic, which precedes even the capability of the infant to learn 'verbal language at all'. The semiotic element is articulated by the primary drives, in uncertainty and indeterminacy (Kristeva. 1984. 27). According to Eric Matthews it is 'not yet a form of discourse, although our discourse 'simultaneously depends upon it and refuses it'' (Matthews, 1996. 195). Matthews quotes Kristeva here from *Revolution in Poetic Language*, where she is primarily talking about the *chora*. This example of critical interpretation highlights the fact that Kristevan theory does not easily yield to taxonomic distinctions, that she is implicated in giving the pre-linguistic a linguistic form, and interpreters make choices how they read her text. As a central concept in Kristeva's thought, I will refer to the *chora* later on, not of course divorced from Kristevan theory in any of its modes, but regarding the primary object, for my purposes, the *poetic text*.

The importance of the drives in the significance of the preverbal condition of the infant is unquestionable. These drives, which 'are always ambiguous, simultaneously assimilating and destructive...make the semiotized body a place of permanent scission' (Kristeva. 1984. 27). The semiotic modality consists of the drives 'as they make their way into signification' (Oliver. 1993b. 101). And in fact the semiotic is only manifest, in the syntactical artefact– the text, when the drives release within the limits of language, and here the semiotic element signifies. This release of the drives modifies the syntactic order of the language producing 'rhythm and tone'. These material qualities, as opposed to the grammatical order of the text, are contiguous with the soundings of the archaic 'maternal body', and therefore 'the semiotic element in language' is related to 'the maternal'. Being non–symbolic, in the technical sense of syntactical-meaning, the semiotic is the clandestine element of meaning inside signification, which of itself does not signify (See Oliver. 1993b. 96).

Kristeva takes pains to emphasise that the semiotic, although provisionally identifiable, is inseparable from the symbolic, in the signification of the text:

> 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.
> (Kristeva. 1984. 24).

In Kristevan theory the symbolic, as opposed to the semiotic, 'is the element of meaning within signification that does signify' (Oliver. 1993b. 96). The symbolic element is contiguous 'with syntax or grammar', having the order of syntax and being able to delineate and posit or define and execute a 'judgement' continuous with the grammar which produces/generates it (Oliver. 1993b. 96). Kristeva explains that 'it is only after the mirror phase or the experience of castration in the Oedipus complex' that the subject is 'subjectively capable' of assuming the societal contract of grammar, the expressions of syntactical order, of which she says, 'I call that "the symbolic"' (Kristeva. 1996. 133). In signification, in the text, the symbolic gives structure and promotes the position of a thesis.

Kristeva analyses written poetic texts as a manifestation of the dialectic heterogeneity of the symbolic and the semiotic. Kristeva sees the semiotic as the site of ebbs and flows of the Freudian drives, while the symbolic occupies a position of order and syntax. And it is well to keep in mind: 'There can be no symbolic without the semiotic in-spite of the symbolic's attempts at repressing it' (Oliver. 1993a. 101). Both the symbolic and the semiotic heterogeneously but independently exist in the poetic text, and in fact the semiotic, while fundamental to the existence and function of the symbolic is just as active in its destruction (Kristeva. 1984. 50). As Kelley Oliver explains, 'For Kristeva, it is the recovery of the semiotic disposition in language that calls signifying practice to its crisis; the semiotic in language is revolutionary' (Oliver. 1993a. 96). It is this 'recovery' which manifests in poetic language in modifications of the syntax of its language.

Kristeva explains that the semiotic precedes the thetic, that is 'the positing of the subject' (Kristeva. 1984. 36). Before the subject thinks within a position of judgement, 'no Meaning exists', however, distinctions 'do exist...heterogeneous to signification and to the sign: the semiotic *chora*' (Kristeva. 1984. 36).

Kristeva cites Mallarmé's *The Mystery in Literature* as an example of 'semiotic rhythm' which she explicates as:

> Indifferent to language, enigmatic and feminine, this space underlying the written is rhythmic, unfettered, irreducible to its intelligible verbal translation; it is musical, anterior to judgement, but restrained by a single guarantee: syntax.
> (Kristeva. 1984. 29).

This analysis by Kristeva of a passage from Mallarmé's *Mystery* is illuminating in its appeal to a tension of excess beyond syntactical meaning, yet in the end one which not only ruptures the symbolic order via semiotic movement but also inscribes the dialectic between the representable and the non-representable. The Mallarmé passage Kristeva refers to is:

> And the instrument of Darkness, whom they have designated, will not set down a word from then on except to deny that she must have been the enigma; lest she settle matters with a whisk of her skirts: 'I don't get it!'
> ....
> What pivot is there, I mean within these contrasts, for intelligibility? A guarantee is needed—
> > > > > > > > > > > Syntax

(Mallarmé. *Mystery in Literature.* In Kristeva. 1984. 30).

It is well to note here that Kristeva bases her reading of Mallarmé's text on his enumeration of the phallocentric binary of masculine/feminine, light/darkness, enigmatic/definite. In this, she is following the pattern and practice of her strong psychoanalytic leanings: that is the phallocentrism of Sigmund Freud. Some theorists such as Domna Stanton and Nancy Fraser contend that by making the semiotic *chora* contiguous with the maternal and the feminine, Kristeva limits/or diminishes the 'feminine to the maternal body and thereby essentializes the feminine' (Oliver. 1993a.48). However, in this interesting

area of discourse, I will not offer exploration of/expansion on Kristeva's gender linguistics as it is not within the scope of this thesis and does not affect the competency of Kristeva's textual analysis as it applies to the theoretical structure employed.

Kristeva sees her idea of the semiotic underlying the (symbolic) grammatical order expressed in Mallarmé's verse. We could separate words, which signify the Mallarméan 'feminine', such as 'Darkness', 'enigma' or 'I don't get it', as her example of semiotic play which upturns the syntactical order of the symbolic, such as 'instrument' or 'designated', rendering it 'irreducible to its verbal translation'. But the very tension of the passage gives a practical example of the heterogeneous dialectic between the symbolic and the semiotic. The symbolic element in the signification of the text is the 'guarantee' that the semiotic will not devolve into psychosis. However. Kristeva finds here not only an example of a transgression of grammatical order–a modification of syntactical order/logic– but more so an instance of a dialectical ambivalence, which responds to her textual theory, and which demonstrates/manifests that theory in the practice of the text (Kristeva. 1996. 134) [cf. ffrench's 'Participation' theory of Kristeva's relationship to the texts of Mallarmé, p 6 above].

The manner of this (Kristeva's) analysis will also inform my approach and application of Kristevan theory of the poetic text to my reading of Shelley's poetry. That is I will read Shelley noting the modifications/excesses of the syntactical order of the language, that is 'poetic language ['s]… [reactivation of] the repressed semiotic… [in]…discharging drives through its music and overdetermination …'(Kristeva. 1996. 134). Also, I will explore the way in which Shelley's poetic texts respond to an engagement with Kristevan theory.

Crucible: The Maternal Chora

Michael Payne explains, 'In order to account for the dynamic interrelations between the semiotic and the symbolic Kristeva boldly introduces the concept of the chora' (Payne. 1993. 167). Kristeva considers the *chora* a maternal experience, which is repressed in order to acquire the symbolic modality of language:

> this archaic semiotic modality [the chora] that I have referred to as infantile babblings, in order to give it clearer definition, is a modality which bears the most archaic memories of our link with the maternal body–Of the dependence that all of us have vis-à-vis the maternal body, and where a sort of self-eroticism is indissociable from the experience of the (m) other. We *repress* the vocal or gestural inscription of this experience under our subsequent acquisitions and this is an important condition for autonomy...There may be an attempt to transpose this continent [the experience of the semiotic chora], this receptacle beyond the symbolic...At that point we witness the possibility of creation, of sublimation...due to the possibility of opening the norms, towards pleasure, which refers to an archaic experience with a maternal pre-object.

> (Kristeva. 1996. 134) [my emphasis].

Kristeva sees the poetic text as a manifestation, via sublimation, of an 'archaic experience with a maternal pre-object'. That is the *chora* is related to the 'maternal body', which Kristeva relates to the symbolic in terms of its (the symbolic's) 'instability' in 'its most significant aspect–the prohibition placed on the *maternal body* (as a defence against autoeroticism and incest taboo)...' (Kristeva. *Powers of Horror*. 1982. 14) [my emphasis]. In this unstable, maternal, contradiction to order and syntax, 'the drives hold sway', and Kristeva names this 'strange space...after Plato, a chora, a receptacle' (Kristeva. 1982. 14).

Kristeva explains her concept of the semiotic, in reference to Plato's *Timaeus*, from where she adopts his idea of the *chora* to form her theorising of the pre-linguistic. The *chora*, according to Kristeva in *Desire in Language*, is a 'receptacle, unnameable, improbable, hybrid, anterior to naming, to the one, to the father and consequently maternally connoted' (Kristeva, 1980. 133). The *chora* is the in-distinguished τοποσ, of the mutual maternal body/infant body space, in which 'the matrix/womb and matter' are produced. Alien to denotation, material and resistant to disentanglement, this 'mother/child dyad...makes the semiotic possible' (Wright. 1992. 195).

John Lechte explains, 'To speak about the chora at all is paradoxical, given that to do so is to give it a place in the symbolic' (Lechte. 128). The Kristevan concept of the semiotic *chora* is not easily understood or read, because it lacks homogeneity (Oliver.1993a. 48). And any discourse 'at all' about/on the *chora* is 'paradoxical' for to explain/narrate it is to render it in the modality/realm of the symbolic; to give the amorphous form and order, which it defies (Lechte. 128). Kristeva in representing the unrepresentable/indefinite *chora* is writing a project analogous to what Derrida enacts when he Deconstructs Western metaphysics using the language of that very same tradition; in both narratives the truth is paradoxical (Derrida. 1978. 280).

Kristeva says of the *chora* that 'we repress the vocal or gestural inscription of this experience under our subsequent acquisitions and this is an important condition for autonomy', and that the return of this repressed archaic inscription results in creative writing. As Kristeva specifically notes, 'What is obvious is that this experience produces poetry' (1996. 134). The *chora*, as an idea taken from an acute reading of Plato's *Timaeus*, is liberally and sagaciously reworked by Kristeva, very akin to Plato's own treatment of his idea, filling a necessary place in her theory (Michael Payne. 1993. 167). Plato, in the *Timaeus* (49-52), discourses on 'the receptacle of being' using words he confesses are remarkably 'difficult and obscure' (Michael Payne. 1993. 167). This ambivalence, which influenced/informed Kristeva's own reading of Plato's text, is of the nature of the χορα, which is the third form he introduces to his idea of reality, the other two being 'an intelligible and unchanging model and its visible and changing copy' (Payne. 167-168).

In discoursing on the *chora*, Plato invokes figure after figure, only to discard them and arrive at a self-reflexive discourse on the metaphorical and experimental distinctiveness of the word play and thinking

which this involves. The very changeableness of the narrative seems to perform the elusiveness of the concept/idea of the *chora*, which he wishes to describe (Payne. 167-168).

Plato refers to the idea in terms of the maternal body:

> We may indeed use the metaphor of birth and compare the receptacle to the mother, the model to the father, and what they produce between them to their offspring.
> (Plato, 69).

However, after positing this generation/maternal 'receptacle' modality, 'Plato proceeds to undermine it, substituting the word "space" or "chora" [Χωρα] for "receptacle"' (Payne. 1993. 168):

> Space...is eternal and indestructible...provides a position for everything that comes to be, and...is apprehended without the senses by a sort spurious reasoning and so is hard to believe in—we look at it indeed in a kind of dream and say that everything that exists must be somewhere and occupy some space, and that what is nowhere in heaven or earth is nothing at all.
> (Plato, 71-72).

Kristeva's idea of the *chora* seems to employ both Plato's maternal image and his more abstract formulation. According to Payne, the *chora*, as Kristeva sees it, is unlike the Lacanian or Derridean concept of the body, in that her narrative is of a body with 'a sense of having bone and flesh and hormones'. In her idea 'the body both is and is not external to language', and thus the biological maternal body is tied up with the existence of the χορα as space/receptacle/generation, not just the body as concept (Payne. 1993. 167-168).

Payne explains that the Kristevan concept of the *chora* is pre-linguistic, presymbolic and precedes the existence of the sign. That is the word *chora* is not, although necessarily symbolic, a substitute for the 'absence of the object', and thus the *chora* is unmarked as a distinction 'between the real and the symbolic'. (Payne. 1993. 169). However, the *chora* is subordinate to 'socio-historical restraints, such as sexual difference and family structure'. As such, the 'semiotic functions', although pre-symbolic/sign, connect the subject/body in process to objects and to the members of the family triad, particularly and strongly directed towards the dominant stimulus of the mother's body/global(encompassing) influence (Payne. 1993. 169).

In Kristeva's theory the drives, which through such semiotic functions 'orient the body to the mother', are dualistic/ambiguous, that is they are 'simultaneously assimilating and destructive' (Kristeva. 1984. 27) (Payne. 1993. 169). Kristeva explains:

> The mother's body is...what mediates the symbolic law organising social relations and becomes the ordering principle of the semiotic chora.
> (Kristeva. 1984. 27).

So, although a 'place' of indefinite splitting, the mother's body regulates and organises the *chora*, which is 'subject to...an objective ordering [ordonnancement]' (Kristeva. 1984. 26). With the drives at the site of the *chora*, delineation is opposed by those very drives that lead to, through mediation of the

mother's body, its very emergence. Yet the subject, as such, is related to the *chora*, by Kristeva within an economy of drive motility, for

> 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. 1984. 28) [my emphasis].

The Body: Subject in process/on trial

The poetic *subject* of Kristeva's theorising is extremely provisional when compared to the stasis of the Cartesian subject of philosophical enquiry. It (Kristeva's subject) is vitally generated/destroyed in the place of the maternal semiotic *chora*, and because of its changing/provisional state/flow, she has called it a 'subject in process/on trial [en process]'.

(Kristeva, 1984. 22, 28. See also Kristeva. 1996. 132).

As Kristeva explains about the choice of the term,

> I used the term 'process' whilst I was working on the texts of Antonin Artaud...Anyone who reads Artaud's texts will realise that all identities are unstable: the identity of linguistic signs, the identity of meaning and, as a result, the identity of the speaker. And in order to take account of this de-stabilisation of meaning and of the subject I thought the term 'subject in process' would be appropriate.
> (Kristeva. 1996. 132).

The 'subject in process' is most evident in the foregrounding of poetic language, which Kristeva analyses in terms of the speaking subject, as Kristeva explains:

> [W]e shall see that when the speaking subject is no longer a phenomenological transcendental ego nor the Cartesian ego but rather a subject in process /on trial...as is the case in the practice of the text, deep structure or at least transformational rules are disturbed and, with them, the possibility of semantic and/or grammatical categorical interpretation.
> (Kristeva, 1984. 37).

As we have seen, Kristeva analyses written poetic texts as a manifestation of the dialectic heterogeneity of the symbolic and the semiotic, and sees the semiotic as simultaneously subverting, while maintaining the symbolic. This is particularly significant, when, in the poetic text, the syntax is disturbed or modified by 'metaphor, metonymy and musicality' (Kristeva. 1996. 134). Kelley Oliver writes, 'Because poetic language is text as practice it constructs a "new symbolic device-a new reality corresponding to a new heterogeneous object.".... This new heterogeneous reality is the reality of a new heterogeneous subject, what Kristeva calls the "subject-on-trial/in process". The revolution in poetic language is also a theory of the subject' (Oliver.1993a. 100). Kristeva's view of the poetic text is that it manifests the otherwise repressed archaic maternal *chora* in a 'subject in process', which disturbs the language order of the symbolic, in what can be described as a transgression of signs by

sliding signifiers. This manifestation of the archaic maternal *chora* will be developed in reference to the poetry of Percy Shelley.

The dialectic of the symbolic and the semiotic is maintained via the drives of the maternal body, and the speaking subject, in poetry–the speaking voice– manifests as the otherwise repressed archaic *chora* ruptures symbolic order. In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva, after reading various exponents of subjectivity, including Plato, Frege, Hegel, Husserl and Hjelmslev (theorists who conceive 'subjectivity as a unified consciousness able to produce reason through the propositional structures embedded in syntactic order', (Tate. 1995. 330) delineates 'a theory of the subject that takes in account the Freudian positing of the unconscious' (Kristeva. 1984. 30).

And in turn, Kristeva utilizes psychoanalysis to *oppose* the unified subject, instead inscribing a 'formation and operation of subjectivity in language and which will encompass the unconscious foundations of the subject, drawing, for this, on readings of Freud and Lacan' (Tate. 1995. 330). Kristeva sees the Cartesian model as inadequate in that it enacts a unified, stable voice/subject, at once conscious and transcendental. Instead, she explains her theory of subjectivity as a process/non-static event, both simultaneously establishing and destroying any subject, and exploding the idea/grasp of the poetic subject as a unitary, transcendental subject. In this, Kristeva views,

> the subject in language as decentering the transcendental ego, cutting through it, and opening it up
> to a dialectic in which its syntactic and categorical understanding is merely the liminary moment of
> the process, which is itself always acted upon by the relation to the other dominated by the death
> drive and its productive reiteration of the 'signifier'.
> (Kristeva. 1984. 30).

The 'subject in language' is most readily seen in poetry, in which its processional (of a process) modality is often foregrounded. Take for an example these lines from Shelley's *The Witch of Atlas*:

> A lovely lady garmented in light
> From her own beauty—deep her eyes, as are
> Two openings of unfathomable night
> Seen through a Temple's cloven roof—her hair
> Dark—the dim brain whirls dizzy with delight,
> Picturing her form; her soft smiles shone afar,
> And her low voice was heard like love, and drew
> All living creatures towards this wonder new.

(Works. Vol. IV. 33-40. 18).

Kristeva's theory of the 'subject in process' can be applied to such verse, for: 'Magic, shamanism, esotericism, the carnival and "incomprehensible" poetry all underscore the limits of socially useful discourse and attest to what it represses: the *processes* that extends the subject and his communicative structures' (Kristeva, 1984. 16)[my emphasis]. And Shelley's verse foregrounds an extension of the subject of the witch. For we have a mystical being, metaphorically– 'garmented in light', whose eyes are as deep as 'unfathomable night'. 'The limits of socially useful discourse', as communicative of the witch as *subject* are transgressed as the metaphorical descriptions, given in the verse, 'underscore' the

processes involved in the extension of object-referent relations; the subject is extended. The boundaries of referential language are partially dissolved in a rupture of the symbolic by the semiotic. The metaphors here give prominence to a partial manifestation of the otherwise *repressed* semiotic *chora*. As for example the line that the witch's 'hair/Dark—the dim brain whirls dizzy with delight', exceeds semantic meaning in the repetition of the d, emphasising the witch as a 'subject in process'. Perhaps the clearest example of the materiality of the text, highlighting the *processes* of the extension of the subject of the witch is the somatic effects of 'her soft smiles shone', where the assonance conveys the feeling of those 'smiles'. Here the poetic subject exceeds the semantics, a *process* which shows the eruption of the symbolic by an archaic, maternal inscription. This is a revolution of the subject.

Kristeva relates of the 'speaking subject', that 'when this subject re-emerges, when the semiotic chora disturbs the thetic position by redistributing the signifying order, we note that the denoted object and the syntactic relation are disturbed as well' (Kristeva. 1984. 55). The rupture of the symbolic occasioned by poetry in its 'metaphor, metonymy, musicality'(Kristeva. 1996. 134), is the re-emergence of the archaic, maternal *chora*, foregrounding the subject as a 'subject in process', disturbing syntax, order and the symbolic as the *poetic voice*.

The Poetic Text: A Kristevan Perspective

In Kristeva's theory of the poetic text, she underlines that apart from dream logic, semiotic processes dominate 'the signifying process' 'only in certain signifying practices, such as the *text*' (Kristeva. 1984. 29). According to Eric Matthews, rehearsing Kristeva's theory of the poetic text, in poetry the semiotic ruptures the bounds of symbolic structures(i.e. syntax and grammatical order), in a situation where 'the poet' is no longer the author/owner/lord over the text, as a linguistic executor *provisionally* as is in the case of the use of 'purely "symbolic" language' (Matthews. 1996. 197). I use the term *provisionally*, to qualify Matthew's quote concerning the phrase 'purely "symbolic" language', because this linguistic distinction, as Kristeva explains, is far from being static, for 'the subject is 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' (Kristeva. 1984. 24).

Kristeva's 'subject in process', is an effect of the dialectical heterogeneity of the two modalities, which constitute textual practice. The poetic text serves as fertile ground for what Roland Barthes called 'a semiotics of production' (Kristeva. 1984. 10). And in relation to Kristeva's critique of the poetic text as a site of semiotic manifestation(s), the above mention of dream logic indicates her Freudian affinities: 'Our positing of the semiotic is obviously inseparable from a theory of the subject that takes into account the Freudian positing of the unconscious' (Kristeva. 1984. 30).

Kristeva analyses texts of nineteenth -century avant garde writers such as Mallarmé and Joyce, among others, as prime instances of semiotic rupturing, which manifest/reshape the linguistic texture, foregrounded in the process of the poetic text. Such texts are symptomatic of a textual efficiency exceeding the constraints or comprehension of the 'linguistic or ideological system' (Matthews. 1996. 176). The rhythm of this exceeding, its signification, is 'precisely... [sexual] pleasure (la jouissance) in which the 'liminary moment of the process' (Kristeva. 1984. 30), manifests a 'sort of radical literary creation', expressing the otherwise repressed semiotic *chora* in the disruption of linguistic order (Matthews. 1996. 176). In Kristeva's words:

> There may be an attempt to transpose this continent [the experience of the semiotic chora], this receptacle beyond the symbolic...At that point we witness the possibility of *creation*, of sublimation...due to the possibility of opening the norms, towards pleasure, which refers to an archaic experience with a maternal pre-object.

(Kristeva. 1996. 134) [my emphasis].

Kristeva remarking on Mallarmé's *Igitur* and *A Throw of the Dice*, explains that: 'In this movement from logic to madness to active chance, madness is necessary' (Kristeva. 1984. 226). Igitur, who in Michael Payne's words has become the 'interdependent opposite' of logic, (Payne. 1993. 203) and whose Latin name means 'therefore', is an ambiguity in that 'what is missing from both sides of Igitur [that of madness and logic] ...is chance' (Payne. 1993. 203). Chance in its indefiniteness opposes the possibility of diachronic or linear depiction. However, *A Throw of the Dice*, 'in its fractured poetic lines and experimental typography, becomes its [Chance's] approximate realisation in language' (Payne. 1993. 204); like the *chora* in Plato's *Timaeus*, it enacts what it tries to describe. This is a semiotic/symbolic (heterogeneous) action (thetic in the act of 'the throw') 'through madness' (Payne. 1993. 204).

In *A Throw of the Dice*, Kristeva finds effects which serve to gloss her theory of the poetic text as an exemplar of the play of paradoxical heterogeneous elements of the symbolic(familial order) and the semiotic(the mad man) and as such it is an example of a partial manifestation of the maternal *chora*. Kristeva illuminates Mallarmé's writing as being subject, itself, to the very processes it subverts; moreover its subversiveness is self-conscious. In *A Throw of the Dice*, she inserts her own critique, that the throw is an 'attempt to perform the signifying and thetic act' which is the 'alternative' both to the choice of the madman's identification with 'the hazardous expenditure in the signifying process', and to the familial (symbolic) rejection of the same expenditure; the symbolic act (throw) which 'sanctifies' the choice of madness (Kristeva. 1984. 228). However, the poem works by fragmenting the 'essential unity' of the cast of the dice(the thetic act) into a great number of causeless, but 'determined fragments' of chance. That is *A Throw of the Dice* is ordered in numbers and in a 'constellation' as if such were nominated 'through and beyond' their fixed/static designation (with reference to the order or symbolic modality pertaining to the (thetic) act: a throw of the dice) exemplifying '*the dangerous motility of the semiotic chora*' (Kristeva. 1984. 227) [my emphasis]. This thetic act of throwing is itself

subject to chance('the non-symbolic expenditure') and to Kristeva this game of dice is a 'very semiotic' one which signifies 'poetic practice...to Igitur, the logical madman' (Kristeva. 1984. 228).

Kristeva's theory of the poetic text, which she elaborates in reference to/analysis of avant-garde poets, such as Mallarmé, I will attempt to apply to a selection of the poetry of the nineteenth-century, English Romantic, Percy Bysshe Shelley, in chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis. The application of Kristeva's dialectical/tensional problematics of her textual narrations, in the area of poetry, elude dogmatic formulations. This is for reasons inextricably tied to, because of, and necessarily dependent on her theorising/narrative of areas, often paradoxically marked, as I have previously explained.. However, these aspects of Kristevan theory do form a continuum with which a dialogue with the Shelleyan poetic text, I contend, can be usefully engaged.

For example, consider these lines, which mother Earth speaks in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*:

> The tongueless Caverns of the craggy hills
> Cried 'Misery!' then; the hollow Heaven replied,
> 'Misery!' And the ocean's purple waves,
> Climbing the land, howled to the lashing winds,
> And the pale nations heard it, 'Misery!' (*Works*. Vol. II. Act I. 107-111).

Nature speaks in anguish, which resonates with Bloom's noting that pain is often pleasure, in Shelley's poetic, a paradox, masochistic, a kind of *jouissance*: 'The pain is the meaning....The Nietzchean sublime like the Shelleyan is a difficult...pleasure, and a difficult enough pleasure is a kind of pain' (Bloom, 1987. 2).The language of Shelley's verse bespeaks 'misery'. Take for example the first lines where the 'The tongueless Caverns of the craggy hills/Cried "Misery!"'. The repetition of c enacts a surplus which overflows/exceeds the semantics, giving rhythm to the notion of the barrenness of nature, foregrounding *the materiality of the text*: a partial manifestation of the archaic maternal *chora*. Prometheus' masochism is expressed in a heterogeneous composition of symbolic and semiotic elements, in which the tone of Shelley's verse exceeds semantics. What is foregrounded here is a language of metaphor and musicality, the manifestation of a latent maternal body which modifies the order and symbolic of the language: the poetic text. In such significance, the words of Kristeva are relevant: 'Significance is indeed inherent in the human body' (Kristeva, 1982: 10).

As I have noted, Kristeva's theory of the re-emergence of the maternal *chora*, in the poetic text, is one of production: 'What is obvious is that this experience *produces* poetry' (Kristeva. 1996. 134) [my emphasis]. Shelley's poetic texts, like Nietzsche's, can be described as production, which exceeds closure, and in which the 'whole poetic and prophetic manner of writing [is one in] *which metaphor constantly eludes exhaustive decoding*' (Vattimo, 1993: 68) [my emphasis]. Both writers, Nietzsche and Shelley, enact a surplus or exceeding in their texts. Take for example, these verses from Shelley's lines, *To-*:

The moon made thy lips pale, beloved;
The wind made thy bosom chill;
The night did shed
On thy dear head
Its frozen dew, and thou didst lie
Where the bitter breath of the naked sky
Might visit thee at will (*Works*. To-, 119:19-24).

The corpse is abjected here but a surplus is given too as death becomes animated by ghastly metaphors. The poetic has a paradoxical nature, this undecidibility especially occurring in the use of metaphors. Although the text ostensibly seems to grant death a presence, its vision of death without hope negates the theological. Derrida's comments are pertinent here: 'The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely' (Derrida. 1978. 280). The play of the text, as it relates to semiotic rupturing, somewhat reflects on the absence of determinate or absolute meaning, and devolves around absence rather than *presence*. In respect to such transgressions, evident also in re-emergences of the maternal inscriptions of the *chora*, Kristeva explains that the irruption occurs in the very *order it exceeds*, for 'language...manifests... [these] states of instability' (1996. 134). The reason why the semiotic transgresses is that 'we *repress* these states of incandescence' (Kristeva. 1996. 134) [my emphasis]. And Kristeva neatly encapsulates the effects of the re-emergence of the maternal semiotic *chora* in the masochistic pleasures of the text in relation to its transgressive enactment:

> Creativity as well as suffering comprises these moments of instability, where language, or the signs of language, or subjectivity itself are put into 'process'. And one can extrapolate this notion and use it not just for the *texts* of Artaud but for *every* 'proceeding' in which we move outside the norms (1996. 132) [my emphasis].

Artaud's 'theatre of cruelty' chimes with Bloom's insight: 'The pain is the meaning...a difficult pleasure, and a difficult enough pleasure is a kind of pain' (Bloom, 1987:7). The *poetic text* is a site of the instability of linguistic signs, signifiers which demonstrate the absence of systematics, be they theological or any centred loci, as articulation(s) of that which is otherwise repressed—the archaic, maternal *chora*.

CHAPTER 3: BODY SPACES: An Analysis of *Laon and Cythna* and *Prometheus Unbound*

The following is an analysis of a selection of Shelley's poems, *Laon and Cythna* and *Prometheus Unbound*. My selection of Shelley's poetic texts is not specifically methodological, nor is the selection treated exhaustively. Rather my analysis is a series of incursions seeking to foreground a reading which highlights the poetry as an example of the manifestation of a maternal space. The two themes, I pursue are the religious and the erotic. In both themes Shelley subverts the Western metaphysic as it exists in patriarchal order and the Symbolic. Although Shelley's ambivalent verse in one sense defies or rather multiplies interpretations, I argue Shelley's poetry can be usefully read in terms of Kristevan theory as it pertains to the maternal space. Such a decentred reading, as opposed to the structure of phallocentrism, both subverts the order and symbolic of the patriarchal space and foregrounds the maternal space as it can be read in the poetic text. In my analysis, I use reference to Kristevan theory, which sees poetic language as a partial manifestation of the archaic *chora*. As Kristeva writes of the instinctual *chora*, it 'in its very displacement transgresses representation...' (Kristeva. 1984. 102). To cite the title of Kristeva's main work in this area, this rebellion of poetry is truly a *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Shelley's text effects a transgression of order and representation, among other ways, by its decentredness, and can be seen as rebellion against unity and structure especially as this manifests in the theological.

Laon and Cythna

Shelley's poem, *Laon and Cythna*, had rather infamous beginnings, for, speaking of the final version of the poem, *The Revolt of Islam*, Sperry comments, that it was changed from 'an earlier version, [which was] suppressed and revised at the insistence of his publishers, ...entitled Laon and Cythna; or, The Revolution of the Golden City: A Vision of the Nineteenth Century' (Sperry. 1988. 41). Shelley renamed it *The Revolt of Islam*, modifying the poem by making Cythna an orphan rather than Laon's sister (cf. Canto II. XXV. 218. 281). The incestuous love affair of the hero and heroine, Laon and Cythna, is Shelley's idea of free love and follows the *Preface's* declaration that in this poem, 'Love is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world').Works: 247). In my analysis of selections of Shelley's work, I will use the earlier text, *Laon and Cythna*, published in London, 1818, and contained in *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. Eds. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck. New York and London: Gordian Press and Ernest Benn , 1965. Vol. I. 236-408.

Of *Laon and Cythna*, his longest poem, Shelley remarks in the *Preface*,

I would willingly have sent it forth to the world with that perfection which long labour and revision is said to bestow. But I found that if I should gain something in exactness by this method, I might lose much of the newness and energy of imagery and language as it flowed from afresh from my mind. And although the mere composition occupied no more than six months, the thoughts thus arranged were slowly gathered in as many years."(*Works*. Vol. I. 246).

Shelley's confessed spontaneity lends his poetry to a reading which foregrounds the semiotic process of the text. Primarily, in this analysis, selected text is read as a re-inscription of the maternal space.

Stuart M. Sperry writes, 'The Revolt of Islam remains the most neglected of his [Shelley's] works'. Reasons he cites for this include, 'The poem is sprawling and amorphous, a difficult and often confusing intermixture of epic, allegory, and romance' (Sperry. 1988. 43). The apparently negative reasons Sperry gives for the demise or neglect of *The Revolt of Islam* [*Laon and Cythna*] are precisely those conducive to a semiotic approach which foregrounds the poetic, as Kristeva finds it: a revolution against order, structure and the symbolic. Both Shelley in his *Preface* and Sperry in his comments give fertile grounds to expect that *Laon and Cythna* as an artefact will readily respond to a reading which foregrounds its ambivalence, achieving significance through the perspective of Kristevan theory which sees significance produced as 'poetic language reactivates the contradiction between the semiotic and the symbolic' (Oliver. 2002. 24) . For the purposes of this thesis, I will investigate the maternal space as it relates to Shelley's text, and how this signifies in the Kristevan theory of the maternal, by concentrating my analysis on the last part of Canto XII.

Of the poem's supposed structural flaws, James Lynn Ruff, writes, 'The great problem here stems from the fact that The Revolt is divided into two very distinct sections'. The first section is Cantos II-XII which concern the experiences of Laon and Cythna, 'who, as social reformers, win the people of the Golden City away from political and religious tyranny only to be defeated ultimately by these forces' (Ruff. 1972. 5). The second section is Canto I with the last part of Canto XII, of which Shelley writes in "a letter to a prospective publisher:

> The whole poem with the exception of the first canto
> & part of the last is a mere human story without the
> smallest intermixture of supernatural interference.

> (In Ruff. 1972. 5)

In my reading I will focus on the last part of Canto XII, which describes the fate of the poem's two protagonists, Laon and Cythna.

Erotic Spaces

In *Laon and Cythna*, the opening Canto according to Reiman, 'contains a moral allegory outlining the major themes of the poem. The person of the Poet, despairing at the failure of the French Revolution, sees an emblem of the cosmic struggle between Good and Evil in an aerial battle between an eagle and a snake. Here a woman whom the Poet meets on the shore explains that when Evil first won ascendancy in the human heart, it drove out the Spirit of Good...' (1969. 53). The woman

> spake in language whose strange melody
> Might not belong to earth. I heard, alone,
> What made its music more melodious be,
> The pity and the love of every tone... (*Works*. Vol. I. Canto I. XIX. 163-166)

She had a 'melodious voice and eloquent mien', inscribing the maternal space, as Laon and Cythna begin a journey that leads both separately, to self-discovery, to victory over physical tyranny, temporary failure in their earthly quest—which through martyrdom grants them a final victory over evil, in the rest of the *Temple of the Spirit*.

In Canto XII, after their martyrdom, Laon and Cythna embark on a journey through a landscape described in terms of: 'winding water ways', 'whirlpools, where all hues did spread and quiver/And where melodious falls did burst and shiver', 'through forests, deep like night', and 'Sometimes between the wide and flowering meadows'(ll. 296, 301-302, 311, 316. pp 405-6). This is but a small sample of Shelley's poetic eloquence which can be seen in terms of a *maternal space*, a heaping of descriptive metaphors of the maternal body:

> Of wide and vaulted caves, whose roofs were bright
> With starry gems...
> Amid sweet sounds...
> Like swift and lovely dreams that walk the waves of sleep.
>   (*Works*. Vol. I. Canto XII: xxxvi. 316-324. 406).

It was,

> A scene of joy and beauty to behold......
> Where melodious falls did burst and shiver. (Canto XII. xxxiv. 298-302. 406)

The erotic journey was immersed in 'sounds and odours' (Canto XII. xxxiii, 293. 405). The maternal body, here, and throughout the Canto, can readily be seen to be present, metaphorically in the repeated references to caves, melodious falls, dreams, sounds, which produce an over-determined maternal space as the context for the boating party. On a material level, in the passage above, we have the repetitions of 'w' and 's' which highlight or emphasise the dream-like lines whose subtlety gives the effect of walking 'the waves of sleep'. In the non-positionality of the language the stasis of the

symbolic is somewhat subverted in favour of the semiotic. However to give the wider context to my reading of Shelley's poetry, it is well to keep in mind that his text, although partially semiotic, does not reach, in Kristeva's purest sense, the heights of the avant-garde poetry that she analyses. As she writes, 'Among the capitalist mode of production's numerous signifying practices, only certain literary texts of the avant garde (Mallarmé, Joyce) manage to cover the infinity of the process, that is, reach the semiotic chora, which modifies linguistic structures' (Kristeva. 1984. 88). Shelley's text, *in part*, responds to Kristeva's theory of the materiality and rhythms of language, as 'In 'artistic' practices the semiotic–the precondition of the symbolic–is revealed as that which also destroys the symbolic' (Oliver. 2002. 44).

While noting his ambiguity in perceptions, Shelley's presentation of nature, read as metaphors for the maternal body, follows common practice in the nineteenth-century romanticism. Friedrich A. Kittler remarks, in the context of the German movement, which equally applies to the English, that 'Nature, in the discourse network of 1800, is The Woman' (Kittler. 1990. 25). And remarking on Goethe's poetry, he comments, that 'The origin of language, once a creation ex-nihilo, becomes *maternal gestation*' (Kittler. 1990. 25) [my emphasis]. Kittler even notes that such romantic focus on the maternal, 'a century later led Freud to the invention of psychoanalysis...' (Kittler. 1990. 25). Given such equivalence, Shelley can be seen to have an incestuous, reflective relationship with the maternal/ mother-nature which can be read as a return to the archaic maternal inscription. As Kelley Oliver writes,

> The semiotic chora is associated with the maternal body because the infant's drives are structured around the mother's body...she [Kristeva] insists that the semiotic chora, with its regulation and motility, prefigures the specular realm of the mirror stage.

(Kelley Oliver. 2002. 24.)

The maternal space/body regulates the preverbal infant and in doing so 'prefigures the specular realm', which is a major stage in the process of the subject. I use the word *process* for Kristeva, in her theory, subverts any idea of a fixed Cartesian subjectivity. Shelley's text, demonstrates a *process*, in its musical tones, 'Where melodious falls did burst and shiver', foregrounding the maternal and the drive economy, underlining that maternal space, present in the intonation of the verse. With respect to such musicality, note Oliver's comments on Kristevan theory, that the 'semiotic chora is associated with *sounds* and *rhythms* that set up the possibility of signification before the infant (mis)recognises itself in the mirror image' (Oliver. 2002. 24) [my emphasis].

Canto XII, section xl, reads:

> Our bark hung there as on a line suspended
> Between two heavens, that windless waveless lake
> Which four great cataracts from four vales, attended
> By mists, aye feed; from rocks and clouds they break,
> And of that azure sea a silent refuge make. (356-360)

The boat 'hung...suspended', on a 'windless waveless lake', an 'azure sea', which 'a silent refuge make[s]'. The boating party are enclosed and protected like a *foetus* in the maternal womb. The peaceful lake can be read as a metaphor of rest and/or sexual identification with the maternal body. Perhaps akin to a foetal position of the mind, we have here a picture of passive rest, a satisfied repose which is in contrast to the violent martyrdom which initiated the lovers' entrance into nature's consolations[It is useful to remember that death is a common euphemism for sexual intercourse]. That this *rest* is far from being static, ('they break') owes its play to Shelley's paradoxical juxtaposition of terms. And isn't the mother's body a paradoxical space; that is a place of comfort and of violence and of motion. The ambiguity, in the text, of stasis and motion can be related to the tension between the symbolic and the semiotic, 'Like poetic language, all signification is the result of a dialectical movement between semiotic and symbolic elements' (Oliver. 2002. 25). While poetry foregrounds the semiotic element, derived from the archaic maternal *chora* as the site of drive motility, 'Poetic language does not represent the semiotic chora or drives in language; rather, poetic language reactivates the contradiction between the semiotic and the symbolic' (Oliver. 2002. 24). Such contradiction is present in Shelley's text, where boundaries are blurred. For example, the narrator narrates, 'We look behind; a golden mist did quiver/When its wild surges with the lake were blended' (XL. 354-355). We have a 'suspension', a 'windless, waveless lake', and yet 'four great cataracts from four vales' 'break' into an 'azure sea' Signification is a product of such a dialectic in language. The ambiguity of the text subverts order as it appears in Western logocentric discourse. This is a partial manifestation of the maternal space as it enters discourse as the archaic maternal *chora*.

The paradisiacal nature of the 'silent refuge' is beyond doubt for it is 'between two heavens'. The journey has been delightful and the climax is rest in peace, in contrast to their violent deaths, like a womb, 'fed; from rocks and clouds'.

Kristeva writes of the *maternal space*,

> Plato...referred to [it] as the aporia of the chora, a matrixlike space that is nourishing, unnameable, prior to the One and to God and that thus defies metaphysics.

(Oliver. 2002. 354)

Shelley's idea of paradise is not complete stasis but rest immersed in motion; a dynamic rest. A *foetal* position partaking of rest, nourishment and violence. The characters find a 'silent refuge' which is in contrast to their agitated martyrdom and this can be seen as a metaphor for the maternal womb. The metaphor has no referent but instead gives a sensible (of the senses) consolation which is a refuge to the reader's sympathies and expectations. This is in contrast to a dying and a death surrounded by 'priests.../Singing their bloody hymns....' (Canto XII, 11, 12. 396). The protagonists enter into a world where a *maternal-natural space*, which can be read as consolation, appears:

> The flames grow silent-slowly there is heard
> The music of a breath-suspending song... (Canto XII. 147-148. 401)

Readerly sympathies are further satisfied by the narration; for the space is inscribed in mother nature: 'By mists, aye fed'. The narrative also inscribes this nourishing as an effect of a nature in motion: 'four

great cataracts.../By mists, aye fed; from rocks and clouds they break'. This can be seen as a metaphor for maternal fluids.

After noting, 'the process by which significance is constituted', and that 'Plato...leads us to such a process when he calls this receptacle or chora nourishing and maternal'(Oliver. 2002. 36), Kristeva says, in a footnote,

> The Platonic space or receptacle is a mother and wet nurse: 'Indeed we may fittingly compare the Recipient to a mother, the model to a father, and the nature that arises between them to their offspring...Now the wet nurse of Becoming [which is true of the Platonic maternal space] was made watery and fiery, received the characters of earth and air, and was qualified by all the other affections that go with these...
> (Oliver. 2002. 63n.14.)

The maternal space, according to Kristeva's use of Plato, is related to the natural elements and their 'affections' which nourish the receptacle or *chora* as a natural maternal space. Shelley's *nourishing* mother nature can be read as a parallel to this. Plato's comment, that the 'wet nurse of becoming was made watery...', is inextricably linked, by Kristeva's contextual usage of it, to the nourishing, maternal space. And in Shelley's verse, natural elements, principally inscribed as breaking water, nourishes the space in which the boating party is enclosed.

Laon and Cythna is a reverse journey to the horrendous birthing experience (for the baby). The maternal body is 'a silent refuge' yet one which 'four great cataracts from four vales attended'. This can be read as 'silent refuge' equals rest, and that this rest is amongst great motion (note the violent motion is of waters). The waters which 'from rocks and clouds...break', can be read as collating with maternal body fluids, in their constant nourishing and dynamic process. The fact that the *maternal space* is equally a place of repose and of violence agrees with this reading of Shelley's text.

Religious Spaces

In the last section of Canto XII, we read:

> Motionless resting on the lake awhile,
> I saw its marge of snow-bright mountains rear
> Their peaks aloft, I saw each radiant isle,
> And in the midst, afar, even like a sphere
> Hung in one hollow sky, did there appear
> The Temple of the Spirit; on the sound
> Which issued thence, drawn nearer and more near,
> Like the swift moon this glorious earth around,
> The charmed boat approached, and there its haven found.
> (Canto XII. xli.. 361-369:.408)

We read, 'Hung in one hollow sky, did there appear/ The Temple of the Spirit', and the boating party 'there its haven found'. Here Shelley employs theological imagery which in one reading is in tune with his declaration in his *Preface*, 'The erroneous and degrading idea which men have conceived of a Supreme Being...is spoken against but not the Supreme Being itself' (*Works*. Vol. I. 246). In one reading, Shelley is subverting the Christian theology of his times by having the atheists come to the divine after their deaths. In another, the one which interests us, the text can be read in terms of an inscription – the *Temple of the Spirit* inscribing the maternal space/receptacle as divine/sublime. Kristeva notes of the *sublime*, which can be seen in Shelley's poetic, that, the *sublime* is present, 'When the starry sky, a vista of open seas or a stained glass window shedding purple beams fascinate me, there is a cluster of meaning, of colours, of *words*, of *caresses*, there are light touches, scents, sighs, cadences that arise, *shroud* me, carry me away, and sweep me *beyond the things that I see, hear, or think*' (Kristeva. 1982. 12) [my emphasis]. We have seen such *words* and *caresses*, in mother nature, through which the lovers have journeyed to reach the ultimate rest; the *shroud* of the *Temple*. Their (the lovers') final consolation, in its intangibility, is *beyond things* seen, heard or known, while patently and paradoxically tied to the logocentrism of the theology utilized by the language.

The Temple of the Spirit can be seen to be *sublime* in its ethereal/pre-objectal consolations. It partakes of the theological connotations, but as a sublime maternal inscription, in contradistinction to a theological paternal space. As Kristeva writes, '*Sublimation*...is nothing else than the possibility of naming the pre-nominal, the pre-objectal, which are in fact only a trans-nominal, a trans-objectal' (Kristeva. 1982. 11). The *Temple of the Spirit*, as a sublime maternal space, can be seen, while utilizing the nominalism of the theological image, as being involved with the preverbal, pre-objectal, space. The *Temple's* sublime nature can be seen as the epitome of existence, entered through death, and mother nature.

Kristeva's argument that 'poetic language...may appear as an argument complicitous with dogma...but...may also set in motion what dogma represses', (Kristeva. 1984. 61) can be applied to Shelley's poetic text. The image at once agrees with the logocentrism involved in *The Temple*, but at the same time, it can be seen to reactivate the drive economy of the maternal *chora*. It is how Shelley appropriates the *theological*, in his poetic text, that effects an ordering, rather than a system or law of a theological dogma. In Shelley's text, the *Temple of the Spirit*, as analogous to the Kristevan chora, receives order through 'socio-historical constraints', (Kristeva. 1984. 26) and in this textual instance, the theo-logical is impressed as an *arranging* of the maternal space as sublime/divine. This arranging, although of a theo-logical impression (stamp), is not of a law or the symbolic. For the very presence of the dogmatic is appropriated to subvert the very logocentrism it seems to assert. The dialectical tension between the semiotic and the symbolic is apparent when the systematic, architectural *Temple* is reinscribed into the natural which utilises it as a *maternal space*, which we see is the pinnacle/rest of the lover's journey through mother nature. This utilisation is of an *ordering* rather than a law-which the theo-logical *Temple* would have in a theo-logical context. With regards to such a ordering and the maternal space or *chora*, Kristeva comments,

> We emphasise the regulated aspect of the chora: its vocal and gestural organisation is subject to what we shall call an objective *ordering* [ordonnancement], which is dictated by natural or socio-historical constraints such as the biological difference between the sexes or family structure. We may therefore posit that social organisation, always already symbolic, imprints its constraint in a mediated form which *organises* the chora not according to a *law* (a term we reserve for the symbolic) but through an *ordering*' (Kristeva. 1984. 26) [my emphasis]

The *ordering* of the space, *The Temple of the Spirit*, is historically, within the poem's narrative, of the order of an eschatology(doctrine of last things), where the consolations of nature, which we have previously considered, give way to a sublime, maternal space, not unlike the *chora* in its implied *jouissance* for the boating party. The ordering of this space owes its regulation to theological, symbolic concepts. However, these concepts and that 'law' (of the order: theo-logical) are undermined by the *chora's* analogical tendency, in the text we are considering, to the natural, which is of the order, in contrast to theological dogma, of the finite and mortal. Mother nature, who belongs to the order of the non-eternal, is inscribed with the eternal, theological.

Kittler draws attention to the inscription of the maternal as nature, relative to the theological, when he writes that '*Instead* of sighing until she [mother nature] rests in the *Name of the Father*, she creates human speech organs, which pursue self-enjoyment in her place...' (Kittler. 19990. 25) [my emphasis]. The replacement of the 'Name of the Father' by the *jouissance* of the maternal creates a space in language. The maternal must necessarily enter and manifest in the symbolic of language, but the theological is not the resting place for her voice. Kittler underlines this replacement of the paternal God by the maternal Nature, when he comments that she [mother nature] '...liberates herself from the Word of God' (Kittler. 1990. 25). The centrality of the logos is subverted, though reinscribed by a maternal, in contradistinction to a paternal, space.

The non-locus where the boating party rest is ethereal, for 'Hung in one hollow sky, did there appear/The Temple of the Spirit...'. The signifier, 'hung', spells out the dialectic which is present here between the *natural* and the *spiritual*. Kittler remarks: 'The discourse that the mother in the discourse networks of 1800 creates but cannot pronounce is called Poetry. Mother Nature...exists as the singular behind the *plurality* of discourses' (Kittler. 1990. 26)[my emphasis]. The unity of the paternal divinity is offset by the plurality of the maternal, whose 'syntactic and categorical understanding is merely the liminary moment of the process...' (Kristeva. 1984. 30).

Regarding the system involved in the image of the *Temple*, Derrida's comments on the theo-logical, have application to Shelley's image:

> The history of metaphysics...is the determination of Being as presence in all senses of the word. It could be shown that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the centre have always designated an invariable presence—*eidos, archē, telos, energeia, ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject) *alētheia*, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man, and so forth.
> (1978. 279-280)

The 'invariable presence' of a paternal 'God' is in one sense replaced by a maternal space, in keeping with the images of mother nature I have previously discussed, yet the maternal as presence/space somewhat subverts the unified patriarchy it utilizes in order to be present itself. In respect to such subversion, Derrida's comments illuminate the sense of the plurality of meaning, such as is highlighted by the semiotic in Shelley's verse. When speaking of a self-conscious 'event' of disruption in language, Derrida writes:

> This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the *absence* of a centre or origin, everything became discourse...a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely *present* outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and play of *signification* infinitely.
> (1978. 280) [my emphasis]

The *Temple of the Spirit*, in its maternal nature, signifies against definite signification. The text foregrounds, rather than a *presence*, an *absence* of the very 'transcendental signified' it professes: that is, theos. Therefore the *Temple* image can be seen as reinscribing the natural/mother nature into the poetic text, where a tension is played, drawing attention to this *absence* and its processes which 'extends the domain and play of signification infinitely' ('infinitely' also being theo-logical). This is the foregrounding of the semiotic, in contradistinction to the symbolic/theological.

The *Temple of the Spirit* can be read as a theo-logical space which gives order to the failed revolution of the lovers, where 'the world grew dim and pale/All light in Heaven or Earth beside[their] love did fail'. (XV. 134-135. 400). As the raison d'être for the protagonists, the *Temple of the Spirit* gives a victory in the wake of defeat. It is like a womb where the boating party 'there its haven found'. In the significance of mother nature, the *Temple* is the consummate/eschatological maternal space. The maternal space, as sublime/divine is an image, both primary and consummate, the principle before principles, the ever dominating mother nature– *in the beginning was the mother*. Sperry speaks poignantly of the *Temple* image in Canto XII: ' this story of human tragedy and unfulfilled ambition is *dominated* by the temple of the spirit from which the lovers proceed and to which they return following their deaths in the last, the ageless structure that provides a vantage point for their struggle and its significance' (Sperry. 1988. 43) [my emphasis].The *Temple* is an inversion of Christian theology's patriarchal God as the logos (the originary word). It can be pictured as immaterial, and as a metaphor for the maternal body space, the maternal as sublime. The theological metaphor of the *body* as the temple of the spirit has theological precedent: 'Do you not know that your *body* is a *temple of the Holy Spirit*' (I Co. 6:19. R.S.V.)[my emphasis]. And the *consummate* 'vision', can be read significantly as metaphorically describing a journey back to the maternal body; into the womb from which life began. This critique is supported by Kittler's synopsis of romantic ideology, in the practice of phonetics and of the teaching of the alphabet in the nineteenth century where mothers were placed, 'at the origin of discourse' and 'the Mother was the first Other to be understood by poetical hermeneutics' (Kittler. 1990. 28)

However, the theological nature of the *Temple of the Spirit* as a vision of (erotic) *consummation* is also involved in the text. For the verse in Shelley's *Laon and Cythna* pursues a narrative in the order of an eschatology (movement towards last things/last Judgement), reinforced by the theological phrase *Temple of the Spirit*. Moreover this contradicts the disruptive move of the erotic semiotic which the presence of the theological connotations further enhances. The maternal body erupts in a deification, where the lovers have journeyed through mother nature to a climax of the maternal as divine/sublime. This is a triumph of an erotic return to the womb. Shelley by subverting the very theological terminology he uses, and challenges accepted borders of his era.

In keeping with reading a selection of Shelley's poetic texts according to an analysis which foregrounds inscribing the maternal body as a significant space, I now turn to a selection of his poetic text in *Prometheus Unbound*. In this poem, the maternal is presented, in opposition to patriarchal authority, and we can see a continuation of the subversion of divine authority as the ruling, paternal law.

Prometheus Unbound

Shelley has taken poetic license with the lost Greek play of Aeschylus, 'Prometheus Lyomenos, or Prometheus Unbound' (Gelpi. 137). As he writes in his *Preface* to his lyrical drama, ' The Greek tragic writers, in selecting as their subject any portion of their national history or mythology, employed in their treatment of it a certain arbitrary discretion....I have presumed to employ a similar license' (*Works*. Vo II. 171). Regarding such license with the Greek drama, Shelley continues: ' The "Prometheus Unbound" of Aeschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis [mother Earth]. Thetis, according to this view of the subject, was given in marriage to Peleus, and Prometheus, by permission of Jupiter, delivered from his captivity by Hercules....I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind' (*Works*. Vo II. 171) (see Gelpi, 1992: 137).

In his drama, Shelley's explores the relationship between mother Earth and Prometheus; mother and son. Here we have a clear instance of Freud's Oedipus complex where mother and son, are 'bound' together opposing patriarchal rule and as the drama unfolds we see that symbolic authority is undermined.

Abjection and Identity

A key theory associated with Kristeva is abjection(see Glossary and Chapter two).

In the Greek drama, according one Freudian reading, 'for the sake of psychological health' the son's anger against Jupiter for possessing mother(earth) must be laid aside (Gelpi. 152) The father's power must be identified with and the son's purpose is to 'wait for the time when it will be his' (Gelpi. 152). Shelley rejects this reconciliatory line, as he says in his *Preface*, and instead seeks the overthrow of patriarchal rule by an all-enduring Prometheus, who aligned with his mother turns Aeschylus' drama on its head: challenging patriarchal rule with a maternal space. Shelley's Prometheus represses the possibility of submitting to Jupiter. Instead his is an open defiance of patriarchal authority as a 'Champion' against the 'Oppressor of mankind'. The Titan, abjected by Jupiter, in turn abjects the Father-God:

> The genii of the storm...
> ....
> Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood
> From these pale feet, which then might trample thee
> If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.　　　(*Works*. Vol. II. 42, 50-52. 180)

Here, Jupiter is abjected by Prometheus, the Father-ruler is abjected by the son who does not identify with the paternal. Classical resolution of the Oedipus complex, according to Freud and reiterated by Kristeva, requires that the son abject the mother (here mother Earth, whom I will discuss later on) and identify with the father, because of the fear of castration. The son's desire for the mother is matured into a nostalgia, according to this theory, and the son submits to paternal law. This Prometheus will not do: 'Submission, thou dost know, I cannot try:/ For what submission but that fatal word' (*Works*. Vol. II. Act I. 395-386. 191).

Prometheus, in the depths of abjection, is free in his mind, and furthermore he claims power over Jupiter: 'Disdain! Ah no! I pity thee' (*Works*. I. 53. 180.) He is physically abjected by Jupiter, but has mastery over his situation by virtue of his refusal to submit to patriarchal castration:

> Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
> Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
> O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
> 　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(*Works*. Vo II. Act I. 9-11. 179)

Prometheus' abjection is within a relationship of a son with patriarchal authority.

He rebels against Jupiter's rule, rejecting the patriarchal castration by asserting the infinite possibilities of language—'but that fatal word'. Prometheus physically is totally at the mercy of the Father-God, yet psychologically he has freedom, in his relationship with mother Earth. This alignment of mother-son undermines symbolic rule much like the semiotic does the symbolic, when the manifestation of the *chora*, in the poetic text, subverts the symbolic order of language.

Prometheus is physically abjected by Jupiter, bound to an icy precipice where an eagle eats his liver. This punishment is for giving mankind divine gifts:

Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me, alas! pain, pain ever, for ever! (*Works*. Act I. 20-23. 179)

In his estrangement, he challenges borders by his open defiance which has a sense of ambivalence in the perspective of the text. This is evident in the word 'unmeasured', sitting in the centre of the line as a boundless image directly contradicting the limiting words 'black, wintry, dead...without herb'. Ambiguity exists here for Prometheus is both 'bound and 'unbound' As Kristeva writes, 'We may call it a border; abjection is above all ambiguity' (Kristeva. 1982. 9). In the juxtaposition of 'nailed' and the absence in the negative terms which follow, such as, 'dead' and 'without', we also have ambiguity. For Prometheus' suffering is effecting contradiction linguistically. 'Nailed' is a term of an action acted and measured: that is, a definite, albeit passive, occurrence. Measurement is here paradoxically juxtaposed with the term 'unmeasured' The precipice where Prometheus is 'nailed' is 'eagle-baffling', both conducive to the eagle's visitations, being bleak, and perplexing, frustrating to all life; yet a life that is present in the eagle. We have an order in both the linguistic discourse and the context of the drama yet the very opposition of 'death' and 'life', paradoxically coexisting within the suffering of Prometheus, violates Jupiter's order; disorder subverting structure.

The words, 'black, wintry, dead, unmeasured' emphasise lack or deprivation and lead to the key word in the passage '*without*'. Prometheus is 'without...life' deprived of the positive, deprived of that which sustains life. The word 'unmeasured', appearing in the centre of the line, suggests the boundlessness of the Promethean situation, ambiguous in both its negativity of suffering but also in its positiveness of the endlessness of Prometheus' boundlessness. In terms which can be seen to engage Kristeva's words, 'And yet, from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master' (Kristeva. 1982. 2). Prometheus ends his *unmeasured* speech with the words:

No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure. (*Works*. Vo II. 23-24. 179)

This is ego identity defined in the midst (or rather because of) pain, inflicted by the word of the Father, for the act of the Titan, who gave humankind speech. Yet Prometheus' word, in the kingdom of Jupiter's rule, gives definition to his suffering for: 'To each ego its object, to each superego its abject' (Kristeva. Powers. 1982. 2). Prometheus, opposed to Jupiter as his superego, refuses the castration which also reinforces the I that 'endures'. As Kristeva writes, 'It is not the white expanse or slack boredom of repression, not the translations and transformations of desire that wrench bodies, nights, and discourse; rather it is a brutish suffering that "I" puts up with, sublime and devastated...' (Kristeva. Powers. 1982. 2). Such is the nature of Prometheus' abjection that he is defined from his suffering, which is essential to his ego-identity, which is inflicted by patriarchal rule:

Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge. (*Works*. Vol. II. 9-11. 179)

That Prometheus is abjected by patriarchal authority is countered by Prometheus' abjection of the Father-God, not the Mother-Earth, as is the normal Oedipal resolution. As John Lechte writes, 'The point is that the symbolic is not, of its own accord, strong enough to ensure separation; it depends on the mother becoming abjected' (Lechte. 1990. 159). One could say that the poetic text demonstrates a linguistic freedom (boundlessness) which works against (or abjects) the symbolic order of Jupiter's authority as the measured/ *determinate meaning* in the drama; for Prometheus' sphere is 'unmeasured' As we have seen the word 'unmeasured' grants the defiance of Prometheus a limitless character while also juxtaposing with the negativity of the Titan's situation; 'nailed', 'dead', 'without'. The abjection is ambiguous. The language of Prometheus challenges well defined paternal, symbolic, logical order. As Kristeva relates, 'Abjection...is fundamentally "what disturbs identity, system, order"' (Lechte. 1990. 160). Linguistically, Prometheus' language appears as a transgression of order and system, ultimately an ex-position of Jupiter's system/foundation as a transcendental signified.

Shelley's choice

Shelley had, like most of the romantics, an affinity to the poet, John Milton. As William Gaunt writes, the 'balance between nature and the supernatural helps to explain why Milton was the favoured poet of the romantic movement... [for] sympathy might well be directed to Satan who did rebel against the All-Powerful....In describing the uncertainty, the almost equality of the contest, Milton himself seemed to oppose what he ostensibly wished to establish, and to make "the adversary" into a hero. His Satan, it is hardly too much to say, was the hero of the Romantic Movement' (Gaunt. 1956. 117-118). Shelley says, in his *Preface* to *Prometheus Unbound*, of the spirit which 'shook to dust the oldest and most oppressive form of the Christian religion', 'we owe Milton to the progress and development of the same spirit: the sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a republican, and a bold enquirer into morals and religion' (*Works*. Vol III. *Preface.* 173). Milton's politics struck a chord with Shelley, although he was in a very real sense ambivalent towards such a work as *Paradise Lost*. Milton was a Christian writing in Puritan England but his poetry is pluralistic. His Satan is at the very least composite, part hero and part villain. Shelley had little sympathy with the biblical theology of *Paradise Lost*, but, as with other romantic poets, appreciated Milton's Satan as a rebel against 'All-Powerful' authority.

Also in the same *Preface*, Shelley's choice of Prometheus as a rebel figure over Milton's Satan is extensively explained in a juxtaposition of their respective characters. Shelley writes:

> The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan: and Prometheus is, in my judgement, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force [which Milton's Satan has], he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement, which, in the Hero of Paradise Lost, interfere with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry, which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure....But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.
>
> (*Works*. Vol. II. preface. 171-172)

Shelley's reason for choosing Prometheus over Satan is in the first instance a 'poetical' one. For Shelley writes that the subject of a poetical text should be the highest in 'moral and intellectual nature', unsullied, unadulterated by impure motives. While we have Shelley's dislike for Milton's inducement of his readers to 'weigh' Satan's 'faults with his wrongs', the main reason for Shelley's character choice is that Shelley conceives Prometheus as the 'poetical' hero; that is the most meta-physical he could imagine (was Milton's Satan too human?). Shelley chooses Prometheus and in such a character choice he claims to reach for the dizzy (transcendent) heights and give Prometheus a power and purity of motives which, to him, is fitting for the *poetical*, rather than the more realistic, human-like hero of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. However, with Prometheus the perspective is not so much a matter of character but of the language, of the text, which effects a 'subject in process' and in spite of Shelley's claims for the relative perfection of his hero, his (Shelley's) verse inscribes ambiguities, commensurate with the pluralism of Milton's poetic epic.

Shelley creates an alternative hero to Milton's Satan. A hero who is free (unbound) of desiring the power and position of the Father-God. Milton's Satan, in contrast to Shelley's Prometheus, mirrors the power structure of God, always pursuing to usurp the power of his divine foe. Satan, in *Paradise Lost*, seeks to be in the place of God, to dethrone the Father. Shelley's Prometheus, however, does not desire the throne of Jupiter rather, his kingdom is his own mind/linguistic sphere.

> Scorn and despair,–these are mine empire.
> More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
> From thine unenvied throne, O, Mighty God! (*Works*. Vol.. II. 15-17. 179)

Mother and Son

Prometheus addresses his arch foe in Act 1 with the words:

> Monarch of Gods and Daemons, and all Spirits
> But One, who throng those bright and rolling worlds
> Which Thou and I alone of living things
> Behold with sleepless eyes!
> ....
> No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure.
> I ask the earth, have not the mountains felt?
> ....

(*Works*, Act I: 1-4, 24-25; 181)

In regard to this passage, Gelpi says, 'Despite Prometheus' degrading and tormented position, my statement that he and Jove share power seems verified by Prometheus' claim that 'One', whom critics have generally agreed is Prometheus himself... is not under Jove's rule' (Gelpi, 1992: 145) Jupiter's rule is almost universal, but like symbolic order is partially deconstructed by the semiotic, his order is undermined by the existence of the transgressive, resisting son. The words, 'I ask the

earth' set the scene for Prometheus' exchange with his mother Earth, which I will consider later on. Shelley reinscribes mother Earth into the drama, who, unlike Aeschylus' Thetis, supports Prometheus' linguistic rebellion. This further contrasts with Milton's patriarchal epic. In fact the maternal mother-son bind of *Prometheus Unbound*, as a semiotic relationship opposed to the symbolic order of Jupiter, is central to the drama as I read it in terms of Kristeva's theory of the maternal *chora*. The Titan's suffering delineates his subjecthood, which is on the edge of dissolution, but given definite voice through the silent pain, which ameliorates the fragmentation of the ego. In this we see, 'Suffering as the place of the subject. Where it emerges, where it is differentiated from chaos. An incandescent, unbearable limit between inside and outside, ego and other. The initial, fleeting grasp...*Being as ill-being*' (Kristeva. 1982. 140) [my emphasis].

Similar to Christian dogma, Prometheus' suffering is seen as an ennobling state but unlike it has no redemptive purpose. Although Prometheus does see himself as a saviour of human-kind, it is as a sufferer for gifts he has given them, not as a substitute for their sins:

> I would fain
> Be what it is my destiny to be,
> The saviour and the strength of suffering man,
> Or sink into the original gulph of things:
> There is no agony, and solace left... (*Works*. Vol.. II. Act I.815-819. 204)

In Shelley's drama, Prometheus' suffering is tied to 'suffering man' not as a substitute but in solidarity with them. Language, in the poem, is the mediation (go between), amelioration and ultimate significance of the Titan's suffering. And appropriately so for Prometheus is 'nailed' for giving human beings speech. In Shelley's drama, the abjection that Prometheus suffers calls perspectives into question as a commentary on the 'boundlessness' of language, which does not have a clear (transcendental) purpose, such as redemption, and whose dissolution, of inside/outside, I shall discuss in an analysis of Act II, scene I.

It is of note that the focus which has thus far been on Prometheus' suffering and abjection, in the drama, can be read in terms of Christian dogma. Prometheus is posited with his mother, in a way very much paralleling Mary and Christ. Mother Earth makes two notable laments on her son's suffering. The first being:

> The tongueless Caverns of the craggy hills
> Cried, 'Misery!' then; the hollow Heaven replied,
>
> 'Misery!' And the Ocean's purple waves,
> Climbing the land, howled to the lashing winds,
> And the pale nations heard it, 'Misery!'
> (*Works*. Vol. II. Act I: 107-11; 182)

Here the alliterations of c and h punctuated by the lament 'Misery' accentuate the foregrounding of nature's sympathy with the suffering of the Titan. The 'caverns' are 'tongueless' yet cry 'Misery!', and the 'hollow Heaven' replies or echoes 'Misery!'. From the ground to the sky, the whole of nature, below

and above, vibrates sorrow. The Earth, a little later spells out nature's wail, making a more personal mourning:

> Misery, Oh misery to me,
> That Jove at length should vanquish thee.
> Wail, howl aloud, Land and Sea,
> The Earth's rent heart shall answer ye.
> Howl, Spirits of the living and the dead,
> Your refuge, your defence lies fallen and vanquished. (*Works*. Vol. II. Act I. 306-311. 188)

To Earth it is a matter of a broken heart, which linguistically speaking is accentuated by the rhyming of the first four lines and the use of personal pronouns. She is clearly lamenting her son's plight and her grief is felt throughout nature's realm, whom she calls on to unify in wailing for her suffering son. Further on mother Earth clearly states what can be seen as an instance of a parallel with Mary at the foot of the cross of Christ, as she feels her offspring's woe:

> I felt thy torture, son, with such mixed joy
> As pain and virtue give. (*Works*. Vol. II. Act I. 656-657. 199)

The pain is mixed with joy as the abjection of the son is shared with the mother and also the nobility of his endurance and resistance against the Father-God. Kristeva's comment on the Mater Dorolosa could easily apply to Shelley's dramatic mother and suffering son, 'The Mater Dolorosa knows *no masculine body* save that of her dead son, and her only pathos...is her shedding tears over a corpse' (Moi. 175) [my emphasis]. The mother's body is felt by her son's somatic suffering, and their relationship reinscribes the archaic maternal space, while the identity of mother Earth, is tied to the corporeality of her son. Her desire is inscribed bodily in the suffering body of her son, which body she gave birth to, and which is the only 'masculine' body she knows, as per the reinscription of the archaic maternal space. Writing of the Christian tradition of Mary at the foot of the cross of Christ, Kristeva says:

> This love, of which divine love is merely not an always convincing derivation, psychologically is perhaps a recall on the near side of early identifications, of the primal shelter that ensured the survival of the new born. Such a love is in fact, logically speaking, a surge of anguish at the very . moment when the identity of thought and living body collapses' (Moi, 1993: 176-177).

The anguish of mother Earth is reminiscent of primal *jouissance* in terms of a feeling/love which transcends boundaries of the body—while paradoxically resurrecting the archaic maternal body space, foregrounding semiotic processes. In this nexus, the maternal inscription re-emerges as a 'shelter' in the face of corporeal collapse. Through the central image of the dying/dead/collapsing body, mother and son are reunited in the abject.

In the context of such abjection, the crucified Christ is alluded to, yet in terms of a negation. It is interesting that Panthea first sees a vision of the crucified Christ:

> A woful sight: a youth
> With patient looks nailed to a crucifix. (*Works*. Vol. II. Act I. 584-585. 197)

Prometheus also sees this vision:

Remit the anguish of that lighted stare;
Close those wan lips; let that thorn-wounded brow
Stream not with blood...
Fix, fix those tortured orbs in peace and death,
So thy sick throes shake not that crucifix,
So those pale fingers play not with thy gore.
O, horrible! Thy name I will not speak,
It hath become a curse.
(*Works*. Vol. II. Act I, 597-604. 198)

Prometheus takes up Panthea's vision of Christ on the cross, seeing it as 'a curse'. Here, Prometheus refuses any favourable comparison of his suffering with Christ's and instead sees the Christian narrative as part of the patriarchal authority he opposes. The paternal Father-son dyad, as for example, in Christian tradition, is emblematic of the authority he is resisting, and part of the symbolic order which Jupiter as a Father-God perpetuates. It is interesting that in the short piece prefacing *Laon and Cythna*, *To Mary-*, we read the following lines:

And Faith, and Custom, and low-thoughted cares,
Like thunder-stricken dragons, for a space
Left the torn human heart, their food and dwelling-place. (*Works*. Vol. I. 115-117. 254)

The above quotation with its image of a dragon feeding on the torn human heart is a powerful visual metaphor drawing on a long and complex cultural history. The dragon image reinscribes classical myth and Christian iconography. Shelley replaces the Christian theos with his own theos, in a reinscription of the system of metaphysics in his poetry. This exchange, whose circular theological modality highlights the persistent nature of metaphysics in language. The latter cannot just be erased, and efforts to do so, simply underline its tenacity. Derrida curtly remarks, he does not 'at all believe in what today is so easily called the death of philosophy (nor, moreover, in the simple death of whatever—the book, man, *or* god, especially since...what is dead wields a very specific power)' (1981. 6). Maybe Shelley has an interest in this paradox, but in any event he recognizes that theology/philosophy cannot simply escape itself: 'The erroneous and degrading idea which men have conceived of a Supreme Being...is spoken against, but not the Supreme Being itself' (*Works*. Vol. I. 246).

Yet on the level of the discourse in *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley's Prometheus speaks against the redeemer of received Christian dogma, reinscribing a saviour of a non-redemptive nature:

...I would fain
Be what it is my destiny to be,
The saviour and the strength of suffering man,
Or sink into the original gulph of things:
There is no agony, and solace left... (*Works*. Vo II. Act I.815-819. 204)

However, as with the Christian tradition, Prometheus can be seen as a saviour who is abjected by an all-powerful Father figure and lamented by his mother. A very real opposition of the maternal cradle against a vengeful, symbolic order. However, it is important to note the imagery from Christian

symbolism is just one among a number of poetic devices used by Shelley. *Prometheus Unbound* is not a Christian allegory nor does it rely on a Christian framework for its meanings.

Maternal Speech

Now let us consider the relationship/space of mother Earth and Prometheus in terms of *jouissance*. Prometheus obsessed by a desire to recall the words wherewith he cursed Jupiter, says:

> What was that curse? For ye all heard me speak (*Works*; Act I: 73. 181)

To that question, mother Earth replies:

> How canst thou hear,
> Who knowest not the language of the dead? (*Works*; Act I: 138-139. 183)

I note that the words—'language of the dead'– may have the sense of Earth's self-depreciation/dejection, however, I read the words as a refusal of Earth to enter into the symbolic discourse of Jupiter; an interpretation which nicely dovetails with her solidarity in the semiotic mother-son space, which she reinforces in her maternal speech.

Earth is deliberately not engaging Prometheus on the level of the symbolic; that is on the patriarchal contest between him and Jupiter. The symbolic is not the concern of mother Earth here but rather such a reply can be seen as a gloss on the symbolic order of Jupiter, which is inadequate to communicate the maternal space which Earth will instead focus on. The reluctance of mother Earth to repeat the curse, in which Prometheus defied Jupiter, is attributed to her fear:

> I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven's fell king
> Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain. (*Works*: Act I 140-141; 183)

However, Earth, whose language serves to bring into play into the archaic semiotic relationship of mother and son, addresses Prometheus' present suffering with a refusal to speak to her son in reference to the patriarchal, symbolic space. She will answer Prometheus but in terms of the maternal, using but undermining, symbolic order. Her Speech will be a celebration of the infant-maternal nexus of joy which gives us insight into the present relationship of mother and son. The maternal space of *jouissance*, in ll. 152-158, which I will consider at length, is grounded in the primal articulations of the Freudian drives. As Kristeva writes,

> In the speaking subject, fantasies articulate [the] irruption of drives within the realm of the signifier; they disrupt the signifier and shift the metonymy of desire...onto a jouissance that divests the object ambiguity–the death drive underlying it' (Kristeva. 1984. 49).

The autoerotic body is the focus of *jouissance*, which is heterogeneously linked to the death drive underlying it. Here mother Earth can be seen to preface her maternal-speech, ll. 152-158, with this comment on language, her language, as a 'dead' body that is removed from the symbolic order. While

she recognises that her maternal-space will grow out of it (language), her recollection of that archaic space, foregrounds it (the space) predating the realm of Jupiter's order.

Kristeva writes: 'The abject confronts us, on the other hand, and this time within our personal archaeology, with our earliest attempts to release the hold of maternal entity even before ex-isting outside of her, thanks to the autonomy of language' (Kristeva. 1982, 13). Prometheus is bound with Jupiter outside the maternal, in the symbolic realm of language; however, he is also unbound, bound with his mother, in the recollection of the archaic mother-son nexus, which links mother and son through, and almost despite of, language. Yet this paradox does not obscure the fact that Prometheus demonstrates a language which arises out of his very abjection. The reluctance of mother Earth to speak the 'curse' wherewith Prometheus cursed Jupiter distinguishes Prometheus from the maternal without totally cutting him off from it. She in a very real sense cannot partake in Prometheus' suffering. But their maternal link sees her as a persona in the drama who is bound, I use the word deliberately, with her son and his plight.

Prometheus answers Earth's 'negative' response with:

And what art thou,
O melancholy Voice? (*Works*; Act I, 151-152. 183)

But *The Earth* replies:

I am the Earth,
Thy mother; she within whose stony veins
To the last fibre of the loftiest tree
Whose thin leaves trembled in the frozen air,
Joy ran, as blood within a living frame,
When thou didst from her bosom, like a cloud
Of glory, arise, a spirit of keen joy! (*Works*; Act I, 152-158. 184)

The 'melancholy voice' is Prometheus' perspective of Earth's 'dead' relation to the patriarchal order. Language is truly the focus here, but from Earth's perspective the maternal space, from which Prometheus arises 'a spirit of keen joy', is appropriately prefaced in contrast to 'the language of the dead', a 'melancholy voice'. In Kristevan theory the maternal body, as autoerotic, is incessantly tied to the death drive. As Kristeva writes,

If language, constituted as symbolic through narcissistic, specular, imaginary investment, protects the body from the attack of drives by making it a place—the place of the signifier—in which the body can signify itself through positions; and if, therefore, language, in the service of the death drive, is a pocket of narcissism toward which this drive may be directed, then fantasies remind us...of the insistent presence of drive heterogeneity' (Kristeva. 1984. 49).

The maternal body signifies through language, in fantasies. The 'narcissistic, specular, imaginary investment' of language, tied to such semiotic irruptions, 'protects' the maternal body from the destructive death drive, while acting in its(the death drive's) service. This gives the body arrangement

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in the symbolic. 'Fantasies' as the return of the maternal body in language underlines the divergence in the composition of the drives, although the death drive predominates.

When, according to mother Earth's narrative, Prometheus separates from the maternal space and the destructive realm of the death drive, as a 'spirit of keen joy', contradictorily, he enters into the temporary space of death and language(the symbolic) where the maternal body, paradoxically, is posited by the very drives which seeks its destruction. It is here the fantasy, manifest in *jouissance*, retains a link to the semiotic and to the ameliorating differentiation of the death drive itself. *Jouissance* in its 'body' form is a counter to the symbolic order in its semiotic reinscription of the maternal space; the archaic *chora*. The maternal-infant nexus, here, is more synchronic than the time-diachronic order of Jupiter's rule. Here is a paradox. While the very corporeal maternal body is vividly described, the receptacle/space of mother-son is outside and beyond time/space, and the historical progression of the Patriarchal system.

The word 'when' (157) locates a time-element to Earth's recollection but the symbolic is somewhat suspended in this celebration of primal *jouissance*. Earth starts her narrative with the first person 'I am' but quickly moves to the third person, e.g. 'she', 'her', indicating that the process is the generator/inscriber of the *jouissance*, not any delineation of subject-hood. Here mother Earth's narrative juxtaposes words indicating movement and stasis. Words such as 'trembling' and 'ran' are juxtaposed with terms such as 'frozen' and 'stony'. The leaves are a quiver though the air is frozen and joy ran as blood through 'stony veins'. Gelpi writes,

> When Prometheus, her infant, is born to her, the two experience an affect attunement[1] [which is] mirrored by the structure of her verse structure, [cf. ll. 156-158]....The two "joys" answer each other across the three lines, bringing before the eye the sympathy the words present to the mind. The phrase "a spirit of keen joy", by sharing its appositiveness with both the maternal "joy" of line 156 and the infant "thou" of line 157, further reinforces the point' (Gelpi, 146-147)

What Gelpi is describing as joy, affect attunement and sympathy also lends itself to Kristevan ideas of *jouissance*. The language of the maternal *jouissance* certainly constructs a space where patriarchal rule is excluded; a space that is constituted of the nexus of mother/infant. The words, 'joy ran, as blood within a living frame', can be aligned with the archaic maternal *chora* and the *jouissance* of the maternal is *sublime*. The 'last fibre of the loftiest tree', an erotic experience, as the birth-'subject' is a personification of *jouissance*– 'a spirit of keen joy'. The joyousness of the mother-infant space pits against the terror of Jupiter's symbolic rule; the space which post-dates the maternal one. The isolation of Prometheus' 'wintry' existence–which, as we have seen, summates his position in the patriarchal

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[1] 'Affect attunement builds on the infant's extraordinary capacity for amodal perception. It involves the mother's showing the infant that she shares the feeling of a moment, such as sudden joy or slight bewilderment or disappointment, not by mimicking the infant's acts or facial expressions but by virtually instantaneous response in another sensory modality' (Gelpi. 19). This description is reminiscent of the mother-child dyad in which the *chora* exists as an inter-relationship in which both the mother's and the child's affect reactions are mutually nourishing, complementary, and co-dependant.

order–is ex-hausted in the line, 'No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure'. However mother Earth, rather than entering into the patriarchal space, offers the more semiotic positionality of the archaic mother-infant nexus. This is outside of Prometheus' present suffering, yet subverts the symbolic by reinscribing *jouissance* as it *exists*[2] in the archaic *chora*. Tension exists between the symbolic (stasis) and the semiotic (movement), as can be seen, for example, in the lines:

> To the last fibre of the loftiest tree
> Whose thin leaves trembled in the frozen air.

Kristeva can be applied here, 'The text's principal characteristic and the one that distinguishes it from other signifying practices, is precisely that it introduces, through binding and through vital and symbolic differentiation, heterogeneous rupture and rejection: jouissance and death' (Kristeva. 1984. 180). The text links both life (*jouissance*)- 'trembled' and death (stasis)- 'frozen' in a signification which calls into question normal perception, while testifying to the *jouissance*, which initiates the linguistic expression which gives it definition. As Kristeva writes,

> the text as signifying practice points toward the possibility–which is a jouissance–of a subject who speaks his being put in process/on trial through action. In other words and conversely, the text restores to "mute" practice the jouissance that constitutes it but which can only become jouissance through language' (Kristeva. 1984. 210).

In fact the narrative *works* on the level of a maternal space which defies logical analysis but reads in a way which prefaces the symbolic order of discourse, as a contradiction to order, syntax, and in the drama's context, Jupiter's rule. It is a defiance of Jupiter's Symbolic, and a celebration of the maternal semiotic. *Jouissance* is manifested through the linguistic but is tied to the symbolic delineation of a subject. It is that which both predates subjecthood–through the *chora*–and is expressed as erotic joy. The archaic *jouissance* of the maternal space, mother and son, is underlined by its undifferentiation; for: 'joy *ran, as blood*'.

That mother Earth is tied to/re-calls her narrative of the birth of her son, as the maternal space, reinforces not just archaic memory (a space reinscribed within patriarchal drama) but is a process which gives language to a sublime reality which precedes the symbolic but is given definition by it: The 'sublime object dissolves in the raptures of a bottomless memory. *It is such a memory, which, from stopping point to stopping point, remembrance to remembrance*, love to love, transfers that object to the refulgent point of the dazzlement in which I stray in order to be' (Kristeva. 1982. 12) [my emphasis].

Panthea's Dream

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[2] 'Exists' in the sense that language somewhat notes its irruption. As Kristeva writes, 'Our discourse–all discourse–moves with and against the chora in the sense that it simultaneously depends upon and refuses it. Although the chora can be designated and regulated, it can never be definitely posited: as a result, one can situate the chora and, if necessary, lend it a topology, but one can never give it axiomatic form.' (Kristeva. 1984. 26).

Kristeva's concept of the semiotic, in part, notes that the semiotic transgresses symbolic order and rule. In Act II, scene I, Panthea's dream does just this and can be linked with the suffering/resistance language of Prometheus and the *jouissance* in maternal space, mother Earth narrates in Act I. The subversive nature of the Oceanide's dream further underlines Shelley's stated rationale in his *Preface*: 'But, in truth, I was adverse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind' (*Works*. Vol. 2. 171). Shelley, as it were, gives the reader a fantasy within a fantasy: language in which the signifiers are twice removed from Jupiter's symbolic rule.

In Act II, scene I, set at:'Morning. A lovely Vale in the Indian Caucasus', (*Works*. Vol. II. 205), Panthea relates to Asia that she has dreamed two dreams. They came as she slept with Ione at Prometheus' feet, of which 'One I remember not', and the other 'a remembered dream', she recalls to her sister with 'delight' (*Works*. Act II. 207, 206). The unremembered dream will be the catalyst for the events of the remainder of Act II, whereas the rehearsal of the remembered dream dominates the opening scene. As Gelpi notes,

> Panthea's opening words to Asia begin a discussion of dreams that forms the central action of the scene. In part perhaps because of the subject matter, but also through the images evoked by her words, the speech gives evidence of how well the Kristevan concept of the semiotic serves as a theoretical gloss on the function of the Oceanides–Asia, Panthea, and Ione- within the Promethean subjectivity' (Gelpi.177).

The preview to the dream concerns relations of an incestuous embrace of Panthea and Ione. Panthea narrates, 'erewhile I slept' (ll. 43):

> Under the glaucous caverns of Old Ocean,
> Within dim bowers of green and purple moss;
> Our young Ione's soft and milky arms
> Locked then as now behind, my dark, moist hair,
> While my shut eyes and cheek were pressed within
> The folded depth of her life-breathing bosom:
> But not as now, since I am made the wind
> Which fails beneath the music that I bear
> Of thy most wordless converse; since dissolved
> Into the sense with which love talks, my rest
> Was troubled and yet sweet; my waking hours
> Too full of care and pain.
>   (*Works*. Act II. I. 44-54. 206-207)

She (Panthea), as distinct from the sphere of paternal penetration, is here, in an ethereal embrace, in which we have a semblative occurrence of a dissolution of *determinate* boundaries, between the two sisters, to the maternal/child dyad of the *chora*. The incestuous embrace is foregrounded as a dissolution of a definite demarcation or separation of the individual identities of the Oceanides. This indefiniteness of the subjecthood of the sisters is a partial manifestation of the maternal space rather than a description of a corporeal relationship. With this in mind, the following gloss is prefaced as a note on the inscription/inscribing of the maternal of the text in terms of the maternal body, which, while being non-determinate, is nonetheless present in the poetry.

Panthea narrates that she slept 'under the glaucous caverns of Old Ocean', an indefinite, vague and timeless/synchronic setting, in a world of bluish-grey, in the depths, removed from the sphere of the symbolic law/rule of Jupiter. In keeping with the indefiniteness of her location, Panthea is enclosed 'Within *dim* bowers of green and purple moss', indistinct, and tending to obscurity, conducive to the ethereal narrative to follow, being apart from the delineations of patriarchal authority.

The maternal space of the Oceanide's embrace involves penetration in a space removed from the patriarchal order, for the 'soft and milky arms' are *'locked* then as now behind, my dark, moist hair' [my emphasis]. The descriptions of 'soft and milky', and 'dark moist', ameliorate the word 'locked', giving the sense of a musical, rhythmic, dream-like, erotic relation/space between the two sisters. The indistinctiveness of 'dim' is further enhanced by the description of Panthea's 'shut eyes', which foregrounds the erotic in 'shut eyes and cheek were pressed within/The folded depth of her life-breathing bosom'.

'Arms', 'hair', 'eyes', 'cheek', and 'bosom, figure as images of an eroticism. The narrative thusly glosses on the bodily relationship of the sister/lovers, while foregrounding the eroticism of a penetration of that body space–Ione's arms were 'locked' 'behind Panthea's 'dark, moist hair'. This narrative of an incest experience foregrounds the semiotic in the text and serves as a gloss on the experience of the sisters while subverting any literal reading of a corporeality of the Oceanides' exchange.

The whole rhythm of the narrative partakes of an interrelation which, though given voice in the symbolic, can be seen as an appearance of the indeterminate maternal *chora*. As Kristeva writes, 'The mother's body is...what mediates the symbolic law organising social relations and becomes the ordering principle of the semiotic chora' (Kristeva. 1984. 27). Paradoxically, the 'mother's body' gives arrangement, as the mediation between the semiotic and the symbolic, to the *chora*, and also oversees the dissolution of body boundaries which manifests the maternal space, as it exists, for example, in the text we are considering. Gelpi refers to some Lacanian terms, with respect to Panthea's pre-dream narrative,

> There, in the "semiotic chora", her experiences—of—body (properly given the feminine name Ione because it involves introjection of the mother's body) is inscribed with the "letters" that are "the effects of touch, sound, the gaze, images, and so forth as they intermingle with sensory response" (Gelpi. 177).

That is, Ione's relations to the body are a manifestation of the 'introjection of the mother's body' which, while giving an ethereal 'sensory response', in terms of the words of the text, are the 'effects' of the senses, generated by the maternal body; the literal ('letters') inscribing the maternal space in the text.

The set of feelings involved with the Oceanides' embrace reinscribe into language ('letters') aspects of the maternal *chora* by transgressing/bypassing the symbolic/paternal order of language–that is they, conversely, occupy a semiotic space. Panthea's vivid re-experience of the dream is prefaced by the phrase, 'erewhile I slept' (ll. 43) which, though it gives an inertness to the remembered dream, though its symbolic modality allows the semiotic to be recalled in tension. As Gelpi says, 'she has an active mediating role between the semiotic and the symbolic' (Gelpi.177).

Asia, after Panthea has narrated, to her, the earlier state when she was embraced by Ione, requests:

Lift up thine eyes
And let me read thy dream.

(*Works*. Act II. I. 55-56. 207)

Gelpi writes,

'In so using the word "read", Shelley adumbrates the Lacanian dictum that "the unconscious functions like a language". At the same time, the simile "like a language" contains difference as well as sameness, as will become clear within a few lines; Asia, through the intersubjectivity of the gaze, can become so "sutured" to Panthea that she will have the experience of the dream itself, unmediated by the re-presentation of language' (Gelpi. 178).

Panthea's re-collection of the dream is a re-experience. The *chora* manifests here as a tripartite maternal space involving the three sisters in a dissolution of identity where subjecthood is subordinate to the incest fantasy itself.

Prometheus, however, is the central figure in Panthea's re-membered dream. The first lines of that narrative, recalled by Panthea, and read by Asia, are:

his pale wound-worn limbs
Fell from Prometheus, and the azure night
Grew radiant with the glory of that form
Which lives unchanged within, and his voice fell
Like music which makes giddy the dim brain,
Faint with intoxication of keen joy

(*Works*. Act II. I. 62-67. 207)

Prometheus lights up the night with his 'glory'; an instance of his divinity and of the maternal reinscribed as *sublime*. Regarding the sublime, it is useful to recall Kristeva's words: 'The 'sublime' object dissolves in the raptures of a bottomless memory. It is such a memory, which, from stopping point to stopping point, remembrance to remembrance, love to love, transfers that object to the refulgent point of the dazzlement in which I stray in order to be' (Kristeva. 1982. 12). Prometheus' 'pale worn limbs/Grew *radiant* with the glory of that form', give a clear textual example of the flood of light which Kristeva marks as the *sublime*. In that Panthea re-members this 'dazzlement', her identity is put in process, for as we shall see, in terms of a parallel with Christian mysticism, in her (Panthea's) re-membrance, she 'strays [in this rapture] in order to be'. 'Love to love', can be seen in terms of the

dissolution of body boundaries, which Panthea's dream relates. This is a fluidity which some mystics relate, in narrative, and is analogous to the economy of the Freudian drives I discussed in Chapter Two—Kristeva's Theory of the Poetic Text– where these mark within the flow of those drives, as they undergo temporary stoppages in movements— 'from stopping point to stopping point'.

Panthea's re-membrance is of a radiant glory which places her as a subject dazzled by that which made 'giddy the dim brain'. She was 'faint with intoxication of keen joy', which relates an experience of a maternal space much like Earth's re-membered birth of Prometheus, who did, 'Of glory, arise, a spirit of keen joy' (158). Prometheus, it seems, in the maternal relationships/spaces foregrounded in the text, is socially a catalyst of *jouissance* which undermines patriarchal order (Kristeva. 1984. 47).

Further, we have a definite example of the text's *mystic* disorder and its maintenance of the maternal space. In the following narrative, in which Panthea raises her eyes to look on Prometheus, in response to his request, 'lift thine eyes on me'(70):

> I lifted them: the overpowering light
> Of that immortal shape was shadowed o'er
> By love; which, from his soft and flowing limbs,
> And passion-parted lips, and keen, faint eyes,
> Steamed forth like vaporous fire; an atmosphere
> Which wrapped me in its all-dissolving power,
> As the warm ether of the morning sun
> Wraps ere it drinks some cloud of wandering dew.
> I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt
> His presence flow and mingle thro' my blood
> Till it became his life, and his grew mine,
> And I was thus absorb'd, until it past...
>
> (*Works*. Act II. I. 71-82. 207)

Panthea is overpowered by the 'light' and her re-membrance is of 'soft and flowing limbs' whose flow is a process in which she is a partaker. Catholic transubstantiation, in which the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ are then absorbed by the penitent, and the words regarding the elements: 'Do this in remembrance of me' (R.S.V. Luke: 22:19) are interesting to note in connection here. The images in Shelley's text, although ethereal, do delineate body parts; 'limbs', 'lips', 'eyes'. These however are secondary to the procession (of a process) in which they are narrated. Panthea's re-membrance is of a transformation in which body boundaries are dissolved, for Prometheus' body wraps Panthea, in its love, 'its all-dissolving power'. Sensory faculties are suspended as Panthea narrates, 'I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt'. This can be read as being a nascent state or a presymbolic, prelinguistic re-member-ance of the archaic maternal *chora*/space.

As we have seen, the three sisters share a maternal space by means of Panthea's remembrance of her dream, and Prometheus, in the dream itself, furthers the dissolution of order and boundaries, as a remembrance/reinscription of the pre-definitive maternal space, which also subverts patriarchal order. The remembrance of this 'all-dissolving power' is a return to the archaic maternal space which is constrained by the mother's body, which organises ' social relations and becomes the ordering

principle of the semiotic chora, which is on the path of destruction, aggressivity, and death' (Kristeva. 1984. 27-28).

Prometheus, is re-member-ed as a body in dissolution. The lines:

> His presence flow and mingle thro' my blood
> Till it became his life, and his grew mine,
> And I was thus absorb'd, until it past...

recall the transubstantiation I earlier referred to, but also, and not divergently, this narrative can be seen in terms of Christian mysticism. The absorption of presence, as well as being a further gloss on a dissolution of body boundaries and the symbolic, points to the Christian phenomenon especially as it exists in the tradition of mysticism, which can be seen to be paralleled by the bible's discourse on a unity of the believer with Christ, 'he that is united to the Lord *becomes one spirit with him*' (R. S.V. I Cor: 6: 17) [my emphasis]. This can be seen in terms of a return of the repressed, pre-linguistic, archaic maternal body, in Panthea's re-member-ed dream, where the *two become one* in her re-experienced union. The poetic text's narration of Panthea's dream can be juxtaposed with the poetry of Christian mysticism. In the poem of a thirteenth-century mystic, Jacopone Da Todi, are the lines:

> In Christ transformed, almost my soul is Christ;
> Conjoined with God, all, all is now divine,
> ....
> Dost Thou return, I strain and strive and pray,
> To lose admist Thine All my Nothingness:
> ....
> Consume my heart with Love!
>   (Jacopone Da Todi. 1977. 678-679)

The contradiction of the Cartesian subject, that lies in the lines, 'His presence flow and mingle thro' my blood/Till it became his life, and his grew mine', have an echo in 'almost my soul is Christ', and the transformation as a process, which the mystic is re-membering in narrating, is processional (occurring in its process of narration) in that the mystic's experience is becoming as the other: 'becomes one spirit with him'. The three texts, that of Shelley, the bible and the mystic, all foreground the archaic maternal *chora* as it interrupts symbolic order, especially pointing to Kristeva's concept of a 'subject in process'. The mother's body is held in re-member-ance when the semiotic disrupts the ordered subject. As Kristeva writes, 'Theory can "situate" such processes and relations [such as drive facilitation and social structures] diachronically within the process of the constitution of the subject precisely because they function *synchronically* within the signifying process of the subject himself, i.e. the subject of cogitatio. Only in dream logic, however, have they attracted attention, and only in certain signifying practices, such as the *text*, do they dominate the signifying process' (Kristeva. 1984. 29) [my emphasis].

Panthea's dream/ re-experience narrative of Prometheus, like its beginning, ends in incest between the sisters, Panthea and Ione. At the end of Panthea's narrative of her dream: 'Ione wakened' (93) and accused her 'false sister' (99) of,

> 'Some enchantment old,
> Whose spells have stolen my spirit as I slept
> And mingled it with thine: for when just now
> We kissed, I felt within thy parted lips
> The sweet air that sustained me, and the warmth
> Of the life—blood, for loss of which I faint
> Quivered between our intertwining arms.'

(*Works*. Vol. II. Act II. I. 100-106. 208).

The eroticism we have considered, which prefaced the telling of the re-member-ed dream, comes a full loop, incorporating similar exchange as that describing the presence of Prometheus: 'my spirit...mingled...with thine', 'parted lips', 'warmth/Of life—blood'. And all this engagement is within an embrace, in which they 'quivered between our intertwining arms'. All reiterated by Ione's narrative, itself re-member-ed by Panthea, demonstrating the poetic text's process, and its undelineated repetition/ distension, giving a decentring of symbolic, referential relations, and so reincorporating the maternal inscription as the non-centre.

Panthea recalls to Asia: 'I answered not.../But fled to thee' (107-108) foregrounding, again, the triadic relationship of the three Oceanides, 'within the Promethean subjectivity' (Gelpi. 177). As has been noted, 'a discussion of dreams...forms the action of the scene, (Gelpi. 177) and in this ongoing context, to Asia's request to Panthea to 'lift/Thine eyes, that I may read his[Prometheus'] written soul' (109-110), Panthea says 'what can thou see/but thine own fairest shadow imaged there?'. The shadow images, which are 'as the air' (109) though 'written' (inscribed), is a good gloss on the process of the narrative, where the interrelations of the Oceanides, and the interprocessional (fluid movement) of the dreaming Oceanides with their imag(e)ining/dreaming of Prometheus, continues the ethereal loop, of the dream's narrative.

The 'dream is told', and immediately 'a shape' (127) appears 'between' (127) Asia and her vision of Prometheus. A 'thing of air' (129), identified as *Dream*, who says 'Follow! Follow!' Panthea says:'It is mine other dream', the unremembered dream which is the catalyst for the remainder of the scene. The refrain, 'Follow, Follow', is elusive, 'wind swept' (137) and 'on the shadows', yet 'stamped' (139) and 'written' (140). Asia narrates she heard 'like the farewell of ghosts/ OH, FOLLOW, FOLLOW, FOLLOW ME!' (159). And then, Shadows, reflections, gazes, give the narrative a sense/nonsense of 'the farewell of ghosts'. Instantly there is an '*Echo*. Follow, follow!' (164), and the Echoes 'cannot stay:/As dew—stars glisten/Then fade away' (167-169). This continuation, and elusive hint of follow, follow, indefinite and shadowy, brings forth Asia's response which can be seen to epitomise the in/out, inside/outside, present/absent binaries which mark the scene's carnival of voices and recollections:

Hark! Spirits speak. The liquid responses
Of their aerial tongues yet sound.
(171-172).

The whole tenor of the dreams of the Oceanides concerning Prometheus and the eroticism of the Ocean sisters, with the elusive unremembered dream, can be seen to be like the 'spirits ...liquid responses'. The narrative foregrounds process rather than product, and in this semiotic rupturing there is a manifestation of the fluidity of the maternal *space*, in contradistinction to the patriarchal order of the rule of Jupiter. In the last 'aerial tongues' of the Echoes, the words 'As the song floats thou pursue' (198), there is a marking of the *process* which the Oceanides pursue, as Asia says, 'Come sweet Panthea, link thy hand in mine, /And follow, ere the voices fade away' (207-208). Here I leave the verse of *Prometheus Unbound* to pursue the maternal space, manifest as excess in fantasy, in some other poems of Shelley in the next chapter, *The Pursuit of Fantasy*.

CHAPTER 4: THE PURSUIT OF FANTASY: An Analysis of Shelley's *Alastor; Or, the Spirit of Solitude*, *The Witch of Atlas* and *Mont Blanc*

In this chapter, *The Pursuit of Fantasy*, I will consider a selection of Shelley's poems: *Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude*; *The Witch of Atlas* and *Mont Blanc*. My analysis of this selection, rather than following a methodical, or exhaustive interpretation of Shelley's texts, is more a series of incursions into the poetry, to achieve a dialogue between Shelley's verse and Kristevan theory. All three poems respond to a reading which utilises Kristevan theory, making a space for the maternal. However, I group them together because of their commonality in foregrounding the fantastical; the maternal as *excess*. Excess beyond semantics, object-referential, reality. According to one dominant line of criticism described in Chapter One above, the poetry fails to ground the metaphors/images in the material world. This is a major negative criticism of Shelley's verse by some of his critics over the last two centuries. Yet, from a Kristevan perspective, fantasy is a wonderful, maverick inscription in the poetic text, which reinscribes the maternal in its transgressive nature, subverting the Western metaphysic and patriarchal discourse. In each of the following three poems, Shelley pursues the ethereal and in doing so questions our perceptions of reality itself.

Alastor; Or, the Spirit of Solitude

Michael Ferber writes, 'Alastor, in short, is more about the process of its production than about the product of that process: the figure of the Poet' (1993. 87). However, the poet, as a subject, pursuing and being pursued, is strongly implicated in the 'process of its production', and is more a process than a product. That process is involved with the archaic maternal inscription both as *sublime* and *abject*, though the treacherous maternal is predominant. The poem's protagonist, the 'youth', herein to be known as 'the poet', is demonstrative of a subject which is unstable and removed from the certainties of differentiation, albeit subject to the maternal. The poet, in his fantastical experiences/ presence/non-presence, undermines the Cartesian subject, 'eroding the verisimilitude... [underlying] the very position of enunciation (i.e. the positing of the subject as absent from the signifier) [as] poetic *language puts the subject in process/on trial...*' (Kristeva. 1984. 58) [my emphasis]. Shelley throughout the poem calls identity into question, not just the poet's but the reader's certainties as well. He challenges our sense of reality by centring the poet's reality around his (the poet's) vision of the 'veiled maid' (151), which I will consider later, and by presenting a very horror-full maternal which seduces and pursues the poet until both his separate identity and life is lost.

This analysis of Shelley's poem, *Alastor*, is an exploration of the poet's relationship with the maternal. The erotic vision (or psychotic hallucination) of the poet sets the rest of the poem's narrative as an outworking of the maternal space. The poet also engages the maternal, metaphorically as *mother nature*, leading to his death as the climax to this re-engagement with what can be seen as the archaic, maternal *chora*, where significance is found in the poet as subject both in and to the maternal inscription. In this, we have a '*signifying process...*in which significance puts the subject [himself] in

process...' (Kristeva. 1984. 22). When the poet expires, as it were, his re-engagement in the treacherous womb of mother-nature reaches a nexus point of sorts, yet removed from linear termination. This is the non-point where: 'Birth and the grave...are not as they were' (ln.720).

'The opening invocation (1-49) is addressed to "Earth, ocean, air, beloved brotherhood", but immediately behind or beyond this natural trinity stands the single transcendent "Mother of this unfathomable world"' (Haines. 1997. 109). Shelley's narrator invokes the maternal and sets the poem's tone to be one which engages mother-nature as *sublime*, leading to an experience of mother-nature, as *abject, abjecting;* a womb of death. In *Alastor*, the maternal as *sublime* reaches its consummate manifestation in the poet's dream/vision. From then on, Shelley's poetic text can be seen as illustrative of Kristeva's perception that the 'abject is edged with the sublime', (Kristeva. 1982. 11) as the sublime vision turns/works out in a predominant abject/abjecting maternal inscription. Mother-nature and the poet are re-incorporated; the erotic vision immerses him in/to death.

Shelley prefaces the poem: 'He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave' (*Preface. Works.* Vol. I. 173). The poem, read in terms of an experience of the maternal, is an erotic return journey into the maternal womb ('grave') culminating in a blurring of identities, of the poet and the maternal as mother-nature, in a sense a re-establishment of the umbilical cord; a dissolution of separations, the indefiniteness of death.

With regard to the poet's pursuit of the maternal, which destroys him, he is:

> As one
> Roused by some joyous madness from the couch
> Of fever, he did move; yet, not like him,
> Forgetful of the grave, where, when the flame
> Of his frail exultation shall be spent,
> He *must descend* (*Works*. Vol. I. 517-22. 191) [my emphasis].

Here we can see the poet is ecstatic, 'roused' like a feverish mad-man, drawn to/by the promise of the maternal as *jouissance*. Yet this promise of maternal joy is merely the lining on the depths of the abjecting maternal, he 'must descend', irresistibly drawn into the power *of horror* (Kristeva. 1982. 11). Respecting the poet's suicidal journey, Shelley writes in his *Preface,* 'The picture is not barren of instruction to actual men. The poet's *self- centred* seclusion was avenged by the furies of an irresistible passion pursuing him to speedy ruin' (*Works*. Vol. I. 173) [my emphasis]. The 'passion', which has its origins in the archaic maternal *chora*, drives the poet via his dream, which compels him like a psychosis. His reality is thus ruptured and ends in the final semiotic rupture of death. The poet's experience with the maternal, his 'self-centred seclusion, is tied to images of a maternal nature, and the poem abounds in metaphors of mother-nature, especially with respect to the wild boat journey in which he 'descends' into nature's depths:

The boat pursued
The windings of the cavern...
....
Where the mountain, riven,
Exposed those black depths to the azure sky,
Ere yet the flood's enormous volume fell
Even to the base of Caucasus, with sound
That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm

(*Works*. Vol. I. 369-379. 187)

Gelpi's comments on the poet's descent in relation to the maternal inscription and in relation to the linguistic, nicely tie the poem's threads from a Kristevan perspective, as ' "Alastor" records, at constant risk of abjection in the face of the maternal experienced as dissolution, death, non-being. It is a risk he continues to take nonetheless, for the sake of a renewed subjectivity to be found where the maternal and the linguistic coexist' (Gelpi, 1992. 27-8). The maternal inscription is desire, the promise of *jouissance*, yet Gelpi's comments, while set diachronically as an historical, biographical reconstruction of Shelley's maternal experience, can be viewed synchronically, illustrative of the poet as a 'subject in process'. The poet actively seeks rest in terms of fulfilment of his desires for a 'renewed subjectivity', via and ending in mother-nature. For him *death* is the finality where 'the maternal and the linguistic coexist'.

The Lexicon of Psychiatry, Neurology and the Neurosciences gives this definition of psychosis: 'Illness characterised by major alterations in mental function, severe disturbances in cognitive and perceptual processes (e.g., *hallucinations*, delusions), *inability to distinguish reality from fantasy*, impaired reality testing...' (Ayd. 1995. 543) [my emphasis]. This is relevant to a discussion of *Alastor*, for the poet can be seen to hallucinate and fixate on his delusion to the detriment of his perception of reality:

He dreamed a veiled maid
sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul... (151-153)

In this passage, the first thing we notice about the poet's dream is that it is narcissistic. It proceeds from his self/subject-process and is tied up with himself; 'like the voice of his own soul'. This has parallels with a psychosis in its lack of a real referent besides the mind, which generated it. As Kristeva writes, 'what is called 'narcissism', without always or necessarily being conservative, becomes the unleashing of drive as such, without object, threatening all identity, including that of the subject itself. We are then in the presence of *psychosis*' (Kristeva, 1982: 44) [my emphasis]. The vision is *sublime*, but becomes increasingly *abject*. Kristeva's psychoanalytic view of the symptom has relevance to the poet's process: 'In the symptom, the abject permeates me, I become abject. Through sublimation, I keep it under control' (Kristeva, 1982: 11). The archaic maternal, which generated the psychosis progressively delivers him to ruin. The maternal seduces him to dissolution and death. The horror of the maternal must appear sublime to draw the poet in, and for him to 'keep it under control'. But like a Venus

flytrap, lined with sweetness, it ends its victim by dissolving his defined identity/form in a hideous death.

William Ulmer writes, 'The Poet pursues a "Spirit" that Alastor, given his orgasmic encounter with her, defines as a vanished body from the start, deriving the supernal from the sensual matrices–and Shelley elaborates on this irony' (Ulmer. 1990. 32) While agreeing with Ulmer that the poet has an ' orgasmic encounter with her', I contend that the 'vanished body', in the corporeal sense Ulmer seems to suggest, is not absent , but present as a maternal presence. The passage, like the rest of the narrative, is simply brimming with a present maternal body, which in spite of being, as Ulmer suggests, an already 'vanished body', is embodied as a maternal presence. The 'orgasmic encounter', rather than being an exercise in Platonic forms or spiritualization, 'deriving the supernal from sensual matrices', serves to entangle the poetinto a very corporeal maternal body which recurs throughout the poem.

The direction of the poem is unarguably erotic: indeed, this is its attraction. The maid though veiled, is prominent as a body. 'Her voice', already noted, is followed by, 'her fair hands', (ln.165) 'their branching veins', (ln. 167)'The beating of her heart', (ln. 169) 'her breath', (ln. 170) 'Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil', (ln. 176) 'her outspread arms now bare', (ln. 177) 'Her dark locks', (ln. 178) 'Her beamy bending eyes, her parting lips'. (ln. 179). The archaic maternal is inscribed by metaphors involved in a fantastical vision of the female body, which (the vision) ruptures the taboo of the veil and invades the dreamer's unconscious in a way, which can only be described as seduction. It successfully threatens his grip on reality and by it Shelley challenges our idea of reality. As Kristeva writes, 'For the absent object, there is a sign. For the desire of that want, there is a visual hallucination' (Kristeva, 1982: 46).

The poet's vision/hallucination is an expression of a desire. Shelley writes in his *Preface*, the poet is, 'Conversant with speculations of the sublimest and most perfect natures, the vision in which he embodies his own imaginations, unites all of wonderful, or wise, or beautiful, which the poet, the philosopher, or the lover could depicture' (*Preface*. Vol. I. 173). However, in the poet's vision the erotic predominates. The poet rather than having a purely ideal vision has something akin to a wet dream.

In fact the closeness/undifferentiation of the poet's encounter is smothering/stifling, for:

> Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
> ....
> His inmost sense *suspended in its web...*
> (*Works.* Vol. I. 153-156: 181) [my emphasis].

The maternal body is present by its orgasmic interaction with the poet. The poet seeks the *jouissance* of the maternal body, which ends his identity in the dissolution of death. Kristeva writes, 'the sublime is a something added that expands us, overstrains us, and causes us to be both here, as dejects, and there, as others and sparkling. A divergence, an impossible bounding. Everything missed, joy-fascination' (Kristeva, 1982. 12). The poet dreams the impossible, expends himself and truly misses everything. The vision is as dangerous as a sugar coated psychosis. ' (Language)is at the service of the death drive, diverts it, and confines it as if within an isolated pocket of narcissism' (Kristeva. 1984. 70). Narcissism is a refuge for the death drive, and the effect/result of the poetic text, in both its manifestation of the semiotic *chora* and its symbolic element, highlights the heterogeneity of the two modalities. However, the semiotic *chora* 'is on the path of destruction, aggressivity and death' (Kristeva. 1984. 28). And this is the price of the process of the text as a pursuit of an exceeding. Narcissism is bounded by abjection which ever threatens all identity: the inevitability of death. Writing of death's necessity, Kristeva says, 'Death would thus be the chief curator of our imagery museum: It would protect us in the last resort from the abjection that contemporary literature [and Shelley's *Alastor*] claims to expend while uttering it' (Kristeva, 1982. 16). In *Alastor* the poet must die, to save himself or to be saved from a downward spiral into intolerable degrees of abjection .We are promised the amelioration of abjection by a poetic which manifests the maternal space. However, while partially free of the rigidity of the symbolic, poetry also reinforces that which it claims to 'expend'.

In regard to the hallucination, which in my reading necessarily involves the highs and lows associated with mania, the poet is engaged by the maternal as a waking dream, ll. 182-187. *Jouissance* is inscribed here, which can be read as a moment of a return to the archaic maternal, as *sublime*. This reading draws strength from the enfoldment of the poet in the arms of the veiled maid. The phrase, 'her dissolving arms', signifies the feeling it expresses, at once an exceeding/excess which is significant through fantasy. Here is a climax, an orgasm. Identity is dissolved and the two become one. However this erotic climax has a lining of abjection, as lines 181-191, indicate. In *Alastor*, the poet's vision is identified with the *sublime* maternal inscription, initially, but the word 'dissolving' (ln. 181) recasts the intimate eroticism as a moment of encountering the horror of the maternal; the maternal as *abject*. His subsequent journey into mother-nature painfully bears this out.

The encounter/suffocation with the maternal intensifies as the poet, excessively and manically, descends towards the womb of mother-nature, which drives/draws him, into an *exceeding,* as he 'eagerly pursues/*Beyond* the realms of dream that fleeting shade/He *overleaps* the bounds' (205-207) [my emphasis]. For the maternal 'treacherously' (209)] dooms/abjects the poet to/into herself: 'Does

the dark gate of death/Conduct to thy mysterious paradise' (211-212). This is an interrelation of the maternal as both sublime and abject; for 'the abject is edged with the sublime' (Kristeva. 1982. 11). As soon as he awakes, the reality of the maternal as abject dooms him, 'to an untimely grave' (see. ll. 207-209). So the *jouissance* of the vision, turns into, as it were, a death march, and by such jouissance/exceeding, 'one thus understands why so many victims of the abject are its fascinated victims—if not its submissive and willing ones' (Kristeva. 1982. 9).

The waking world is an empty suspension of the 'hues of heaven' (ln.197) where his desire lies. Contextualized by: 'The cold white light of morning', (ln.182) his ecstatic dream is replaced by 'vacant woods' (ln. 195) as:

> His wan eyes
> Gaze on the empty scene as *vacantly*
> As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
>   (*Works*. 200-202. 182) [my emphasis].

Mother nature is desirable/desiring, with the poem often effecting recurrent metaphors of a nursing maternal, which shrouds the dark, abjecting maternal:

> He sought in Nature's dearest haunt, some bank,
> Her cradle, and his sepulchre.
>   (*Works*. Vol. I. 429-430: 189).

[Where]
> Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,
> Commit the colours of that varying cheek,
> That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.
>   (*Works*. Vol. I. 599-601;193-194)

The repetition of the 'c' in 'commit the colours of that varying cheek', serves to highlight through material excess, though tied to the ideal/images of mother-hood of Shelley's era, the maternal inscription of mother-nature in the process of the poem, into which the poet 'descends'. This nursing maternal has a 'snowy breast', but the 'dark drooping eyes', where the repetition of 'd' equally intensifies this dark image that indicates that mother-nature is not such a benevolent mother, as primers from Shelley's era prescribed(see Gelpi. 1992 and Kittler. 1990. 25-69). The mixing of the light and dark images of the maternal, over shadowed by 'Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss', give the sense, in a Kristevan reading, that the 'abject is edged with the sublime' (Kristeva. 1982. 11). The sublime only thinly covers the maternal horror and the poet increasingly becomes abjected until death, ll. 660-665, for the maternal destroys all certainties, such as the 'snowy breast'. As Kristeva writes, 'the abject is perverse...It kills in the name of life—a progressive despot; it lives at the behest of death...it curbs the other's suffering for its own profit' (Kristeva. 1982. 15).

In the process/journey of the poet through/into mother-nature, there is:

> No sense, no motion, no divinity. (ln. 666)

Any transcendental signifier is infinitely deferred and the poet is in the process of a decentring. 'No divinity', is an apt summary of the poet's downward process/journey which questions foundations/transcendental signifieds, rupturing them. They are undermined and the very presence/absence binary on which Western metaphysical, Cartesian subjecthood is based, is engaged and shaken by Shelley's questioning of certainties in perception. The treacherous maternal has driven/drawn him (the poet) through a seeming sublime maternal world to the night of the womb, which dissolves him at last in

> pale despair and cold tranquillity,
> Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
> Birth and the grave, that are not as they were. (713-720).

'Birth and the grave' are truly 'not as they were' and the poet, as a subject has slipped into language, can be seen in Kristevan terms, where, 'We view the subject in language as decentring the transcendental ego, cutting through it, and opening it up to a dialectic in which its syntactic and categorical understanding is merely the liminary moment of the process, which is itself always acted upon by the relation to the other dominated by the death drive and its productive reiteration of the "signifier"' (Kristeva, 1984: 30). The poet, in process, is another signifier in the text, decentred, whose positions, via syntactical, object-referent/symbolic measures, are far *exceeded* by his semiotic reincorporation with the maternal.

The vision/psychosis has compromised the poet's positionality/subjecthood, and enforced an abjection of the poet via a treacherous maternal manifest as the sublime mother nature. The signifier *the poet* is turned back to the dissolving womb, where identity and definiteness are merely effects among other signifiers. For he is:

'Lost, lost, for ever lost...'ln.209)

The signifier, *the poet*, demonstrates subjecthood as being an unstable position, especially subject to the maternal whether reinscribed as sublime or abjectl. His psychotic vision dominates his reality, but instead of bringing the *jouissance* he seeks it swallows him. The poet shows/is shown to be just another signifier among many. His engagement with the maternal is the outcome of his fantastic vision, without a referent/object/signified relation, and in this I subscribe to Lacan's definition, 'that metaphor is the substitution of a signifier for another signifier 'without any natural predestination' and *without the intervention of any signified*' (Marini. 1986. 182) [my emphasis]. Further, the conclusion of the poem argues for the inadequacy of language to present the poet's abjection, in any delineated reference/relations. In self-reflexive, almost Deconstructive terms, the text concludes, that:

> Art and Eloquence,
> And all the shows o' the world, are *frail* and *vain*
> To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.

> (*Works*. Vol. I. ll. 710-712; 197) [my emphasis].

The poetry is a self-critiqued emptiness where 'art' fails in the pursuit of the maternal inscription, leaving *Alastor* as a fantasy which ends in ambiguity, an excess beyond semantics, a 'risk' taken, a pursuit in/into the place where 'the maternal and the linguistic coexist' (Gelpi. 1992. 28).

In my critique of *Alastor* we can see that the poet is involved with the text's process, as a 'subject in process', yet subject to the maternal inscription as both sublime and abject. This process is in contrast to, though necessarily implicated in, transcendental signifieds, such as 'man', 'god', 'subject', etc. (cf. Derrida. 1978. 280). In looking at *The Witch of Atlas*, I will continue to *mark* the archaic maternal *chora* as it is partially manifested in portions of the poetic text. That is the maternal reinscribed in the subject of the *witch*, in excess, in the fantastic. In this reading the fantastic is appropriately an excess to be pursued.

The Witch of Atlas

The Witch of Atlas opens:

Before those cruel twins, who at one birth
Incestuous change bore to her father Time,
Error and Truth, had hunted from the earth
All those bright natures which adorned its prime,
And left us nothing to believe in, worth
The pains of putting into learned rhymes
A lady– witch there lived on Atlas' mountain
Within a cavern by a secret fountain.
    (*Works*. Vol. IV. 1-8: 17)

The poem at its beginning tells us that it is to be a true myth: that is, it inhabits a space that precedes the advent/birth of 'Error and Truth'; a myth- 'Before'. Here is a space which is ahistorical, and where the synchronic and metaphoric predominate. On the level of the signifier, we will find a surplus which *exceeds* any historical narrative, while celebrating fantasy. In this we have a fantasy world similar to the poet's world in *Alastor*, one in which Shelley narrates a *process* rather than a series of events. For in the verse, 'Before/Error and Truth, had hunted from the earth/All those bright natures/And left us nothing to believe in', 'A ladywitch...lived', Shelley signals that *The Witch of Atlas* requires a suspension of diachronic/narrative perception. In this he shares with Samuel Coleridge, telling us 'to deal with persons and characters supernatural...yet go as to transfer from our inward nature...a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination *that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitute poetic faith*' (1907. 6).

The *Witch of Atlas* as a poem/story transgresses historical-linear narrative, as the short prefacing poem, *To Mary*, relates:

How, my dear Mary, are you critic-bitten,
(for vipers kill, though dead,) by some review,
That you condemn these verses I have written,
Because they tell no story, false or true!
    (*Works*. Vol. IV. *To Mary*. 1-4. 15).

In creating this poem, Shelley recognises he is moving away from the popular notion of the sign/narrative and rather than a linear narrative, *The Witch of Atlas* is a fantasy. Here is a poem, whose witch is a timeless, or rather atemporal myth, ambivalent and processional (it is of a process) but synchronically so, not narrated as a historical series. We have the two axes of the synchronic and the diachronic working with and against the semiotic *chora*, and this poetic text favouring the synchronic. Shelley's poem does not define his witch via a structured or symbolic positioning–Mary's idea of a 'story'. And we could say that, like the poet's vision in *Alastor*, this lack of definition is a manifestation of the semiotic *chora*. For this atemporal myth, like the *chora*, 'precedes...temporality' (Kristeva. 1984. 26).

Harold Bloom says of the witch: 'Her beauty would condemn its beholder to the fate of the wandering poet in *Alastor*, by withdrawing all hope and beauty from attainable objects of experience' (1968. 93). He is referring in particular to the lines,

> For she was beautiful: her–beauty made
> The bright world dim, and everything beside
> Seemed like the fleeting image of a shade:
> No thought of living spirit could abide,
> On any object in the world so wide,
> On any hope within the circling skies,
> But on her form, and in her inmost eyes. (*Works*, Vo. IV. 89-96. 20.)

The witch is *sublime* but *abjects* any other object. One could say the witch replaces the real-object world in an exchange of signifiers, in an *exceeding* which goes beyond direct equivalence into a surplus that can be equated with Kristeva's idea of *jouissance*. As Kristeva writes of the thetic phase, which equally applies to the positing of the witch, 'Thus ends the formation of the thetic phase, which posits the gap between signifier and the signified as an opening up toward every desire but also every act, including *the very jouissance that exceeds them*' (Kristeva. 1984, 47)[my emphasis]. The witch is like the vision of the maid in *Alastor* with her fantastical presence which 'made everything beside dim'. The poet in *Alastor* enters a psychotic world (cf. psychosis defined in the analysis of *Alastor*); doomed to death via abjection. While the witch is *sublime* besides whom the real world 'seemed like the fleeting image of a shade'. With regard to this ethereality/fleeting, Kristeva's concept of the 'subject in process' can be utilized in thinking of the witch. Kristeva writes about the subject, 'We view the subject in language as decentring the transcendental ego, cutting through it, and opening it up to a dialectic in which its syntactic and categorical understanding is merely the liminary moment of the process...' (Kristeva, 1984. 30). In Shelley's poem the witch's subjecthood belies any Cartesian dualism or transcendental ego signification. The narrator's verse, as poetry, 'constitutes the subject' by 'thetic signification', which is part of the poetic subject's process, 'without being reduced to his process precisely because it is the threshold of language' (Kristeva, 1984. 44-45). That is the excess of the fantastical in poetry regarding the subject is both symbolic and semiotic. It is processional (processing) while not able to be reduced to that process. For the process 'constitutes neither a reduction of the subject to the transcendental ego, nor a denial [dénégation] of the thetic phase that establishes signification' (Kristeva. 1984. 45).

Perspective, for Shelley, challenges accepted modes of referential/object related discourse; 'Because they tell no story, false or true'. The poem's witch is a subversive creature (relative to the logocentric/patriarchal/rational world) whose existence or subjecthood is very marginal and ambiguous and corresponds to Kristeva's 'liminary moment'. The witch *exceeds* any symbolic world being an ethereal subject whose form in its surplus economy denies any deity or transcendental signified, while appearing *sublime*. This mode of poetry, falls in well with Kristeva's theory where, 'Magic, shamanism, esotericism, the carnival and "incomprehensible" poetry all underscore the limits of socially useful discourse and attest to what it represses: the *process* that *exceeds* the subject and his communicative structures' (Kristeva, 1984. 16)[my emphasis].

Harold Bloom writes, 'this poem is not an allegory but a mythopoeic fantasy; the more general interpretation seems truer to it' (1968. 94).The witch is indeed mythopoeic and *The Witch of Atlas* can be read as a myth-making/fantastical poetic text. In this the text truly weaves as texture, and not only is the poem mythopoeic but the witch, herself, also creates myth-poetry; she is a poet:

All day the wizard lady sate aloof,
Spelling out scrolls of dread antiquity,
Under the cavern's fountain-lighted roof;
Or broidering the pictured poesy
Of some high tale upon her growing woof,
Which the sweet splendour of her smiles could dye
In hues outshining heaven-and ever she
Added some grace to the wrought poesy.
(*Works*. Vol. IV. 201-208. 23-24) [my emphasis].

The 'wizard lady' weaves her poetry as a very material thing, and this fantastic event extends the limits of language by way of metaphor. 'The limits of socially useful discourse' are transgressed as the fantastical highlights a Deconstruction of referential signifieds. That is the boundaries of referential language are partly dissolved in a rupture of the symbolic by the semiotic. The metaphors here manifest the maternal as the fantastical in excess, giving a remainder. For example the repetition of the three 's's' and two 'h's', in 'the sweet splendour of her smiles/ In hues outshining heaven', accentuates the sublimity inscribed: the archaic maternal inscription as *sublime*.

The 'poesy' is 'pictured' not written, broidered, not inscribed. This use of weaving/texture metaphors challenges limits of referential signifiers in a decentring of the poetic subject. As Kristeva writes 'The text's semiotic distribution is set out in the following manner: when instinctual rhythm passes through ephemeral but specific theses, meaning is constructed but is then immediately *exceeded* by what seems outside meaning: materiality, the discontinuity of real objects' (Kristeva, 1984. 100)[my emphasis]. Referring to this semiotic distribution process, she explains, 'The subject and meaning are only phases of such a practice, which does not reject narrative, metalanguage, or theory. It adopts them but then pushes them aside as the mere scaffolds of the process, exposing their productive eruption within the heterogeneous field of social practice' (Kristeva, 1984. 101). We cannot have the witch 'broidering the pictured poesy' without the lexical meanings of the words. Yet the metaphors, not to mention the

repeated 'p', exceed the semantics of the narrative told. They expose the limits of linear narratives, in a process which shows the eruption of the archaic, maternal inscription.

This is also a revolution of the subject, that is the witch as 'subject' (I use quotation marks deliberately) is disenfranchised, somewhat, of her/its Cartesian and transcendental centrality, by a lack of presence/position in the poetic discourse. The witch's body is important in its absence. It is beyond representation and like the mother's body surpasses the world. The repressed maternal body breaks through in language via the archaic inscription of the *chora*, which it regulates for, as we have noted, 'The mother's body is therefore what mediates the symbolic law organising social relations and becomes the ordering principle of the semiotic chora' (Kristeva, 1984. 27). The witch is: 'A lovely lady garmented in light' (ln. 33), at once a paradoxical being, heterogeneous, extending the range of that 'socially useful discourse' by which Mary is 'critic-bitten'. Her ethereal being is light, formed/unformed by the repetition of the 'I' which leaves a remainder/excess demonstrating the occurrence of the semiotic maternal as an exceeding beyond lexical symbols; the maternal in fantasy. She 'was changed into a vapour' (ln. 17) and her corporeal presence/body is absent (lacks tangibility). But paradoxically the maternal *body* has a space via the very language which marginalizes the poem's protagonist's corporeal presence. This ethereal body of the witch, paradoxically, gives space for the re-emergence of the otherwise repressed maternal body, itself tied to the economy of the primary drives, since, '[when] in the speaking subject, fantasies articulate... [drive irruption] within the realm of the signifier; they disrupt[the drives] the signifier and shift the metonymy of desire back on to a jouissance that divests the object and turns back *toward the autoerotic body*' (Kristeva. 1984. 49) [my emphasis].

However much she lacks a body and even a sex, being 'like a sexless bee' (ln. 541), the witch addresses the mortal with immortality. To the

> Ocean nymphs and Hamadryades.
> Oreades and Naiads with long weedy locks
> [who] offered to do her bidding through the seas... (ll. 169-171)

she explains:

> I cannot die as ye must—over me
> Your leaves shall glance—the streams in which ye dwell
> Shall be my paths henceforth, and so, farewell. (190-192)

The witch's body is a liminal point which defies historical time as *birth to death*. She is not subject to a linear narrative: she manifests time but is not of time. Though not subject to diachronic time, and thus of the order of an exceeding, the witch is the central focus in whom the mortal/linear world must perish—'I cannot die as ye must—over me/your leaves shall glance'. She thus signals the discontinuity of 'real' objects. In this, the witch is paradoxically absent and present in relation to the 'world', both central and marginal, a measure which cannot be measured.

The Witch of Atlas makes a space for the maternal body by an excess of signifiers. Take for example these lines, which combine fantasy and an excess beyond semantics as, speaking of the witch, the narration runs:

> She saw the inner form most bright and fair-
> And then–she had a charm of strange device,
> Which, murmured on mute lips with tender tone,
> Could make that spirit mingle with her own.
> > (*Works*. Vol. IV. 525-528. 34).

The repetition of m ('murmured' with 'mute') and t ('tender tone') makes a place for the maternal body, reinscribed in the materiality of the text; it is a significant excess. Also the rhyme of the words gives the complementary effect to the line: 'could make that spirit mingle with her own'. The spirit is felt to mingle, recalling the similar dissolution of identity I have discussed in *Prometheus Unbound* and *Alastor*. This is a defence from the power of the drives: an example of a *jouissance* which exceeds the diachronic, the linear, and the semantic. Demonstrated is language as a 'pocket of narcissism', a signification through fantasy which operates as a reminder that the drives are there and not fully containable–they are heterogeneous (cf. Kristeva. 1982. 16 and Kristeva. 1984. 49)

The semiotic is foregrounded in *The Witch of Atlas*, where the transgression of diachronic/historical narrative uncovers ['if you can unveil my witch'. *To Mary*. (46)] discourse which is opposed to logical, symbolic meaning, indicating a movement of the drives which form the principles of metonymy and metaphor (Kristeva. 1984. 28).The re-emergence/reactivation of the drive economy can be read, as excesses in fantasy, which also signify/have significance through metaphorical images. For example, the witch is described in the third stanza:

> Tis said she first was changed into a vapour,
> And then into a cloud, such clouds as flit,
> Like splendour–winged moths about a taper,
> Round the red west when the sun dies in it:
> And then into a meteor, such as caper
> On hill–tops when the moon is in a fit:
> Then, into one of those mysterious stars
> Which hide themselves between the Earth and Mars.
> > (*Works*. Vol. IV. 17-24. 17).

The witch 'was changed' into a 'vapour', then a 'cloud', then a 'meteor', then finally 'into one of those mysterious stars'. These metaphors indicate the inscription of the maternal space, as Kristeva proposes happens with poetic creation, and as we have seen in my earlier critique of the poem's excesses in the repetition of sounds. Also such metaphors as clouds flitting 'like a splendour–winged moths about a taper', and the 'moon is in a fit', serve to multiply the extension of the maternal space via fantasy. Here the proliferation of images marks, secondarily, an excess which ruptures static meaning. Here we have the process of the subject, transgressing definitive syntax, and giving rise to the secondary significance of signifiers(as distinct from primary significance as in the case of signifier/referent binaries), which occur at the reinscription of the semiotic *chora*, for 'when this subject[the speaking subject] re-

emerges, when the semiotic chora disturbs the thetic position by redistributing the signifying order, we note that the denoted object and the syntactic relation are disturbed as well. *The denoted object proliferates in a series of connoted objects produced by the transposition of the semiotic chora'* (Kristeva. 1984. 55) [my emphasis].

Such fantasy in language, manifesting the maternal in its excess, is an example of where there is 'an attempt to transpose this continent, this receptacle [the semiotic chora] beyond the symbolic' (Kristeva. 1996. 134). Certainly a transposition has taken place via the disruption of metaphors in which weaving and sliding signifiers signify. This disruption of syntax can be seen as the cause of Mary Shelley's alleged dislike of the poem–it is a proliferation of images (a true myth), not an historical narrative. This is the significance of the text, in its complicity with interpretation for:

> If you unveil my Witch, no priest nor primate
> Can shrive you of that sin,– if sin there be
> In love, when it becomes idolatry.
>
> *(To Mary.* ll. 46-48. 16)

Mont Blanc

In his pursuit of fantasy, Shelley, in *Mont Blanc*, presents perception as a question. Perception need not have an external object, although ostensibly the objects of the narration are the Ravine, the Arve and Mont Blanc. In that it is a matter of *knowing* we can see a parallel with the quest of the poet in *Alastor*. In that it is concerned with *truth and error* we can link it with *The Witch of Atlas*. As in *The Witch of Atlas*, the maternal space can be seen here as inscribed as fantasy. The narrator, for example, declares: 'I seem as in trance sublime and strange/To muse on my own separate phantasy' (ll. 35-36). This bracketing/involvement with sleep and fantasy is repeated many times in the text, (cf. lines 27, 35, 50 and 55). However, first, by way of a parenthesis, I wish to consider this line, 'I seem as in a trance *sublime* and strange', as a marking of a conceptual theme in Shelley's poetry. That is Shelley's use of the *sublime*.

In a description/perceiving of the Mont, the narration reads:

> Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky,
> Mont Blanc appears,– still, snowy, and serene—
>
> (ll.60-61. 230)

And again:

> Power dwells in apart in its tranquillity,
> Remote, serene, and inaccessible
>
> (ll. 96-97. 231)

Such verse reveals Shelley's idea of the sublime as distance, tranquil, and apart from/above the familiar and knowable. Angela Leighton comments on lines 96-100, that in Shelley's thinking, 'sublimity is associated with a landscape of absolute remoteness. Power is unknown, distant and indifferent'

(Leighton. 1984. 69). And her comments on the poem's last lines, 142-144, are illuminating: 'It is because Shelley presents the landscape of the sublime as, at times, a desert of sleep, a wilderness without a voice, an eternity from which there is never a reply, that the affirmation of the end remains so bleakly and dearly won' (Leighton. 1984. 72). The *Bedford Glossary of Literary Terms* comments that 'Edmund Burke's 1757 treatise, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*...[argues]... that the sublime, associated with the most powerful of emotions, is infinite...[and that] ..[Burke] also associates the sublime with terror' (1997. 389). Neither Burke's idea of the sublime, which influenced Shelley's concept, nor Shelley's poetic practice of the sublime, is extensively marked in this thesis. Nor are Kristeva's theoretical intricacies of the term. Indeed, there is crossover in both Shelley's and Kristeva's use, which can be seen in the inscribing of the maternal/nature equation, especially in my analysis of *Alastor*, and in Kristeva's observation that 'the abject is edged with the sublime' (Kristeva. 1982. 11). Rather, I have focused on the practical *effects* in the practice of Shelley's poetic text, analysed in the context of the maternal reinscription as sublime. Simply put, its effects are present in the resonances of the text, where 'the sublime is a *something added* that expands us, overstrains us...' (Kristeva. 1982. 12).

The poem exhibits the process of knowing. *Mont Blanc* as a project in a perception of Mont Blanc, with all the logocentric baggage it ostensibly involves, is subject to the subject/object knowledge continuum. However, the narrative of Shelley's poetic text suggests fertile ground for an insertion which foregrounds uncertainties in perception(s). In Kristevan theory, the denotation of objects is exposed by the manifest and transgressive semiotic modality in poetic texts. For,

> the subject and meaning are only phases of such a practice [the text's semiotic distribution], which does not reject narrative, metalanguage or theory. It adopts them but then pushes them aside as mere scaffolds of the process, *exposing* their productive eruption within the heterogeneous field of social practice. (Kristeva. 1984. 101) [my emphasis].

In the poetic text 'meaning is constituted but is then immediately exceeded by what seems outside meaning: materiality, *the discontinuity of real objects* (Kristeva. 1984. 100) [my emphasis]. And Shelley's poetic text markedly demonstrates that the exceeding of 'real objects' occurs in his questioning of knowledge of Mont Blanc. In the poetic text, according to Kristeva:

> the entire gamut of partial drives is triggered within the *chora* underlying the text, endlessly 'swallowing'/'rejecting' appropriating/expelling, *inside/outside.* ...As a provocation for the subject, instinctual rhythm simultaneously *posits* and *passes through the object.* (Kristeva. 1984. 99) [my emphasis].

This exceeding/eruption of the semiotic, in the order(symbolic) of the poetic text is essentially tied to the Freudian drives, which, as I covered in chapter two, both generates and negates the subject at the site of the maternal semiotic *chora* (Kristeva. 1984. 28).

Hogle's Freudian analysis of the images in *Mont Blanc*, suggests:

> The level to which the observer seems recalled, in fact, is the place of the most 'original' states a Freudian analyst could suggest. Since each 'shade' flees both from a vagina (or ravine) pouring forth liquid and life and from a mountain shaped like a 'breast' (topped with a milky whiteness), every such impression appears to recast, in a figure or scene concealing yet intimating a dimly remembered 'other stage', the primordial eruption from the womb and the earliest reaching back for the mother. Bound up with these primal conditions too– which are themselves both desirable and horrifying– beneficently giving birth and ominously threatening to reabsorb what comes out...we cannot tell if the mountain as mother or death drive is a covering and recasting of lost memory–traces of birth or if it is a projection created by reenwombed traces... as they seek new life by targeting a motherly point of origin– then giving birth to it– at the heart of a dying and distant past. (Hogle. 1988. 77-78).

I quote Hogle at length because he applies a rather conservative Freudian analysis to Shelley's poetry, i.e. ravine–vagina, mountain–breast, while he grounds *Mont Blanc* in 'the primordial eruption from the womb and the earliest reaching back for the mother'. This simplistic/literal rehearsal of psychoanalytic interpretation of the poetic text, serves as a good foil to the Kristevan analysis of Shelley's text, which I utilize in this thesis. In Kristevan terms poetry is truly an 'eruption' but of the semiotic, *in language*, formed by the ebbs and flows of the drives rather than a *direct* desire for the rebirthing experience and the mother. And Hogle analyses *Mont Blanc* as being a product of the maternal in two possible scenarios. One concerning 'lost memory–traces of birth'. And second as a 'projection created by reenwombed traces...targeting a *motherly origin of birth'*. Hogle sees the 'lost memory-traces' as memories of birth, and in this respect he ties the poem, in a more phallocentric/Freudian way, than Kristeva, to the maternal. Kristeva sees the manifestation of the maternal space in poetry as articulations of the reciprocal relationship of mother and child. Of this archaic *chora*, Kristeva explains it is where 'a sort of self-eroticism is indissoluble from the experience of the (m) other' (Kristeva. 1996. 134). Her poetic subject is one in process and is dynamic, continually involved in change. The key word is *process*, for the re-inscription of the maternal space is a reactivation of the drive economy underlying the *chora*. Hogle's remarks focus on diachronic event(s) such as 'lost memory—traces of *birth*' while Kristeva is concerned with the maternal space as synchronic. For the *chora* 'precedes evidence' (Kristeva. 1984. 26). Further, rather than the single/temporal experience of birth, the *chora* is indefinite and 'precedes...temporality' (Kristeva. 1984. 26). This Kristevan perspective on process, rather than product, is, I contend, more in keeping with the poetic text's own self-awareness of perceptivity.

Hogle's second alternative is that re-enwombed traces project in seeking new life by focusing on the mother as origin. As with his first possibility, Hogle emphasises the womb and the event or re-event of birthing. However, for our purposes, I note that the 're-enwombed traces' target an *origin*, the mother. In contrast to this transcendental moment, Kristeva sees the subject as a continuum that manifests the repressed maternal *chora* in poetry as metaphor, metonymy and musicality (see Kristeva. 1996. 134). Not only does it not have a locus, like the womb, but also its instability constantly calls all origins into question. Derrida, is partly applicable here, when he says, speaking of the rupture of rethinking the centre of Western metaphysics, 'Henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no

centre, that the centre had *no natural site*, that *it was not a fixed locus* but a *function*, a sort of non-locus in which an infinite number of sign substitutions came into play' (Derrida. 1978. 280) [my emphasis]. In contrast to Hogle's subject, Kristeva's 'subject in process' where 'the subject is committed to trial, because our identities in life are constantly called into question, brought to trial, overruled' (Kristeva. 1996. 132), does not have a locus or origin. The poetic subject is in *process* in the poetic text where the semiotic *chora* is partly manifest in its language. In the instability/modification of the poetic text, with its diversity/ decentredness rather than unity/centrality, we find a matter of perspectives which Kristevan theory addresses.

Hogle writes of Shelley's poems written in 1816, which include Mont Blanc, 'Right from the start….his lyrics of 1816 set out to perform several disruptions at once: to wrest his precursor's [Wordsworth's and Coleridge's] God-centered terms into juxtapositions with very different figures, to force these terms back toward their transpositional assumptions to such an extent that their usual definitions must be overturned...' (Hogle, 1988. 61). As a prime example of this Hogle mentions Coleridge's 'Hymn Before Sunrise with its Mont Blanc intoning the voice of the Lord Himself' (Hogle. 74). Hogle stresses to explain this departure from a God-centeredness to more a focus on perception:

> The human psyche, as Shelley began to see in *Alastor*, may be but an instance in a larger motion surging into it and much of what it perceives, then driving on in the words of the mind to those who would perceive Nature through the overlay of poetry. Thought is *exceeded* and thus contained by the very action it would surround and appropriate within its current... (Hogle. 74)[my emphasis].

In *Mont Blanc*, this exceeding, undermines the theo-logical centre which Shelley's precursors had recourse to in their poetry concerning Mont Blanc. To Shelley, Mont Blanc was part of a process of perception, and he questions our field of description, in a poetic practice which can be read as foregrounding poetic excess, an excess in which 'an infinite number of sign substitutions came into play'. This, can be seen in terms of Kristeva's concepts/ideas of fantastical poetry, where the maternal has a manifest space in the poetic text; the maternal as an excess to be pursued, which 'point[s] to the very *process* of significance' (Kristeva. 1984. 16) [my emphasis].

Mont Blanc contains voices; not divine/unified (such as Coleridge's 'voice of the Lord'), but deferred from a locus or transcendental centre. They are joined to/come from a perception with or inseparable from nature as a poetic action ll. 34-40). Perception is deferred in a 'phantasy', (ln.36) and in this the narrative or poetic voice tells us of a nature twice removed. That is like *Panthea's dream* in *Prometheus Unbound*, the signifiers are deferred/removed from the symbolic, ordered, system/God-centeredness, just as the *Oceanides* subvert/differ from, *Jupiter's rule*.

The narration revels in ambiguity, as it calls perception based on an objective or logocentric view of 'the clear universe', (ln. 40) into question. The narration challenges order and the symbolic; for here nature is certainly not the *book of God*. In *Mont Blanc*, as opposed to the *voice of the Lord*, we have the 'many-voiced vale', (ln. 13) the 'voices of the desart', (ln. 28) the 'wilderness has a mysterious

tongue', (ln. 76) and the 'voiceless lightning in these solitudes'. (ln. 137). All this verse describes by way of metaphor a fantastical perception, which can be seen as a manifestation of the semiotic. The semiotic is prominent here as the narrator's 'many' diffuses the unity of the single logocentric, God-centredness. That is the referents/signifieds, ostensibly the Arve and Mont Blanc, are deferred in a poetic process which diffuses the poetic voice/subject rather than delineating it.

Also, the voices in *Mont Blanc* have a pedagogical mode in a wilderness whose:

> ...mysterious tongue
> Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,
> So solemn, so serene, that man may be,
> But for such faith, with nature reconciled... (*Works*. Vol. I. 76-79. 231)

The figure of the natural as a maternal educator, in Shelley's era, is a well documented one, (cf. Gelpi. *Shelley's Goddess.* 1992) and the equivalence of *Nature* and the *Mother*, in his time, is given an interesting light by Kittler's statement about 'placing...mothers at the origin of discourse' (Kittler. 1990. 28). In Shelley's poetic text, nature teaches the gazer, the narrator, the poet, the reader, man, [3] both doubt and faith by its 'mysterious tongue'. Shelley's *Mont Blanc* 'flows through the mind' (ln. 2), in 'awful doubt, or faith so mild' (ln. 77). This is similar to *Error and Truth* which I have considered in the section on *The Witch of Atlas*, and Coleridge's remarks are equally pertinent here, when he writes of, 'that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitute poetic faith' (Coleridge. *Biographia Literaria.* 6).

Reference to or representation of nature in *Mont Blanc* is somewhat deferred from the signifier/signified, and this is partly an experience of the semiotic in language which is manifest in a challenging of the borders of description. As Kelley Oliver says, 'The semiotic in language is the rhythm and music that expresses drives. Kristeva argues that instinctual rhythm passes through symbolic theses and 'meaning is constituted but is then immediately *exceeded* by what seems outside of meaning: materiality' (Oliver. 1993. 96) [my emphasis]. For example, the following lines are replete with materiality:

> Thine earthly rainbows stretched across the sweep
> Of the ethereal waterfall, whose veil
> Robes some unsculptured image; the strange sleep
> Which when the voices of the desart fail
> Wraps all in its own deep eternity...
>   (*Works*. Vol I. 25-29. 229-230)

The 'veil' and the 'voices' of these natural phenomena are an example of metaphorical signifiers which inscribe a materiality in the text, also significantly in the repeated 'v'. The rhythm of the lines, 'stretched across the sweep', 'the strange sleep' by their repetition of 's' shows an excess beyond semantics which indicates the presence of the semiotic, demonstrating an *exceeding* of the syntactical

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[3] In Derrida's logocentric sense. (cf. *Writing and Difference.* 1978. Trans. Alan Bass. 278-279)

order of the text. Also there is an excess of affect produced by the materiality of the placement/juxtaposition of the repeated alliterations, where the: 'rainbows stretched across the sweep', gives the feeling of the stretching, as also there is enfolding affect of 'wraps all in its own deep eternity'.

With, such a deferral of a linear narrative of description in *Mont Blanc*, paralleling the 'no story, false or true', of *To Mary* in *The Witch of Atlas*, the narration, in its conclusion, further subverts certainty in the act of *perceiving* the poetic text itself:

> And what were thou [Mont Blanc], and earth, and stars, and sea,
> If to the human's mind's imaginings
> Silence and solitude were vacancy?
>   (*Works.* Vol. I. 142-144. 233)

We see that the narrator leaves the truth of his *knowings* and perceptions in *Mont Blanc* in the realm of ambiguity, but not without *significance*. For the *significance* is in the *process* of the poetic text, the 'semiotics of production' not the 'semiology of products' (Kristeva. 1984. 10). In this 'signifying process', (Kristeva. 1984. 9) *Mont Blanc* can be seen to participate in an excess beyond semantics, and in this way the poem offers moments of the return of the repressed semiotic, the archaic maternal *chora*. These poetic phenomena of Shelley's texts have attracted negative critiques in the past but their very ambivalence gives this fantasy, by its excess, a space for the maternal, a fantasy usefully pursued by an analysis inscribed in Kristevan theory.

CONCLUSION

The process of this thesis in applying/inscribing Kristeva's theory of the poetic text onto/within Shelley's poetical texts, does not so much enter the field of Shelleyan scholarship, as it is found in the last two centuries, but rather injects possibilities into the infinite range of interpretations which exist or can exist. To this end, I have not exhaustively analysed the selection I have made of Shelley's poetry, nor consistently developed a planned or sequential progression in the critique. As such, *injection*, is an apposite term for my incursions into both Kristeva's theory of poetry and Shelley's poetic texts, with less concern for wholeness than process. Notwithstanding, ideological approaches to poetry are indeed a legacy which has foregrounded the variety of criticism possible forany text, and to my purpose, for Shelley's poetic in particular.

And in a Kristevan approach to/insertion in the poetic text the maternal reappropriates paternal colonialist space. The signifier/signified binary is less a referent point, in texts like Shelley's, than an occasion for an excess where semantics are exceeded in favour of what Kristeva refers to as a manifestation of the *maternal chora*. This excess or materiality of the text is the special subject of Kristeva's theory of the poetic text and its foregrounding, as a means of approaching the genotext, highlights the tension between the semiotic and symbolic elements in language.

The rupturing of the symbolic by the semiotic is especially marked, for Kristeva, in the poetry of the nineteenth-century symbolists, pre-eminently Mallarmé. Kristeva's focuses on avant-garde poets because of their textual transgressions of syntactical, grammatical order. In a similar vein I have analysed Shelley's poetry, attending to the materiality (metaphor, musicality) of the text. In simple terms, the semiotic element in the poetic text(s) of Shelley, as far as it disrupts syntactic, linguistic or grammatical order, can be viewed as an instance of the manifestation of the *chora*. The maternal *chora* is itself in opposition to the symbolic element, and, as has been noted, knows no law but the ordering of 'the mother's body' (Kristeva. 1984. 27).

As I have discussed, Kristeva's critique of Mallarmé's *The Mystery in Literature* reinforces her equation of the semiotic with 'woman', albeit inscribing her (the woman) as a 'feminine space'. With Mallarmé's poetry, as previously discussed, Kristeva's critique rehearses the binary elements which underscore phallocentrism, a result of her Freudian ideology, which exists, for example, in the binaries:

masculine/feminine, light/darkness, enigmatic/definite. While Kristeva's connection to Freudian theory has been the occasion of some feminist criticism, this has not been the focus of this thesis.

I have proposed the usefulness of reading Shelley's texts in the way Kristeva reads Mallarmé's poetry. Kristeva chose Mallarmé because of the semiotic revolutionary manner of his poetry, both in his involved semantics, the dissolution of signifier/signified binaries and in his foregrounding of the materiality of the text (its metaphor/musicality-signification). Both criteria I find, though of course to less extent, in Shelley's poetry.

Paternal symbolic order depends on the repression of that which challenges its borders, while assigning significance to those borders. The expression of materiality in poetry, as the semiotic in language exists as a remainder or excess exceeding the syntactical, grammatical structure–the symbolic– and is assigned significance by Kristeva's theory which sees such transgression(s) as a manifestation of the maternal *chora*. The significance of the excess of poetic language finds its voice in the substitution of the maternal for the paternal, read in terms of Kristeva's theory of the poetic text. Poetry read in these matrix-centred terms has been identified with the Romantic period of Shelley's era. Friedrich A. Kittler conversing on Goethe's *Tobler*, writes:

> Nature ...accomplishes a PRODUCTION OF DISCOURSES. She creates–since the text names only tongues and hearts, but no hands for writing or eyes for reading–a primary orality. In doing so she liberates herself from the Word of God. Instead of sighing until she rests in the Name of the Father, she creates human speech organs, which pursue self-enjoyment in her place. *The origin of language, once a creation ex nihilo, becomes a maternal gestation....*The discourse that the mother in the discourse network of 1800 creates but cannot pronounce is called Poetry...She [Mother Nature] exists as the singular behind the plurality of discourses.

(Kittler. 1990. 25-26.)[my emphasis].

Shelley's identification/affectation of mother nature with woman, was a practice which was very much tied to the imagination/affect of his time, when, as Kittler comments 'in 1800 the system of equivalents Woman = Nature = Mother allowed acculturation to begin from an absolute origin' (Kittler. 1990. 28). The maternal is centrally and essentially the origin/creator of language replacing the paternal. Nature gestates 'discourses' and like Kristeva's chora is maternal.

In *Laon and Cythna*, the 'temple of the Spirit' is the inscription of the maternal space replacing paternal theology: a matrix, a chora. Being of the order of eschatology, 'the temple of the Spirit' retains the language of the 'Name of the Father', while its function, can be analogous to the womb. In this reading the 'haven' is maternal and relates to Kristeva's semiotic in its dialectical tension: the maternal is original rather than paternal-theological. Likewise in *Prometheus Unbound*, the Christ resemblant-Prometheus is juxtaposed with the paternal-theological, in this instance Christ, in many examples of the foregrounding of the semiotic. In Panthea's dream, Prometheus is in dissolution, recalling transubstantiation and the language of Christian mysticism, transgressing the symbolic order and supplanting the centrality of 'the Word'.

In *Alastor; Or, The Spirit of Solitude*, the semiotic is inscribed as the poet is subject of/to a psychotic vision of the maternal, which he pursues or which pursues him to an ending of total dissolution, and an identification with the maternal. This is illustrative of Kristeva's 'subject on trial/in process': the subjecthood of the poet is increasingly compromised by a metaphorical descent into the womb from which he came, and he ends at the origin:

> Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
> Birth and the grave, *that are not as they were.* (713-720)[my emphasis].

In *The Witch of Atlas*, the narrative concerning the witch consistently adheres to the fantastic, a quality which Kristeva theorises 'exceeds the subject' (Kristeva, 1984. 16). The Cartesian subject and the historicity of the narrative are delimited in favour of a 'subject in process', for here we have verses that 'tell no story, false or true!' (*Works.* Vol. IV. *To Mary.* ln. 4. 15). The semiotic element present in the poem subversively undermines and challenges the symbolic, especially as its 'magic... underscore[s] the limits of socially useful discourse' (Kristeva. 1984. 16). The fantastic discourse moves toward the pole of a genotext which 'attest[s] to what it represses: *the process that exceeds the subject and his communicative structures*' (Kristeva, 1984. 16) [my emphasis]. The witch has a very marginal existence, certainly no corporal presence- 'A lovely lady garmented in light' who 'was changed into a vapour', the ambivalence of her presence being an attestation to Kristeva's theory that the 'subject in language' decentres 'the transcendental ego' (Kristeva. 1984. 30).

In my reading of *Mont Blanc*, utilizing Kristevan poetic theory, processes can be viewed as being foregrounded by excesses over and above the semantics of syntactical significance. In this highlighting of process, semantics are more marginal than definite, for 'The subject and meaning *are only phases* of such a practice, which does not reject narrative, metalanguage, or theory. It adopts them but then pushes them aside as the mere scaffolds of the process, exposing their productive eruption within the heterogeneous field of social practice' (Kristeva. 1984. 101) [my emphasis]. The narrative, also attends to reflexivity on its own process. The last lines of *Mont Blanc* inflect the whole enterprise of the narration as not definitively interpretable/delineable in symbolic terms:

> And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
> If to the human mind's imaginings Silence and Solitude were vacancy?
> (*Works.* Vol. I. 142-144. 233)

In a Kristevan reading the lines 142-144 can be surmised to be a continuation of the awful doubt (ln.77) which steals over the mind rendering powerless even the musings of dreamers, who addressing the 'thou, and earth, and stars, and sea', cannot be sure (if) there is closure even of the *possibility* of thought in the play of signifiers; this is the 'dangerous motility of the semiotic *chora*' (Kristeva. 1984. 227).

The permutations and combinations of Kristevan poetic textual theory with the debates on the ambiguities and tensions therein, notably the feminist critique of Kristeva, have not been the concern of this thesis. Simply put, I offer this thesis as adopting a practice which renders Julia Kristeva's theory of the poetic text in some way relevant to an analysis of the poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley. In so doing I offer a small interlocution on Kristevan theory that avoids the prevalent critical value judgements of the New Critics. In analysing Shelley's verse, I have followed Kristeva's own method of analysis, which is two-fold. First, focusing on the materiality (metaphor, musicality) of his poetry, I have interpreted such devices as alliteration and metaphor as they relate to the maternal, highlighting Kristeva's theory of poetry as a partial manifestation of the semiotic *chora*. Second, I have sought to interpenetrate Shelley's poetic text with the theoretical texts of Kristeva on poetry in an endeavour to form a dialogue between the two, highlighting the maternal/matrix–centred commonality. In the poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley I see an artefact which emits the ambivalence of a creation foregrounding the fragmentation of the body–maternal, in defiance of the metaphysical unified subject, and which is somewhat illustrative of the shattering of the traditional *soul*: a subject both maverick and emergent from, the maternal matrix.

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