

KINDERGARTEN:  
DISCOVERED IN THE MIDST OF JULIA KRISTEVA'S TWO-SIDED SACRED

by

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(Random) **ABSTRACT**

Well on my way toward compiling what I thought would be the theoretical groundwork for the writing of my major paper, I experienced what can only be described as an epiphany; a most unsettling turn of events which launched me in a completely unplanned-for direction. At once discombobulated and perfectly at home, I suddenly found myself in a space which enabled me to discuss what I have always felt, living, as I do, the passionate life of a teacher. All the ideas and feelings I hold so close to my heart were miraculously given not just a voice, but an entire musical score with parts for everyone. This wondrous symphony was made audible to me through the writings of Julia Kristeva; a citizen of the postmodern universe who also considers herself to be a foreigner and an exile.

The drawing card for me was Kristeva's espousal of the notions of: One and Other; polyphonic vocalizing; an ever-changing and evolving space which defies reduction in a hierarchical sense; and the absolute necessity of acknowledging the existence of things abject and horrible. To me, Kristeva's unique take on the world transposes itself into a window that opens onto my Kindergarten class; providing me with a linguistic (in a Kristevan sense) framework in which to situate what had heretofore been impossible to express verbally.

Uncomfortable with the fit a strict adherence to linear regulations produces, I have attempted to create a work that invites readers

into a place of disruption, movement and discovery. Instead of chapters, a left-to-right progression and consecutively numbered pages, I have organized my thesis around the four notions of space ("Anaphora"), abjection ("Wandering at the Borders of the Speakable and the Visible"), humour ("Defying the Laws of Gravity"), and fixed narrative ("The Presence of Absence"). The notion of story-telling is an integral part of the whole project, thus the fairy tale beginnings to each section. Although the title page is located at the beginning of "Anaphora," this does not imply that this is the place to start; indeed, I hope that different readers will find their own entry points. As each section is encountered, the reader must unfold and open out the pages; a visual argument against the notion of a linear, fixed narrative being the only way in which to produce a work of academic merit.

If, due to restrictions imposed by the Library, the copy of my thesis you are reading does not open out or contain some coloured pages and you would like to see the "real thing," please contact Dr. John Willinsky at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

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In sweet memory of my twin, Ian.

## **"Hansel and Grettel"**

"Once upon a time there dwelt on the outskirts of a large forest a poor woodcutter with his wife and two children; the boy was called Hansel and the girl Grettel. He had always little enough to live on, and once, when there was a great famine in the land, he couldn't even provide them with daily bread. One night, as he was tossing about in bed, full of cares and worry, he sighed and said to his wife: 'What's to become of us? how are we to support our poor children, now that we have nothing more for ourselves?' 'I'll tell you what, husband,' answered the woman; 'early tomorrow morning we'll take the children out into the thickest part of the wood; there we shall light a fire for them and give them each a piece of bread; then we'll go on to our work and leave them alone. They won't be able to find their way home, and we shall thus be rid of them.' 'No, wife,' said her husband, 'that I won't do; how could I find it in my heart to leave my children alone in the wood? the wild beasts would soon come and tear them to pieces.' 'Oh! you fool,' said she, 'then we must all four die of hunger, and you may just as well go and plane the boards for our coffins;' and she left him no peace till he consented. 'But I can't help feeling sorry for the poor children,' added the husband.

The children, too, had not been able to sleep for hunger, and had heard what their step-mother had said to their father. Grettel wept bitterly and spoke to Hansel: 'Now it's all up with us.' 'No, no, Grettel,' said Hansel, 'don't fret yourself; I'll be able to find a way of escape, no fear.' And when the old people had fallen asleep he got up, slipped on his little coat, opened the back door and stole out. The moon was shining clearly, and the white pebbles which lay in front of the house glittered like bits of silver. Hansel bent down and filled his pocket with as many of them as he could cram in. Then he went back and said to Grettel: 'Be comforted, my dear little sister, and go to sleep: God will not desert us;' and he lay down in bed again."<sup>1</sup>

**Tossing first this way, then that, I circumnavigate the dimensions of my bed. From the moment I wrap my anything-but-tired body in the blankets until the alarm finally goes off in the morning I am anxiety personified. Not unlike a whale that, after having plumbed the depths of its ocean habitat, rises and breaks the calm surface of the water as it sounds. I cannot sleep. It was impossible to sleep last year and I know it will be so next year. On this night of nights I live the life of a veteran**

**insomniac. We go back to school ... tomorrow!**

"At daybreak, even before the sun was up, the woman came and woke the two children: 'Get up, you lie-abeds, we're all going to the forest to fetch wood.' She gave them each a bit of bread and spoke: 'There's something for your luncheon, but don't you eat it up before, for it's all you'll get.' Grettel took the bread under her apron, as Hansel had the stones in his pocket. Then they all set out together on the way to the forest. After they had walked for a little, Hansel stood still and looked back at the house, and this manoeuvre he repeated again and again. His father observed him and spake: 'Hansel, what are you gazing at there, and why do you always remain behind? Take care, and don't lose your footing.' 'Oh! father,' said Hansel, 'I am looking back at my white kitten, which is sitting on the roof, waving me a farewell.' The woman exclaimed: 'What a donkey you are! that isn't your kitten, that's the morning sun shining on the chimney.' But Hansel had not looked back at his kitten, but had always dropped one of the white pebbles out of his pocket on to the path."<sup>2</sup>

**The first day of school never fails to fill me with great excitement and nervousness. My mind races with questions: Will my, (before I even meet them they have already become *mine*) children like our room? Will they be as excited as I? Will they be afraid? Will they be hesitant to leave their parents in order to come inside with me?**

"When they had reached the middle of the forest the father said: 'Now, children, go and fetch a lot of wood, and I'll light a fire that you mayn't feel cold.' Hansel and Grettel heaped up brushwood till they had made a pile nearly the size of a small hill. The brushwood was set fire to, and when the flames leaped high the woman said: 'Now lie down at the fire, children, and rest yourselves: we are going into the forest to cut down wood; when we've finished we'll come back and fetch you.' Hansel and Grettel sat down beside the fire and at midday ate their little bits of bread. They heard the strokes of the axe, so they thought their father was quite near. But it was no axe they heard, but a bough he had tied on to a dead tree, and that was blown about by the wind. And when they had sat for a long time their eyes closed with fatigue, and they fell fast asleep. When they awoke at last it was pitch-dark. Grettel began to cry, and said: 'How are we ever to get out of the wood?' But Hansel comforted her. 'Wait a bit,' he said, 'till the moon is up, and then we'll find our way sure enough.' And when the full moon had risen he took his sister by the hand and followed the pebbles, which shone like



new threepenny bits, and showed them the path. They walked all through the night, and at daybreak reached their father's house again. They knocked at the door, and when the woman opened it she exclaimed: 'You naughty children, what a time you've slept in the wood! we thought you were never going to come back.' But the father rejoiced, for his conscience had reproached him for leaving his children behind by themselves."<sup>3</sup>

**As I bustle around the room I try to see if the way my children will. The walls always look so bare and forlorn to me at the beginning of the school year. Will it seem so to them, I wonder. I can hardly wait until the children's art is up on the walls and hanging from the ceiling and windows. It does not quite feel like *home* to me until this tangible evidence of their existence finds its place on the physical structure of our room; something they have created, that has come from within.**

"Not long afterwards there was again great dearth in the land, and the children heard their mother address their father thus in bed one night: 'Everything is eaten up once more; we have only half a loaf in the house, and when that's done it's all up with us. The children must be got rid of; we'll lead them deeper into the wood this time, so that they won't be able to find their way out again. There is no other way of saving ourselves.' The man's heart smote him heavily, and he thought: 'Surely it would be better to share the last bite with one's children!' But his wife wouldn't listen to his arguments, and did nothing but scold and reproach him. If a man yields once he's done for, and so, because he had given in the first time, he was forced to do so the second.

But the children were awake, and had heard the conversation. When the old people were asleep Hansel got up, and wanted to go out and pick up pebbles again, as he had done the first time; but the woman had barred the door, and Hansel couldn't get out. But he consoled his little sister, and said: 'Don't cry, Grettel, and sleep peacefully, for God is sure to help us.'

At early dawn the woman came and made the children get up. They received their bit of bread, but it was even smaller than the time before. On the way to the wood Hansel crumbled it in his pocket, and every few minutes he stood still and dropped a crumb on the ground. 'Hansel, what are you stopping and looking about you for?' said the father. 'I'm looking back at my little pigeon, which is sitting on the roof waving me a

farewell,' answered Hansel. 'Fool!' said the wife; 'that isn't your pigeon, it's the morning sun glittering on the chimney.' But Hansel gradually threw all his crumbs onto the path. The woman led the children still deeper into the forest, farther than they had ever been in their lives before. Then a big fire was lit again, and the mother said: 'Just sit down there, children, and if you're tired you can sleep a bit; we're going into the forest to cut down wood, and in the evening when we're finished we'll come back to fetch you.' At midday Grettel divided her bread with Hansel, for he had strewed his all along their path. Then they fell asleep, and evening passed away, but nobody came to the poor children. They didn't awake till it was pitch-dark, and Hansel comforted his sister, saying: 'Only wait, Grettel, till the moon rises, then we shall see the bread-crumbs I scattered along the path; they will show us the way back to the house.' When the moon appeared they got up, but they found no crumbs, for the thousands of birds that fly about the woods and fields had picked them all up. 'Never mind,' said Hansel to Grettel; 'you'll see we'll still find a way out;' but all the same they did not. They wandered about the whole night, and the next day, and the next day, from morning to evening, but they could not find a path out of the wood. They were very hungry, too, for they had nothing to eat but a few berries they found growing on the ground. And at last they were so tired that their legs refused to carry them any longer, so they lay down under a tree and fell fast asleep."<sup>4</sup>

**Until we have spent more time together, the allure of this room will have to depend upon the materials I choose. What games and toys should I bring out first? Not too many... I do not want to overwhelm them on their first day. I always find the arrangement of our centres the most difficult and time-consuming part of this preparation. It has to be just right. I am like some mad hostess striving to create the perfect ambience for her soirée. Although I can laugh at my antics, I nevertheless recognize the importance of my endeavours; convincing myself every year that the children will know immediately if the room does not feel right. If I have not done my job the children will sense it the moment they walk through that door. In my heart I believe this to be true and that is why I spend so much time arranging and re-arranging these spaces.**

"On the third morning after they had left their father's house they set about their wandering again, but only got deeper and deeper into the wood, and now they felt that if help did not come to them soon they must perish."<sup>5</sup>

Given the choice, I would much prefer on that first day to be in our room early, in order to watch the children arrive. The choice is never presented, however, as we always have a staff meeting prior to the grand opening of the doors. I must admit I am not on my best behaviour at this meeting. My mind races back to our room, completing a mental checklist, fearful that I will have forgotten the most important thing of all. It is with a great deal of effort that I pull myself away from my room at the end of the hall and back to the present one, where the speeches continue to drone on. The last place I want to be is in the library discussing procedures, rules and regulations. Don't these people know that today is the day the children will come?

"At midday they saw a beautiful little snow-white bird sitting on a branch, which sang so sweetly that they stopped still and listened to it. And when its song was finished it flapped its wings and flew on in front of them. They followed it and came to a little house, on the roof of which it perched; and when they came quite near they saw that the cottage was made of bread and roofed with cakes, while the window was made of transparent sugar."<sup>6</sup>

Finally free to return to our rooms to attend to any last minute details, I fly down the hallway. Glancing out the window as I enter the classroom I can just make out the tops of a few little heads. They're here! My stomach turns a few flip-flops. I don't know why I get so nervous. I would have thought I would be used to all this by now, but every year it is the same. I want them to fall in love with Kindergarten from the moment they

**step through that door.**

" 'Now we'll set to,' said Hansel, 'and have a regular blow-out. I'll eat a bit of the roof, and you, Grettel, can eat some of the window, which you'll find a sweet morsel.' Hansel stretched up his hand and broke off a little bit of the roof to see what it was like, and Grettel went to the casement and began to nibble at it. Thereupon a shrill voice called out from the room inside:

'Nibble, nibble, little mouse,  
Who's nibbling my house?'

The children answered:

' 'Tis Heaven's own child,  
The tempest wild,'

and went on eating, without putting themselves about. Hansel, who thoroughly appreciated the roof, tore down a big bit of it, while Grettel pushed out a whole round window-pane, and sat down the better to enjoy it. Suddenly the door opened, and an ancient dame leaning on a staff hobbled out."<sup>7</sup>

**The fact that I will be the first thing the children see when the door opens weighs heavily on me. In that first moment I become the classroom; the fleshy embodiment of Kindergarten. I am conscious that the appearance for which I yearn is complex and not unlike the House of Mirrors that so intrigued me during my childhood when the travelling carnival rolled into town. I want everything about me to entice and draw them in. The image has to be just the right amount of pretty, fun, maternal-but-not-exactly-Mom, exciting; a magical elixir of larger-than-life pizzazz. I want this very first picture to hold out the promise to them of the trip of a lifetime for as long as they are with me. But really, whose shoes could ever be this big? As this question hangs in mid-air I see the circus clowns whose shoes are always ridiculously enormous and over**

**which they constantly trip, to the ever-increasing laughter of the crowd.**

"Hansel and Grettel were so terrified that they let what they had in their hands fall. But the old woman shook her head and said: 'Oh, ho! you dear children, who led you here? Just come in and stay with me, no ill shall befall you.' "8

**I do not know why, but on every first day my face seems to freeze into a manic, Cheshire Cat grin the moment my fingers touch the doorknob. Trying not to squint as my eyes adjust from inside to outside light, I greet the children who, on this day, are not solitary beings, but multiple entities, conjoined as it were with one or more family members. I can practically taste the myriad emotions as they swirl about me in a heady mixture of bitter-sweet perfume. My costume changes yet again to hospital greens as I prepare to sever the umbilical cord. The door is my scalpel. It is never painless.**

"She took them both by the hand and led them into the house, and laid a most sumptuous dinner before them - milk and sugared pancakes, with apples and nuts. After they had finished, two beautiful little white beds were prepared for them, and when Hansel and Grettel lay down in them they felt as if they had got into heaven."9

**Suddenly they are all here - inside - with me. There are so many of them and they are all so little. Some scurry around, ready to explore. Others remain rooted to the spot, afraid to move or even breathe. Eager to prove to them that they do belong in here with me, I lead them to the closet and proudly point out their individual coat hooks and shoe boxes; all of which have been meticulously labeled by me. This act, which will soon become routine and meaningless, assumes mythic proportions on**

the first day. It is a solemn ritual, this physical appropriation of personal space. A part of me firmly believes that by naming their coat hooks and shoe boxes, I demonstrate beyond a shadow of a doubt that they belong here. This simple act, the first thing we do together, is a marriage ceremony of sorts; witnessed by the adult faces pressed against the windows on all sides of the room.

"The old woman had appeared to be most friendly, but she was really an old witch who had waylaid the children, and had only built the little bread house in order to lure them in. When anyone came into her power she killed, cooked, and ate him, and held a regular feast-day for the occasion. Now witches have red eyes, and cannot see far, but, like beasts, they have a keen sense of smell, and know when human beings pass by. When Hansel and Grettel fell into her hands she laughed maliciously, and said jeeringly: 'I've got them now; they shan't escape me.' Early in the morning, before the children were awake, she rose up, and when she saw them both sleeping so peacefully, with their round rosy cheeks, she muttered to herself: 'That'll be a dainty bite.' Then she seized Hansel with her bony hand and carried him into a little stable; and barred the door on him; he might scream as much as liked, it did him no good."<sup>10</sup>

Admittedly, some of the children are harder nuts to crack than others.

That this is the last place on Earth they ever wanted to be is made abundantly clear to me within seconds. Entering our room sobbing and screaming, the alarm is sounded for anyone within good yelling distance to hear. Already barely able to let them go, these are the parents who become hovering sentinels at any and every orifice that allows them access to what is going on *inside*.

"Then she went to Grettel, shook her till she awoke, and cried: 'Get up you lazy-bones, fetch water and cook something for your brother. When he's fat I'll eat him up.' Grettel began to cry bitterly, but it was of no use: she had to do what the wicked witch bade her."<sup>11</sup>

I, on the other hand, can never quite bring myself to believe that these children do not like me, or us, or anything we do. What is there not to like? No matter how much I detest the idea that they do not want anything to do with us, I have to come to terms with this viewpoint. I have to acknowledge that, for now, they are terrified out of their wits by this; *this* meaning *me*. My colleagues jokingly tease me about "The Screamers," as they become known throughout the school; their fear loud and reverberating as it echoes up and down the hallways. "What are you doing to them?", they chide.

What indeed...?

"So the best food was cooked for poor Hansel, but Grettel got nothing but crab-shells. Every morning the old woman hobbled out to the stable and cried: 'Hansel, put out your finger, that I may feel if you are getting fat.' But Hansel always stretched out a bone, and the old dame, whose eyes were dim, couldn't see it, and thinking always that it was Hansel's finger, wondered why he fattened so slowly. When four weeks passed and Hansel still remained thin, she lost patience and determined to wait no longer. 'Hi! Grettel,' she called to the girl, 'be quick and get some water. Hansel may be fat or thin, I'm going to kill him tomorrow and cook him.' "12

Sometimes "The Screamers" wear me down. If being gentle, funny and loving will not work, then maybe I need to try the stern approach, I reason. But, telling them to stop crying and screaming usually does not lessen their fears. Nor does it make me feel good about my behaviour. I do not like to see myself as the kind of teacher who raises her voice or speaks sternly. This is not to say that I have not done it, but it always leaves me filled with remorse and guilt. I carry close to my heart this picture of me as the greatest teacher on the planet; an image that does

**not ever include someone who loses her patience or speaks abruptly.**

**Whenever this rupture occurs it makes me feel small and very mean.**

"Oh! how the poor little sister sobbed as she carried the water, and how the tears rolled down her cheeks! 'Kind heaven help us now!' she cried; 'if only the wild beasts in the wood had eaten us, then at least we should have died together.' 'Just hold your peace,' said the old hag; 'it won't help you.'

Early in the morning Grettel had to go out and hang up the kettle full of water, and light the fire. 'First we'll bake,' said the old dame; 'I've heated the oven already and kneaded the dough'. She pushed Grettel out to the oven, from which fiery flames were already issuing. 'Creep in,' said the witch, 'and see if it's properly heated, so that we can shove in the bread.' For when she had got Grettel in she meant to close the oven door and let the girl bake, that she might eat her up too. But Grettel perceived her intention, and spoke: 'I don't know how I'm to do it; how do I get in?'

'You silly goosel!' said the hag, 'the opening is big enough; see, I could get in myself;' and she crawled towards it, and poked her head into the oven. Then Grettel gave her a shove that sent her right in, shut the iron door, and drew the bolt. Gracious! how she yelled! it was quite horrible; but Grettel fled, and the wretched old woman was left to perish miserably."<sup>13</sup>

**As much as I like to think I can "win over" any child with my sparkling personality, creativity and never-ending patience, more often than not the saving grace in these moments ends up being some quiet, little child, who calmly comes up to the one who is upset and lovingly holds his or her hand; a touchingly gracious admonishment to me to never overestimate my importance in this unique little space we are carving out together.**

"Grettel flew straight to Hansel, opened the little stable-door, and cried: 'Hansel, we are free; the old witch is dead.' Then Hansel sprang like a bird out of a cage when the door is opened. How they rejoiced, and fell on each other's necks, and jumped for joy, and kissed one another! And as they had no longer any cause for fear, they went into the old



hag's house, and there they found, in every corner of the room, boxes with pearls and precious stones. 'These are even better than pebbles,' said Hansel, and crammed his pockets full of them; and Grettel said: 'I too will bring something home;' and she filled her apron full. 'But now,' said Hansel, 'let's go and get well away from the witches' wood.' "14

**Even when things are going well, someone inevitably asks when they can go home. It always hurts my feelings.**

"When they had wandered about for some hours they came to a big lake. 'We can't get over,' said Hansel; 'I see no bridge of any sort or kind.' 'Yes, and there's no ferry-boat either,' answered Grettel; 'but look, there swims a white duck; if I ask her she'll help us over;' and she called out:

'Here are two children, mournful very,  
Seeing neither bridge nor ferry;  
Take us upon your white back,  
And row us over, quack, quack!'

The duck swam towards them, and Hansel got on her back, and bade his little sister sit beside him. 'No,' answered Grettel, 'we should be too heavy a load for the duck: she shall carry us across separately.' The good bird did this, and when they were landed safely on the other side, and gone on for a while, the wood became more and more familiar to them, and at length they saw their father's house in the distance. Then they set off to run, and bounding into the room fell on their father's neck. The man had not passed a happy hour since he left them in the wood, but the woman had died. Grettel shook out her apron so that the pearls and precious stones rolled about the room, and Hansel threw down one handful after the other out of his pocket. Thus all their troubles were ended, and they all lived happily ever afterwards."15

**All too soon, it seems to me at least, the faces reappear at our windows.**

**Tap-tap-tapping on the panes and fervent hand-waving forces to a sometimes abrupt conclusion our time together. In the twinkling of an eye they all disappear, leaving me alone with phantom whispers, cries and squeals of delight... until tomorrow.**

Into the woods ... dark and mysterious, the woods beckon, yet we are frightened. Do we dare enter the unknown space of the forest?

Hovering at the edge, we peer cautiously through the branches. Surely something nasty lurks there, lying in wait for us. In spite of this nagging suspicion our feet take the first tentative steps . . . into the woods.

The woods occupy a space; a location somewhere between the safety and warmth of home and the forbidding darkness of the unknown world "out there." Indeed, in the story of Hansel and Grettel, the forest is where the wicked step-mother wants to abandon the children.

Cautioned to be on our guard when leaving home, we are nevertheless drawn to the prospect of adventure and, yes, even danger that the woods may hold in store for us. In fairy tales the evil characters often dwell in the woods, while the good characters, occasionally given permission to tarry there, eventually continue on their way; choosing either to return home or emerge into the world "out there."

When I try to define *space*, a concept central to Julia Kristeva's thinking, I envision it as being somewhere "in the middle." Unsure of what exactly it is in the middle, I am more confident in my belief that it does not have to mean in the centre. It could just as easily be hovering somewhere on the fringes. It seems to me, though, that a space lies between things. It implies a world, a state of being that lacks the definition of borders, yet manages to hold its own fluid shape.

Madeleine Grumet, in Bitter Milk, describes my notion of space when she writes:

The middle is hard to sing.  
This is the realm of the semiotic that Kristeva claims for female knowledge. Grounded in the body, engaged with the other in play, Kristeva's child, in Wright's words, "chuckles its way into selfhood" and retains this presymbolic capacity to celebrate disorder even after acquiring language and sexual identity.<sup>16</sup>

We sing at the top of our lungs in Kindergarten! Perhaps that is one of the reasons our rooms are often situated at a remote end of the building; the unspoken assumption being that the farther removed we are from the hub of things, the less disruption will occur for the rest of the school.

We keep singing.

Whenever we leave our classroom to venture into the other realms of the school, try as we might, we seem never to be able to traverse those great hallways quietly enough. The allure of unexplored territory, combined with the recognition of an older student ensconced in one of the hastily-glimpsed rooms, evinces loud squeals of pure delight, frantic hand-waving and boisterous salutations. The sighting remains peripheral, however, as the greetings are quickly curtailed by the sudden appearance of a monitor, or even, if the level of disruption has been deemed serious, the teacher. Our sorties into the wider world of "the school" are often punctuated with the unmistakable rhythm of closing doors.

Frequently glancing back to make sure we are all still together, that we

have not lost someone on the way, I know I will see anything but a quiet, straight, orderly procession. Not unlike the fabled sea serpent from one of our stories, our "line" flies in the face of convention, defying the laws of gravity. My eyes are assailed by small bodies erupting into the air, spurting out sideways, clustering together in animated groups to loudly discuss the things they are encountering on their journey. Referring to Grumet's quote above, I feel compelled to try to ground them in their bodies, while they are engaged with each other in play. As their teacher, I am supposed to reinforce the proper school etiquette and decorum. It is a clearly stated rule that we walk through the hallways quietly and in an orderly fashion. But, when I see their unadulterated delight in the world around them, I secretly applaud their "presymbolic capacity to celebrate disorder."

Continuing with this discussion of space, I refer now to Judith Butler who, in her provocative book Gender Trouble, touches on this concept while exploring the ideas of "incorporation" and "introjection." While Butler's central focus is directed more toward our understanding of identity through fixed notions and definitions of sex and gender, I find the following excerpt from her book insightful:

The debate over the meaning or subversive possibilities of identifications so far has left unclear exactly where those identifications are to be found. The interior psychic space in which identifications are said to be preserved makes sense only if we can understand that interior space as a phantasized locale that serves yet another psychic function.<sup>17</sup>

Butler tells us that "incorporation", according to psychoanalyst Roy

Schafer, "is a fantasy and not a process; the interior space into which an object is taken is imagined, and imagined within a language that can conjure and reify such spaces."<sup>18</sup> She goes on to say that:

"Abraham and Torok have argued that introjection is a process that serves the work of mourning (where the object not only is lost, but acknowledged as lost). Incorporation, on the other hand, belongs more properly to melancholy, the state of disavowed or suspended grief in which the object is magically sustained 'in the body' in some way."<sup>19</sup>

The initial foray into the world of school produces not only excitement, but also a sense of mourning (introjection) and melancholy (incorporation), for the trauma of beginning Kindergarten is not solely confined to the children. For many mothers this day is hailed as the harbinger of a cataclysmic event; losing their children. On that first day of school I see so many emotions etched on the faces of the mothers: sadness, pride, fear, anxiety, joy and suspicion; all mixed together into a potentially combustible compound of hysteria. It is not unusual to see adult tears flowing with those of the children, or a reluctance of the larger hands to let go of those sweet, small ones. Nor is it odd for me to be on the receiving end of some very mixed maternal signals. Wanting their children to love me forces some of the mothers into the position of hating me. They witness their children breaking free from their loving arms to run straight into mine.

On the first day of Kindergarten I always hear from more than one mother, "I'm losing my baby today." I imagine these women returning home on this much anticipated day, some of them to empty houses,

funereal and deathly quiet; the same houses which, not even an hour ago, were filled to the rafters with the noisy, jittery excitement of children finally being able to get ready for school. My heart goes out to them. They exude a mournful presence as they acknowledge the inevitable closing of my classroom door, much the same way they would have to face the symbolic graveside rite of shoveling earth on the closed lid of the coffin as it is lowered into its final resting place. As at a cemetery, when the mourners gather at the end of the ceremony in small, grieving knots, so, too, do the mothers linger in solemn groups outside our door and windows, before disbanding and moving toward home.

Abraham and Torok suggest that introjection of the loss characteristic of mourning establishes *an empty space*, literalized by the empty mouth which becomes the condition of speech and signification. The successful displacement of the libido from the original object is achieved through the formation of *words* which both signify and displace that object; this displacement from the original object is an essentially metaphorical activity in which words "figure" the absence and surpass it.... the repudiation of the maternal body is the condition of signification within the Symbolic ... this primary repression founds the possibility of individuation and of significant speech, where speech is necessarily metaphorical, in the sense that the referent, the object of desire, is a perpetual displacement. In effect, the loss of the maternal body as an object of love is understood to establish the empty space out of which words originate. But the refusal of this loss - melancholy - results in the failure to displace into words; indeed, the place of the maternal body is established in the body, "encrypted," to use their term, and given permanent residence there as a dead and deadening part of the body or one inhabited or possessed by phantasms of various kinds.<sup>20</sup>

Upon closer inspection of the word "encrypt," defined in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary as meaning to encipher or encode, I am drawn to last part of the word: "crypt." When I read that word I immediately see in

my mind's eye an ancient cemetery filled with mausoleums. Webster's, which defines a crypt as a partially or completely hidden chamber or vault, traces the etymology of this word to the feminine form of the Greek word "kryptos," meaning "hidden." It is interesting to note that the place to which the children come when they leave their mothers also remains hidden from the parents for much of the time and has attached to it the smell of death and a terrible sense of mourning and loss.

It is to this empty chamber, this crypt, that my children come. This room, devoid of any of the atmosphere that will magically appear as soon as the children enter, is truly the empty mouth described by Abraham and Torok. It is in my room that the children will be introduced to the "condition of speech and signification" described in the aforementioned quote. One of the underlying aims of the Kindergarten experience would seem to be the "successful displacement of the libido from the original object," in other words, to enable the children to leave home/mother and enter the more formal, symbolic world of school/father; a symbolic world which espouses and glorifies the power of speech and the word. When I say my children are dying to learn how to read and print, I speak a deeper truth than perhaps I initially intended, because it seems that in order to learn how to do just that, their sole attachment to the original object in their lives must suffer a necessary death.

It is also during the Kindergarten year that we hope to detect the early presence of any speech, language, hearing or vision problems. I make

careful observations in order to spot the slightest sign of any kind of deviation, armed with the phone numbers of the appropriate professionals whom I can contact right away to begin the remediation process. Modelling correct speech and language patterns is a constant activity. My room is the place where the proverbial building block originates; the place where "school speech" begins. This process is fraught with rules and directions. I find myself in the position of having to combine the techniques of both a Miss Manners and an esteemed orator.

Learning to print is an important goal for many of my children. Turning towards writing then, we can talk about the space that it physically occupies. But, it is more than just a mark (grammé) on a page.

... 'letter' does not quite reveal what is at stake unless it is recognized that a letter (mark) cannot have an identity (or be what it is) without being implicated in its 'other', the non-mark, or spacing.... Consequently, we see now that both spacing and the act of inscription are essential to writing's constitution, but it is precisely these aspects which cannot be accommodated to the 'law' of identity. The latter leads to the reduction of letters and words as such to writing. The very 'reality' of writing, however, is the 'trace' (to use Derrida's term) of the act of writing's coming into being. This trace cannot be imagined or made an object of knowledge in the traditional scientific or philosophical way because it is the very condition of writing, and thus of science and philosophy also.<sup>21</sup>

I love the way my children write, especially before I have tried to indoctrinate them with the more formal aspects of this process. Their wavering lines are so full of life and imagination. It does not matter if there is not one decipherable mark on the page; they can weave a



most wonderful story anyway. I almost hate to start the formal process of learning how to print. I place this reluctance in the same category as the dreadful task of having to confirm or deny the existence of Santa Claus. Their writing, like Santa Claus, is not "real." Yet, there is this delightfully confident approach to both matters, prior to the discovery of "the truth," that I am loathe to dispel. When my children write, before they actually learn how to write, their creations are big and fluffy, like clouds. Their words, whether or not they are composed of "real" letters is irrelevant, soar and float like dreams. There are no rules; no boundaries. There are no rights and wrongs, only open spaces that can be filled in whatever way the children desire. These compositions are inventive and rich beyond my wildest imaginings. It becomes my job to tear down these fabulous constructions in order to teach my children the "right" way to print and compose their ideas into acceptable forms.

Kristeva refers to Mallarmé's poem 'Un Coup de Dés' ('A Throw of the Dice') in her own discussion of space. According to Kristeva, this poem is arranged on the pages not to make any kind of sense grammatically, but in a way which "focuses the eye on the volume (space) of writing without this being reducible to an *observation*. In this way, Mallarmé shows that it is inappropriate to try to come to grips with his poetry from the standpoint of communicative language."<sup>22</sup>

"The psychoanalytic interpretation, then, is precisely one that is poised in the space suspended between One Meaning and the deconstructive rejection of all truth, however tentative."<sup>23</sup>

Woke up - where have I been?  
 Transliminal voyage (voyeur - the unsordid kind)  
 Oakville - town of oak - French - trees - too much Daignault!  
 Where am I?  
 Brantwood - my first school (wood - trees again)  
 W-oo-d - oo - like eyes in the middle - two eyes in look  
 Take me inside - I want to look again  
 I remember (re-member - join once more)  
 Up and down - like a house with curves and crannies - the  
 same but different  
 Past Mrs. Kayer's room (not c(are), but a K - hard - the same  
 but different)  
 WE became I and I for the first time here  
 A di/vision - who's vision?  
 You need two Is to look  
 Teaching (t-each-ing) each to his own  
 Taught (ought) - who knew the rules?  
 Our first day of First Grade  
 I here - I t (here) - Daignault's t creating havoc again  
 Ringing - not bells - but a hand across my ear  
 A rule - too late to learn gently  
 No TALKING here  
 This - is school

This piece of writing burst forth from my subconscious during the summer I was immersed in course-work at UBC. It was Bill Pinar's course (referred to later in this paper) and we had been reading and discussing an article written by Jacques Daignault. This particular piece was difficult and exhilarating. I was unaware of how deeply Daignault's writing had affected me until I awoke with this "poem" completely formed in my head. It refused to leave my brain until I finally dragged myself out of bed to write it down. I have had many re-readings of it since then.

In order to understand what my piece of writing is all about, it is necessary to provide a bit of back-ground history. I am a twin and my brother and I were the only children of our parents. My brother and I had never been separated until our second year of school. I always recall having had

separate identities, but we were always together. I consider my twin to have been the first person I ever knew; a relationship that was formed before our actual physical entrance into this world.

I have strong, clear memories of being in Kindergarten together. We loved it! Our school was Brantwood Public School in Oakville, Ontario. I remember our classroom being in the basement of the school. Years later I began to have a recurring dream about wandering around the halls of my old school, peeking into the different classrooms in which I was once a student. I remember nap-time and the big shoe upon which we used to practise tying our laces; a skill that eluded me until the following summer, when my dad spent much of our summer vacation teaching me how to tie my shoes by the lake at the cottage. I remember our teacher, Miss McDonald, who, during our Kindergarten year, got married and then we had to call our beloved teacher Mrs. Brown. That was o.k. We still loved her just as much.

Our parents must have told us this was going to happen, but I have no memory of that conversation. All I know is that on our first day of Grade One it quickly became apparent that things were far from kosher. My brother and I hurtled ourselves into the line-up as usual, (in those days we all lined-up outside one of the two entrances into the school waiting for the bell to ring) only to be told that he was to remain there and I was to go to the other door at the opposite end to the one at which we were standing. I remember being scared and thinking there must be some mistake. As I walked away from my brother I realized that, for the first time

in my life, I was alone. I had never done this before. I did not know what to do. I did not know the rules.

After what seemed like an eternity of walking by myself, in front of the whole school, I finally arrived at my destination: the other line-up. Glancing around nervously I saw one of our neighbourhood friends, who was ahead of me in the line and beckoned me to join her. As I scurried to stand beside this familiar face, I found myself to be on the receiving end of a horrific diatribe from the school principal, whose last name was, ironically, also Brown. I had never been yelled at in my entire life. To have this happen to me in front of all the others was mortifying. Before I could think another thought, I suddenly felt a hard, stinging sensation on my ear. Hot tears sprang to my eyes. I could not hear very well; only an odd kind of ringing sound. That was how I learned that there was no "butting-in" allowed. That was how I learned what "butting-in" was. Thus began my first day of Grade One; away from my dear brother and with a painful, red welt to remind me of the first (and only) time I got my ears boxed. So, this was school.

It was not until I was well into my teens that I was able to "confess" this heinous deed to my parents over dinner one night. Feeling that a suitable grace period had elapsed, I thought I might regale my parents with one of my charming childhood escapades. Having already confessed to the chalk-stealing incident of Grade Three, I felt pretty much assured of amnesty for the boxed ears debacle. Imagine my surprise when my parents reacted with horror and shock; not directed

towards me, but to the now-deceased, yet forever infamous, Mr. Brown. "Why didn't you tell us?", they asked. "No one thought much of Mr. Brown. We would have reported him to the school board." All this time I had been carrying the heavy burden of guilt, the parents of my town had been looking for evidence of Mr. Brown's ineffectiveness as a school administrator. My parents were upset that someone had struck me and could not believe that I had kept silent about this for so long.

I tell this story to illustrate the power possessed by educators. I tell this story, because I am that little girl who was hit by her school principal on her first day of Grade One. I tell this story, because I am now a teacher and I never want to forget the potential to unleash my own hidden monster in the eyes of my children. I recall this memory in an attempt to demonstrate the connection between my childhood stories and the person who I have become.

Written on the inside front cover of Writing Culture<sup>24</sup> are some interesting questions:

Why have ethnographic accounts recently lost so much of their authority?

Why were they ever believable?

Who has the right to challenge an "objective" cultural description?

Are not all ethnographies rhetorical performances determined by the need to tell an effective story?

Can the claims of ideology and desire ever be fully reconciled with the needs of theory and observation?<sup>25</sup>

The second-to-last question in particular speaks to me in terms of the space I have been inhabiting while writing, indeed *living*, this thesis. Although I felt the need to "explain" myself, I could not be convinced that this explanation should occupy the position of first, as in being the first thing read in this paper. Upon writing that sentence, I realize the assumption of linearity inherent in those words and the difficulty in finding alternate ways of expression.

One of the cornerstones of my thesis is my great reluctance to be linear; to place things in a neat, straight, orderly row. I argue against this, not because I think there is no place for this particular format, there is.

Ultimately, I am arguing against the tendency to accept this as the only, or the best way in which to present our ideas. I do not believe that all our learning must take place within a flat, two-dimensional space in order for it to be knowledge that "counts." I believe that when we try to force the

representation of ideas, whether it be those of the children we teach or our own, into a linear package, we overlook the open-endedness of things. By forcing ideas into the same package, we remove, or at the very least reduce, the space required to allow creativity, imagination and originality to flourish.

I remember "discovering" the books of Bill Martin Jr. on one of my practicums. I will never forget the absolute delight with which I made this find. Not only were his illustrations colourful and appealing, but the words ... oh, how they danced all over the pages! I had never seen anything like it. A silly rhyme about a snake slithered and hissed its way in serpentine fashion across the white expanse of paper. Other stories contained words that yelled. I knew they were meant to be read in a loud voice because they were printed in big, bold, letters that could not be mistaken for anything else but loud words. Imagine my disbelief when the merit of his style was debated at such a feverish pitch in our ensuing classes back at the university. While I was so taken with the creativity, playfulness and attractiveness of his books, others felt that these very same books might, in fact, hinder the reading process. They were thought to be too busy, too distracting. Children, it was argued, needed simple, repetitive words that flowed in the proper order from top-to-bottom and left-to-right.

The debate continues ad infinitum; not content to remain in the arena of children's literature, but noisily overflowing onto the larger playing field of curriculum discourse itself. As Madeleine Grumet so eloquently

expresses:

Curriculum expresses the desire to establish a world for children that is richer, larger, more colourful, and more accessible than the one we have known. Perhaps it originates in what Sartre has called "negation," the creative refusal of human consciousness that says, "not this, but that." Perhaps it begins with a gesture to the future, with pulling back the curtain, opening the window, letting in more light. And then, too soon, we look at the window rather than through it, and negation collapses into prescription.<sup>26</sup>

This quote is like a two-way mirror. It describes my hopes and fears as a teacher, as well as my dreams for this project: hopes, because I truly believe that, as a teacher, I must try my best to establish the rich, colourful, more accessible world Grumet mentions; and fears, because I am afraid that I might just look *at* the window instead of through it, thus reducing my teaching to prescription. The guiding dream of my project has been one of "negation" as Sartre and Kristeva understand it: "the *creative* refusal of human consciousness that says, 'not this, but that.'" In fact, I think Kristeva might change it slightly to ask: "Why not have some of this *and* that, as well as a bit of this other?"

The subject (in all its multiple understandings) of this thesis deals with, among other things, the notion of space. I believe Kristeva has shown a courageous intelligence by writing about such an elusive topic. This courage is partly what attracted me to her in the first place; a perverse attachment, as Kristeva is anything but "an easy read."

The more Kristeva I read, the more I saw Kindergarten, *my* Kindergarten emerging through her words. I knew this, however, from a place deep



inside; a place which made verbal descriptions difficult. While recognizing the immense challenge of trying to "explain" Kindergarten in this way, I also knew that I did not want to turn away from this project either.

Writing this thesis, I have felt compelled to take many risks, because I believe that, in order to write *about* Kristeva, I have had to write *from* the very space she describes. This space is about as personal and raw as one can get. I do not think I could do Kristeva justice if I were unwilling to expose or allow my *self* to be vulnerable. Having written that enables me to also say that I recognize the format of this thesis drifts far from the conventional borders adopted by many papers. On one level this has been intentional, but on another, it reflects the very nature of this topic; something that has eluded the conventional aspects of symbolic language from the beginning.

It is with some degree of irony that I say I have made a conscious effort to be "sub-conscious;" by "sub" I mean beneath the surface and straight from the heart (although, I have discovered that the path from the heart very rarely is straight). In the back of my mind I have always had a framework for this project; exploring Kindergarten through Kristeva. I have chosen specific areas to examine (the concept of space is discussed in this section, titled "Anaphora," while those of Halloween, humour and fixed narrative are discussed in the sections titled "Wandering at the Borders of the Speakable and the Visible," "Defying the Laws of Gravity" and "The Presence of Absence," respectively).

Although I had definite, concrete guides, something unplanned-for always seemed to happen the moment I sat in front of my computer. The type of guides that emerged when the actual writing began were spirit ones! Although I write that somewhat playfully, I firmly believe in the truth of this last statement. When talking with others about this process they, too, have described the awe they have sometimes felt upon returning to a piece of writing after a few days' absence. Gazing at the screen they have asked themselves: "Who wrote this?"; "Where did it come from?"

Kristeva maintains that our culture and codes of communication contain not only the linguistic rules and conventions that constitute our postoeidipal symbolic systems but also the imagistic, inflected, and gestural semiotic codes that signal the continued presence of our preoeidipal pasts in our adult experiences.... It invites us to read the texts of educational experience and practice as semiotic as well as symbolic systems. Curriculum is a project of transcendence, our attempt while immersed in biology and ideology to transcend biology and ideology.<sup>27</sup>

It was not until I began teaching Kindergarten that some of the pieces began to fall into place; odd, little bits, reminiscent of the left-over puzzle-pieces found in the box after the puzzle has been completed.

Unsettled feelings and nagging suspicions that the picture was not quite right, somehow. One of the reasons I find Kindergarten so appealing is that the children (and I) are free to make choices; choices that are made on a variety of levels. From the moment they walk through the door, the children make their own decisions about issues such as: how they will participate, how much they will participate, in what activities they

will involve themselves, and with whom they will spend time, to name but a few. There is no place in Kindergarten for binary systems.

Not only is curriculum the "project of transcendence" so aptly described by Kristeva in the quote above, but it also seems a more than suitable title for my thesis. I have attempted to transcend *everything*, when it comes right down to it. Even the font, Avant Garde, has been deliberately chosen as the one best suited to this project. The way in which I have constructed the final form of my thesis (different sections that may be read in any order, demanding, therefore, some level of reader/audience participation) transcends the conventional flat, linear, passive-reader format we have been convinced to accept as being the best way to demonstrate academic merit. The fact that I have always seen my thesis in colour transcends the formality of black and white. Trying with every passage I have written to bare my soul and put as much of "me" into it as I could, transcends the distanced writing that favours "one" over "I." Weaving together stories into an unpredictable tapestry has been an attempt to transcend the format we have been trained to accept as scholarly. This transcendence, for me, has been multi-directional, rather than "up" as the definition of transcendence might imply. I feel I have travelled down/inside myself, forward, backward and out, as well as up.

Anaphora thus challenges the notion that the sign exists at a fixed remove from the realm of material practice. But in addition, by evoking (etymologically) the idea of a 'carrying back' in space, and what is 'fixed in memory,' we are put in touch with the 'volume' of language.<sup>28</sup>

We are talking about things that cannot be contained;<sup>29</sup> words occupying space on a page, disembodied somehow from the essence, which is defined in Webster's as:

the permanent as contrasted with the accidental element of being ... the individual, real, or ultimate nature of a thing esp. as opposed to its existence ... a volatile substance or constituent (as of perfume) ... possessing the special qualities in concentrated form.

There is something so alluring about perfume. It is mysterious, sensual and wonderfully feminine. There is much to be said about slowly, languidly becoming aware of the presence of a woman by inhaling her scent as it wafts through the air; your air, her body breath. For Kristeva, perfume is:

the most powerful metaphor for that archaic universe, preceding sight, where what takes place is the conveyance of the most opaque lovers' indefinite identities, together with the chilliest words: 'There are strong perfumes for which all matter/Is porous. They seem to penetrate glass' (*The Flask*).<sup>30</sup>

Children possess a perfume uniquely theirs. I love when I am working so closely with my children that I can smell their skin, their freshly-washed hair, their clothes. At snack-time I am assailed by the delicious aromas, not only of their food, but also of their homes. When some of my children open their lunch-boxes I can smell the lingering scent of incense. I remember when I was a child, one of my friends telling me she could always detect a "cottage smell" emanating from me, my clothes, my school snack. It took me years to figure out what she meant. My mother was, and still is, a firm believer in mothballs. That was the overriding scent

that made its presence known to my friend. To this day I swear that I can smell the familiar, warm presence of mothballs in what has now become my ferry-snack (a little repast lovingly prepared by my mother for her grown-up daughter to stave off hunger during the ferry trip from Victoria to the mainland).

Kristeva further elaborates her point by writing that this condensation is a synthesis of self into a "fusion with the mother,"<sup>31</sup> which begs the question of how to cope with the ensuing loss of identity once the fusion has occurred. Interestingly, Kristeva replies that, in Baudelaire's time it was through dandyism; in our time, perhaps through 'punk.'<sup>32</sup> It seems we strive to make a "kind of desperate assertion of independence - of social survival - *against the mother* (emphasis mine) ... - the symbolic appropriation of the maternal position."<sup>33</sup> To answer why the dandy/punk feels the need to draw attention to himself in this way, (that is, in an *anti* - social, rather than an *a* - social manner), Kristeva points to the lack of recognition afforded by "industrial technocratic"<sup>34</sup> societies to "those who wander 'at the borders of the speakable and the visible,' " the realm of "language's musicality."<sup>35</sup> Both today's punk and yesterday's dandy seem to be saying that they need some kind of symbolic shape in order to exist " 'in a fully articulated form' ... some kind of social presence."<sup>36</sup>

Love, for Kristeva, "links up with this condensation of affect in the act of enunciation."<sup>37</sup> We must, however, remember that embodying our love in words is an empty gesture; nothing more than a "linguistic

phenomenon."<sup>38</sup> Kristeva sees love as a synthesis of "drive energy and an external referent. More than this, though, the affect of metaphor and the impact of the act of enunciation is strongest, precisely 'where the object slips away'...."<sup>39</sup>

Perhaps the object slips away the moment my children step through my door. Ironically, this is the place where the subject is battling for its identification and defining aspect into the symbolic realm of the Law.

To further illuminate this notion, Kristeva directs us to Baudelaire and his discussion on the theme of perfume, which for him, "most closely approximates the notion of metaphor as condensation - as love."<sup>40</sup> In Baudelaire's work the object does indeed slip away, dissolved, in fact, by virtue of being combined with all objects into the one object of the "poet's contemplation."<sup>41</sup>

Lechte includes a chapter titled, "Horror, love, melancholy" in the section of his book called, "A reading of Kristeva's oeuvre,"<sup>42</sup> in which Kristeva talks about metaphor from a psychoanalyst's point of view. She states that this view falls more on the side of the semiotic than the symbolic, because, "For the analyst, it is equivalent to a condensation of affect, or psychical energy, in dream work."<sup>43</sup> If, as Kristeva says, being in love "involves being the other, of recognizing subjectivity as an 'open system,' " then industrial society "has no love for the semiotic poet. Even though the position of all artists is precarious in industrial society, that of the one who dissolves identities and meanings is more so."<sup>44</sup>

Kristeva tells us that this is "an experience at the limits of the identifiable."<sup>45</sup>

This is precisely where I situate Kindergarten. I would venture to guess that, more often than not, the word *limit* conjures an image of some sort of finish line or ending. When applied to Kindergarten, however, it acts more as a portal, an entranceway to the symbolic world.

It might seem odd to marry Kindergarten and the field of semiotics; a discipline that has established itself well in Europe and, to a lesser extent, North America. In his preface to Julia Kristeva, Lechte writes that the concept of semiotics has gained its Anglo-Saxon foothold through film studies more than anything else, thus providing an "out" for the more conventional and traditional scholars who might yet be unwilling to acknowledge the existence of such an area of thought.<sup>46</sup>

The nature of semiotics makes it difficult to hold onto. We slip on its surface; part of the allure and frustration of this theory. Intellectuals of the calibre of Eco and Barthes tell us that there is little that would not fit within the realm of semiotics, for this is a study that examines what Barthes calls " 'extra-linguistic' sign systems."<sup>47</sup>

What makes Kristeva's focus unique is the influence of psychoanalysis that she brings to bear on this study.<sup>48</sup> Although Lechte puts forth the notion that part of the difficulty for non-European scholars in understanding Kristeva's analyses of semiotics is "due to a particular Anglo-Saxon intellectual disposition,"<sup>49</sup> I find her work to be evocative of and resonant with Kindergarten and the space within which it is situated.

Part of the connection stems from the fact that Kristeva writes from the position of being a foreigner. As she herself has said, she is a foreigner on two counts: the first is attributed to the fact that she lives in France as an exile from her home in Bulgaria and the second is due to her being a woman. We inhabitants of Kindergarten are also foreigners. We are fringe-dwellers, odd, different from the others. This is not to imply that we go uncelebrated in our world of school; far from it. But the manner in which we are celebrated reminds me of the ways in which we tend to explore the topic of multi-culturalism. More often than not these multi-cultural experiences highlight the differences of the cultures, the aspects which make them stand apart from the culture (often dominant) conducting the study. And so we remain; well-loved, but still apart.

It was during the 1970s, in particular, that Kristeva's notions of semiotics came into fruition. In her La Revolution du Langage Poetique she "takes up the issue of the theory of the subject in relation to language - and especially poetic language... designed to help articulate the realm of the pre-symbolic."<sup>50</sup>

To think the unthinkable ... her writing scans the terrains of philosophy, theology, linguistics, literature, art, politics and, not least, psychoanalysis.... Always challenging, original, provocative, her work can lead to no easy consensus.... Speaking across the conventional disciplinary boundaries of the academic world, Kristeva raises the fundamental issues of human existence: language, truth, ethics, love."<sup>51</sup>

It occurs to me that in Kindergarten, we do that all the time; *think the unthinkable*. On one hand, no matter how much preparation I do, or



how tightly I think I have secured the gates, roping off the area in which I want the children's thoughts to be directed, there is always an escapee or two. There is always a loose, unplanned-for thought that gets tossed in the middle of the ring: the challenge of the hat; an unthinkable thought. With young children, this card is a wild one, coming as it does out of the blue/out of left field, with no apparent connection to the topic at hand.

If I may, I could easily re-write the aforementioned quote to read like this:

To think the unthinkable ... *Kindergarten* scans the terrains of philosophy, theology, linguistics, literature, art, politics and, not least, psychoanalysis.... Always challenging, original, provocative, *Kindergarten* can lead to no easy consensus.... Speaking across the conventional boundaries of the academic world, *Kindergarten* raises the fundamental issues of human existence: language, truth, ethics, love.<sup>52</sup>

Kristeva's "consistent and fundamental project," according to Toril Moi is "the desire to produce a discourse which always confronts the *impasse* of language (as at once subject to and subversive of the rule of the Law), a discourse which in a final aporetic move dares to think language against itself, and in so doing knowingly situates itself in a place which is, quite literally, untenable."<sup>53</sup>

The similarities between Kristeva's fundamental project and mine (both my teaching and my thesis) are striking. Mine, too, is a position of confrontation. I rail against the Law, yet realize the necessity of having to obey it. I yearn for subversion, while subjecting myself, my children and my project to the rules. I am aware of the untenable position in which I find myself. Yet, I cannot find a better spot from which to conduct my

affairs.

It is important to remember that the terms *semiotic* and *symbolic* are "processes, not static entities."<sup>54</sup>

The semiotic is linked to the pre-Oedipal primary processes, the basic pulsions of which Kristeva sees as predominantly anal and oral, and as simultaneously dichotomous (life/death, expulsion/introjection) and heterogeneous. The endless flow of pulsions is gathered up in the *chora* (from the Greek word for enclosed space, womb). Kristeva appropriates and redefines this Platonic concept and concludes that the *chora* is neither a sign nor a position, but 'an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases... Neither model nor copy, the *chora* precedes and underlies figuration and thus specularization, and is analogous only to vocal and kinetic rhythm.'<sup>55</sup>

Chora, as defined by Kristeva, is a vivid description of the world of Kindergarten. It is an arena of both death (of the first, primary maternal bond) and life (the first steps taken within the realm of the symbolic). My classroom is not unlike a womb in its cozy, warm, nurturing space. When Kristeva writes that the *chora* is mobile, unique and comparable *only* to rhythms that are kinetic and vocal, I nod vigorously in agreement that, yes, that is my Kindergarten.

"The semiotic continuum must be split if signification is to be produced."<sup>56</sup> With the splitting of the *chora* the subject can now attribute differences (signification)<sup>57</sup> to what was a ceaseless heterogeneity.<sup>58</sup> The mirror phase is the first stage in which this occurs. The splitting is fully achieved in the Oedipal stage. When this occurs, the subject enters the realm of the symbolic, which means "the *chora* will be more or less successfully

repressed and can be perceived only as pulsional *pressure* on or within symbolic language: as contradictions, meaninglessness, disruption, silences and absences."<sup>59</sup>

When my children enter my room they, like the subjects mentioned in the previous quote, enter the realm of the symbolic. But, it is still not too late for their collective chora to be actually heard, rather than just perceived. I believe strongly in the importance of encouraging and fostering this wonderfully eclectic vitality. This is the *jouissance* to which Kristeva refers throughout her writing. Every day I encounter the "pulsional pressure on or within symbolic language" in the unpredictable, funny, seemingly contradictory, but never (to me) meaningless disruptions that are essential threads that comprise the fabric that is the language and behaviour of my children.

The contradiction inherent in trying to "theorize the untheorizable *chora*" is clear to Kristeva and recognized as being at the centre of the "semiotic enterprise."<sup>60</sup>

Semiotic theory is therefore always already caught up in a paradox, an *aporia* which is the same as that of the speaking subject: both find themselves in a position which is at once subversive of and dependent on the law. The Kristevan subject is a subject-in-process ... but a subject nevertheless. We find her carrying out once again a difficult balancing act between a position which would deconstruct subjectivity and identity altogether, and one that would try to capture these entities in an essentialist or humanist mould.<sup>61</sup>

When an analyst is working with a patient, the intent is to provide the patient with some sort of identity which will enable him or her to "live in the

world ...within the symbolic order dominated by the law."<sup>62</sup> The aim is not to give a permanent self to the patient, but to help him or her become a "*work in progress*."<sup>63</sup> This expression, however, "requires subjectivity, and therefore the Law, which constructs speaking subjects in the first place."<sup>64</sup> The realm in which this creation of self takes place is that of the *imaginary*:

The imaginary is the realm of the discourse of transference, which is love.... Love, for Kristeva, then becomes the indispensable element of the cure, the moment of structuring which intervenes in the imaginary chaos, an organizing force produced by the intervention of the 'father of personal prehistory' in the very first months of the child's life. The psychoanalytic situation is one in which such love (transference love) is allowed to establish itself, if only precariously and only in order to undo itself in the end. It is, then, this transference love which allows the patient tentatively to erect some kind of subjectivity, to become a subject-in-process in the symbolic order.<sup>65</sup>

Part of the difficulty in coming to grips with the concept of semiotics stems from its paradoxical nature. "Being itself a metalanguage (language which speaks about language) it cannot but homogenize its object in its own discourse. In this sense then, semiotics is structurally unable to practise what it preaches."<sup>66</sup> For Kristeva, however, this does not really present a problem, because she views this as an enabling condition; one which, instead of freezing the activity of language, forces it to be creative and understood by practitioners of semiotics in this way. In other words, one can never rest, content in the knowledge that semiotics has at last been defined. The definition is always in transition and, here we see Kristeva's recurring theme of a subject in process.<sup>67</sup>

I revel in the life-affirming paradoxes that seem to thrive in the world of Kindergarten. I align myself with Kristeva in her refusal to view this as problematic. The last thing I want to do is freeze the "activity of language." It is these very descriptors of semiotics that make it impossible for me not to draw parallels with the Kindergarten situation. Just as Kristeva tells us that we cannot rest in the knowledge that we have finally defined semiotics, so must I also remain vigilant in my own refusal to put Kindergarten within a static framework.

The definition of semiotics is always in transition.

Kindergarten is always on the move; never still.

The subject is always in process.

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<sup>1</sup> Jacob Grimm, and Wilhelm Grimm, "Hansel and Grettel," The Blue Fairy Book, ed. Andrew Lang (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1965) 251.

<sup>2</sup> Grimm, and Grimm, 252.

<sup>3</sup> Grimm, and Grimm, 252-253.

<sup>4</sup> Grimm, and Grimm, 253-254.

<sup>5</sup> Grimm, and Grimm, 254.

<sup>6</sup> Grimm, and Grimm, 254.

<sup>7</sup> Grimm, and Grimm, 254-255.

<sup>8</sup> Grimm, and Grimm, 255.

<sup>9</sup> Grimm, and Grimm, 255-256.

<sup>10</sup> Grimm, and Grimm, 256.

<sup>11</sup> Grimm, and Grimm, 256.

<sup>12</sup> Grimm, and Grimm, 256.

<sup>13</sup> Grimm, and Grimm, 256-257.

<sup>14</sup> Grimm, and Grimm, 257.

<sup>15</sup> Grimm, and Grimm, 257.

<sup>16</sup> Madeleine Grumet, Bitter Milk (Massachusetts: The (Women and Teaching) University of Massachusetts Press, 1988) 102.

<sup>17</sup> Judith Butler, Gender Trouble (New York: Routledge, 1990) 67.

<sup>18</sup> Butler, 67.

<sup>19</sup> Butler, 67-68.

<sup>20</sup> Butler, 68.

<sup>21</sup> John Lechte, Julia Kristeva (New York: Routledge, 1990) 96-97.

<sup>22</sup> Lechte, 111-112.

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23 Julia Kristeva, The Kristeva Reader, ed. Toril Moi, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) 15.

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25 Clifford, and Marcus, inside front cover.

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30 Julia Kristeva, Tales of Love (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) 334.

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42 Lechte, 157-198.

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49 Lechte, xii.  
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51 Kristeva, The Kristeva Reader vi.  
52 Kristeva, vi.  
53 Kristeva, 10.  
54 Kristeva, 12.  
55 Kristeva, 12-13.  
56 Kristeva, 13.  
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59 Kristeva, 13.  
60 Kristeva, 13.  
61 Kristeva, 13.  
62 Kristeva, 14.  
63 Kristeva, 14.  
64 Kristeva, 14.  
65 Kristeva, 14.  
66 Kristeva, 24.  
67 Kristeva, 24.



### **"Little Red Riding-Hood"**

Once upon a time there lived in a certain village a little country girl, the prettiest creature was ever seen. Her mother was excessively fond of her; and her grandmother doted on her still more. This good woman got made for her a little red riding-hood; which became the girl so extremely well that everybody called her Little Red Riding-Hood.

One day her mother, having made some custards, said to her: 'Go, my dear, and see how thy grandmamma does, for I hear she has been very ill; carry her a custard, and this little pot of butter.'

Little Red Riding-Hood set out immediately to go to her grandmother, who lived in another village.

As she was going through the wood, she met with Gaffer Wolf, who had a very great mind to eat her up, but he durst not, because of some faggot-makers hard by in the forest. He asked her whither she was going. The poor child, who did not know that it was a dangerous thing to stay and hear a wolf talk, said to him:

'I am going to see my grandmamma and carry her a custard and a little pot of butter from my mamma.'

'Does she live far off?' said the Wolf.

'Oh! ay,' answered Little Red Riding-Hood; 'it is beyond that mill you see there, at the first house in the village.'

'Well,' said the Wolf, 'and I'll go and see her too. I'll go this way and go you that, and we shall see who will be there the soonest.'

The Wolf began to run as fast as he could, taking the nearest way, and the little girl went by that farthest about, diverting herself in gathering nuts, running after butterflies, and making nosegays of such little flowers as she met with. The Wolf was not long before he got to the old woman's house. He knocked at the door - tap, tap.

'Who's there?'

'Your grandchild, Little Red Riding-Hood,' replied the Wolf, counterfeiting her voice; 'who has brought you a custard and a little pot of butter sent you by mamma.'

The good grandmother, who was in bed, because she was somewhat ill, cried out:

'Pull the bobbin, and the latch will go up.'

The Wolf pulled the bobbin, and the door opened, and then presently he fell upon the good woman and ate her up in a moment, for it was above three days that he had not touched a bit. He then shut the door and went into the grandmother's bed, expecting Little Red Riding-Hood, who came some time afterwards and knocked at the door - tap, tap.

'Who's there?'

Little Red Riding-Hood, hearing the big voice of the Wolf, was at first afraid; but believing her grandmother had got a cold and was hoarse, answered:

' 'Tis your grandchild, Little Red Riding-Hood, who has brought you a custard and a little pot of butter mamma sends you.'

The Wolf cried out to her, softening his voice as much as he could: 'Pull the bobbin, and the latch will go up.'

Little Red Riding-Hood pulled the bobbin, and the door opened.

The Wolf, seeing her come in, said to her, hiding himself under the bed-clothes:

'Put the custard and the little pot of butter upon the stool, and come and lie down with me.'

Little Red Riding-Hood undressed herself and went into bed, where, being greatly amazed to see how her grandmother looked in her night-clothes, she said to her:

'Grandmamma, what great arms you have got!'

'That is the better to hug thee, my dear.'

'Grandmamma, what great legs you have got!'

'That is to run the better, my child.'

'Grandmamma, what great ears you have got!'

'That is to hear the better, my child.'

'Grandmamma, what great eyes you have got!'

'It is to see the better, my child.'

'Grandmamma, what great teeth you have got!'

'That is to eat thee up.'

And, saying these words, this wicked wolf fell upon Little Red Riding-Hood, and ate her all up.<sup>1</sup>

They usually start asking toward the end of September. By this time most of them have begun to relax and feel more settled; the strangeness of school and being away from home having lost some of its intensity. The children find themselves able to look around and ahead with some degree of security when they reach this point. This is when I catch the first glimmerings of "Hallowe'en babble;" tentative whispers in the beginning, which gradually become louder and more excited with each passing day.

"Hallowe'en is coming!", I hear them say. "What are you going to be?" "I'm going to be a Power Ranger!" "I'm going to be Ariell!" Squeals and giggles mingle with "oohs" and "aahs" as the children exchange their

Kristeva writes about poetry and the manner in which it maintains:

social bonds through what is destructive of the social, and conducive to madness. Poetry is capitalist society's carnival, a way of keeping death and madness at bay. Poetry is a refusal of a 'flight into madness'.<sup>2</sup>

Clearly visible in this statement is Kristeva's penchant for an inclusionary, rather than an exclusionary approach to understanding language, which leads her inquiry into the broader examination of society. Armed with this fact, then, readers of Kristeva's work have a tool with which to chip away at the seeming paradox of the above statement.

I understand Kristeva to be saying that poetry (the function of poetry, to be more precise), acts as a glue; a social bonding

ideas.

Hallowe'en, like magic fairy dust, settles over us all. The change is palpable; something in the air that we all inhale. When this happens I know there will be no other topic that will be able to hold a candle to this one. All the sacred elements come together in this age-old rite. It is the one time of the year when we are sanctioned to peek under the bed and actively search out the demons and bogey-men who haunt our dreams, sometimes well beyond childhood.

Double, double,  
Toil and trouble;  
Fire burn  
And cauldron bubble,  
Fillet of  
A fenney snake,  
In the cauldron  
Boil and bake;  
Eye of newt,  
And toe of frog,  
Wool of bat,  
And tongue of dog,  
Adder's fork  
And blind-worm's sting,  
Lizard's leg,

agent which works to keep the madness at bay by allowing an acceptable amount of that madness to be expressed.

This brings to mind one of my mother's hilarious stories; the one about her friend and the pressure cooker. As Mom tells the story, her friend was just learning the ropes of the whole cooking enterprise back then and this heavy, gun-metal grey contraption with the monstrous lid proved to be an early test of her culinary, and no doubt wifely, mettle. When used correctly, so my mother tells me, pressure cookers can be the miracle of kitchen appliances. The trick, as her friend soon discovered, is to use them correctly. She was just learning the fine art of adjusting the special valve which

And howlet's wing,  
For a charm  
Of powerful trouble,  
Like a hell-broth,  
Boil and bubble.<sup>3</sup>

I wonder if Shakespeare  
knowingly drew upon a universal  
archetype when he wrote the  
now-famous witches' scene from  
"MacBeth," for we all seem to  
conjure the same portrait of  
"witch" in our collective  
imagination when we give  
shape and form to this image at  
Hallowe'en.

Traditionally, in our room, we use  
this occasion to invite interested  
parents and older students to  
help us celebrate what in  
essence is the first formal rite of  
school to be experienced by  
my Kindergarten children.  
Everyone quickly gets into the  
spirit of things and soon the whole  
community can be heard  
discussing and making plans for

perches like a top hat right on the  
peak of the lid. Her adjustments  
must have been off, because  
the pressure cooker exploded,  
forcing the evening's meal  
upwards, in a most non-culinary  
geyser, until the bulk of it met the  
unrelenting hardness of the  
kitchen ceiling.

Poetry acts as society's pressure  
cooker. Without it, all our  
madness would explode and  
erupt everywhere in a big,  
psychotic mess, much worse  
than the one which my mother's  
friend had to clean up so long  
ago. Too much steam and the  
lid blows off; forcing us to employ  
a valve, whose sole function is to  
enable the appropriate amount  
of venting to occur.

Not to say that poetry lacks rules,  
but we seem to allow it much  
more artistic license than other

this big event.

As October 31 draws nigh the children are barely able to contain themselves. "Is your costume ready yet?" "Are you going to wear a mask?" "My mom said I can't wear make-up to school, but I can put it on when we go out trick-or-treating tonight!" "I hope I get lots of candy!"

"Are you scared?"

One year, J. decided not to come to our party. "He's afraid of Hallowe'en," J.'s mother said. "He won't be coming to school tomorrow."

J. afraid of Hallowe'en? I found it hard to believe. At school J. was one of the most brazen characters in our room. I could not fathom this child being afraid of anything! Despite valiant

literary forms. We seem to feel more comfortable admitting that we do not understand poetry, precisely because it is poetry. We recognize that some poetry may not be written with the intent to communicate a particular message. We allow for the notion that poetry sometimes "just is." We grant poetry the right to be less tangible than other written forms. We acknowledge the right of poetry to express what we otherwise would try to sweep under the carpet; the Beat Generation, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg's "Howl," T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" are but a few examples of this genre.

Julia Kristeva asks us to examine in the light of day that which we would prefer to keep under wraps and hidden in the dark, only to be brought out on

efforts on my part, no compromise could be reached with J.'s mother. It had been decided and that was that.

Some of the children come to the party in ordinary clothes. I am never sure if it is because they do not understand the concept of Hallowe'en, the nature of the game, as it were, or if they are somehow not allowed to participate fully in this ritual. Not dressing-up for Hallowe'en is like wearing a bathing suit at a nude beach. What is considered to be normal attire in one situation makes one stand out in another. Not donning a costume seems to create a certain degree of tension in these children. Without the protection of a disguise they are hesitant, afraid to let loose. It is an odd picture indeed to see these models of decorum

special occasions; occasions which sanction the examination of our individual and collective night creatures.

In Julia Kristeva, John Lechte categorizes Kristeva's "intellectual trajectory"<sup>4</sup> into three periods spanning, respectively, the 1960s and early 1970s, the 1970s and, finally, the 1980s.

Poetic language occupies a place of prominence in the first two periods, while psychoanalysis remains a central focus in the third. Throughout all three, the notion of semiotics emerges as a connecting thread; a theory which, as employed by Kristeva, is used to describe poetic language in two ways: "as the 'productivity' of the text, and as a specific form of negativity."<sup>5</sup>

During the late 1960s, a time when



surrounded by whirling dervishes, squealing devils, cackling witches, fairies swathed in gauze with sparkles dripping from foil-covered wands and all manner of other-worldly creatures.

On Hallowe'en I greet the children in costume. Although I never stay with the same outfit for too many years in a row, lately I have taken to donning my clown costume. It fits well. The game of pretend begins as soon as the doorknob turns. The children do not recognize me, nor do I profess to know who they are. "Well, you pirates and goblins and ghosts might as well come in," I tell them, "seeing as my children don't seem to be here today."

Some of them laugh uproariously while they try to tell me I have been fooled by their costumes.

students of linguistics were trying to analyse language in a linear and scientific fashion (i.e. applying formulas and rules), Kristeva was attempting to paint a more elusive picture of her understanding of language. Disrupting the current train of thought, Kristeva began talking about the "unrepresentable poetic dimension of language."<sup>6</sup> What began to emerge from her explorations was the concept that language is something more than communication. Kristeva is referring here to the music of language; a common enough phrase, but one which has unique implications when employed by her.

It helps me to understand what Kristeva is talking about if I apply this concept to my own travel adventures in Italy. Not having

**"It's us, Ms. McMillan!", they cry.  
 "We're here!" A few, however,  
 do not laugh as they earnestly try  
 to recapture their identities.  
 "Don't you know me?" "It's me!  
 See? I'll show you."**

**Creatures big and small mill  
 around our room. Nothing is as it  
 should be. Every known space  
 has undergone a transformation  
 in order to accommodate the  
 various activity centres.**

**We always have a station called  
 "the witch's brew" and every  
 year I am surprised at the  
 reactions the children have to it. I  
 never lack volunteers to be in  
 charge of this activity. In fact, this  
 is the station that seems to bring  
 out the most elaborate  
 costumes and make-up from the  
 parents. It is also the station I  
 most enjoy preparing. The  
 brew itself is nothing more than**

studied the Italian language to  
 any significant extent, I was,  
 however, determined not to miss  
 out on anything that was going  
 on around me. Loathe to be a  
 silent participant in my mother  
 tongue, I was definitely not going  
 to be silent in the midst of such a  
 vibrant atmosphere of  
 communicators.

As I traversed the calles of Venice  
 or sipped an aromatic espresso  
 in a coffee bar, it seemed as if I  
 was constantly being  
 serenaded. Although impossible  
 to understand every single word,  
 I could hear the music of the  
 language. It was as if I was in the  
 middle of a grand symphony. I  
 found if I allowed myself to be  
 swept away by the music, it was  
 much easier to follow the  
 conversation. I know that I do  
 not listen to English in the same

clear pop and green food colouring. But, draped over the sides of the "cauldron" and in various stages of sinking to the bottom of the liquid in sticky, congealing lumps, are the most horrible-looking gummy-worms I have been able to find. I pride myself on my ability to locate the juiciest and most repulsive gummy-worms in town. I have become a connoisseur.

As the witch creates her potion, she utters an incantation, adds the magical, green elixir and a liberal handful of worms.

Many of the children refuse to drink the witch's brew.

I sheepishly tell myself that I may have gone overboard in the lead-up to the witch's brew, assuring the children that the worms are real and the green

manner.

Listening to a language about which I barely knew anything, afforded me the great pleasure of hearing a kind of music I was unaware of having listened to before. Before the actual words could penetrate and be deciphered by my brain, I heard the rhythm, the pitch, the rhymes; in short, the entire musical score that is the Italian language. It was marvellous to me, because I had never heard language in quite this way before.

Kristeva, Lechte tells us, acknowledges that although we can recognize this music in everyday speech, it is not something that can be reduced to the language we call communication. It was Kristeva's insight that enabled us to discuss what, up until that time, we had

liquid truly is a magic potion. As I make a mental note to tone-down this part of the Halloween hype next year, I know that I remain incorrigible in this regard.

After the games have been played, the projects made, the treats eagerly devoured, the songs sung and the stories read, we bring the party out of our room at the end of the hall to have a celebratory parade throughout the entire school. In and out of every classroom we weave, leaving the office for the final stop on our madcap tour, because that is the place where we are always appreciated the most. Knowing that they have caused the principal to gasp and the secretaries to exclaim with horror and surprise somehow makes the day complete.

Not wanting the party to end, the

only been able to intuit; the language that is poetic and the language that is communication.<sup>7</sup>

Still very much intrigued by this issue, in the second phase of her intellectual inquiry Kristeva shifted her focus to further examine "the theory of the subject in relation to language - and especially poetic language."<sup>8</sup> Kristeva was interested in exploring the pre-symbolic dimension of language, which she considered to be "the basis of poetic language."<sup>9</sup>

Kristeva's fascination with the poetic remained strong, even when she entered the third phase of her work, categorized by Lechte as being the psychoanalytic phase, which began to surface, even at this early stage, through her

**children are nevertheless happy  
to go home when their parents  
come to pick them up. Looking  
dishevelled and tired, my little  
hobgoblins traipse home to nap,  
leaving me in the vacuum  
created by their departure.  
When next we see each other it  
will be "back to normal," the way  
we were before we let the  
monsters out to play.**

argument centring specifically on  
the battle waged by the  
" 'feminine' coming to disrupt the  
Name-of-the-Father as the  
embodiment of the paternal  
function."<sup>10</sup> For Kristeva, the  
feminine is directly linked to the  
poetic aspect of language. She  
tells us that the feminine is  
included in that part of language  
deemed unrepresentable by

her due to "its indeterminate and almost ephemeral aspect - the aspect  
which places in question all modes of formalization traditionally  
associated with 'nationality' (masculinity)."<sup>11</sup>

I find it interesting, in light of the statement above, to note the proportion  
of male versus female teachers, especially in elementary schools. I  
should say disproportionate, because the number of women tends to  
outweigh that of men at this level. Upon closer examination, it has been  
my experience that the men who do teach in elementary schools seem  
to conglomerate in the intermediate, rather than primary grades. I put  
the men who break the mold by teaching young children right on the  
front line of the battle being waged by the "feminine coming to disrupt  
the Name-of-the-Father." To me, these are the men whose masculinity is

often called into question; truly a disruption of the "paternal function" and something which queries "all modes of formalization traditionally associated with 'nationality' (masculinity)." Brave poets indeed.

Thus, we come full circle to the aforementioned quote about the ability of poetry to maintain social bonds. Kristeva uses this idea to support her argument that the avant-garde movement was about more than art. For her, it signified the transmutability of poetic language into the "role of the major ethical function of art."<sup>12</sup> Lechte's observation that, instead of using the tools of semiotics and psychoanalysis to understand works of art, Kristeva began at this point to use works of art in her quest to further examine concepts such as abjection,<sup>13</sup> exemplifies for me the nature of Kristeva's multi-voiced project. I am referring here to her desire to include the 'One and Other,' rather than maintain the dualism inherent in the arguments of the "either/or."

With the groundwork laid, as it were, for at least part of Kristeva's intellectual journey, I would like to return now to her ideas centring around the "'productivity' of the text."<sup>14</sup> This notion occupies a place of prominence in her analysis of the concept of 'carnival.'

Kristeva begins her discussion of 'dialogue' and 'carnival' while examining the literary forms of the epic and the novel. Put simply, the epic is one of the "modes of textual organization which are 'closed,' homogeneous, and static - (and) are based on the ideologeme of the symbol"<sup>15</sup> ('ideologeme' being a way to define a "current historical

mode of textual organization" - a term coined by Kristeva in order to differentiate it from the "old concept of 'genre' established by rhetoric"<sup>16</sup>). Within the "field of the symbol"<sup>17</sup> it is not possible to reconcile opposites. In other words, if a character is 'good', he/she can never also be 'evil.'

The novel, on the other hand, is more closely aligned with the ideologeme of the sign, which "contrasts with the symbol by being 'open-ended,' heterogeneous and dynamic."<sup>18</sup> The sign also allows for multiplicity to exist within the characters of the novel. It is possible, therefore, to have "the mocked sovereign, the defeated warrior, the unfaithful wife, the evil priest etc."<sup>19</sup> Kristeva endows the novel with what she calls "potential infinity."<sup>20</sup> This is what gives the form its open-endedness and makes *the truth* a non-issue.

The move away from the ideologeme of the symbol to that of the sign, via the advent of the novel, is what Kristeva calls "intertextuality."<sup>21</sup>

Anxious not to have this term be misunderstood, Kristeva defines it not as the "references in one book to other books, but ... the interpenetration of two or more signifying practices."<sup>22</sup>

This is the point where the notions of carnival and dialogue jump in, as it were, for in order to "reveal the process of intertextuality,"<sup>23</sup> Kristeva tells us, we must examine and analyse the "various utterances in the text."<sup>24</sup> Webster's traces the origin of the word 'carnival' to the Italian *carnevale*, which is derived from the earlier version of the word *carnelevare*, which

literally means "removal of meat" (*carne* meaning flesh and *levare* meaning to remove). Three definitions are provided in this dictionary:

**1:** a season or festival of merrymaking before Lent **2:** an instance of merrymaking, feasting, or masquerading **3a:** a travelling enterprise offering amusements **b:** an organized programme of entertainment or exhibition: FESTIVAL < a winter ~ >.

Although the Pocket Oxford Dictionary offers a similar definition to the one found in Webster's, it seems to have a different nuance to it. Oxford's definition says 'carnival' means "festive days preceding Lent, riotous revelry, furious scene of slaughter &c." The inclusion of words such as *riotous*, *furious*, and *slaughter*, adds a menacing tone to this version. Kristeva strives to make it clear that her use of the word carnival encompasses something other than "a make-believe overturning of the law and existing social norms."<sup>25</sup> Lechte writes that Kristeva, following Bakhtin's lead, understands carnival to mean:

a genuine transgression, not simply a mirror reversal of things as they are which cannot be predicted by the existing law. The carnival is not just the other side of the law, but includes the law within itself."<sup>26</sup>

Kristeva's definition of carnival includes another term that is central to her thinking. The notion of 'One and Other' is a crucial concept around which much of her intellectual inquiry pivots. When Kristeva talks about One and Other, the whole comes to mean more than the sum of the two parts.



'Now, if you'll only attend, Kitty, and not talk so much, I'll tell you all my ideas about Looking-glass House. First, there's the room you can see through the glass - that's just the same as our drawing-room, only the things go the other way.... But, oh, Kitty! now we come to the passage. You can just see a little *peep* of the passage in Looking-glass House, if you leave the door of our drawing-room wide open; and it's very like our passage as far as you can see, only you know it may be quite different beyond. Oh, Kitty! how nice it would be if only we could get through into Looking-glass House! I'm sure it's got, oh! such beautiful things in it! Let's pretend there's a way of getting through into it, somehow, Kitty. Let's pretend the glass has got all soft like gauze, so we can get through. Why it's turning into a sort of mist now, I declare! It'll be easy enough to get through - ' She was up on the chimney-piece while she said this, though she hardly knew how she had got there. And certainly the glass was beginning to melt away, just like a bright silvery mist.<sup>27</sup>

I have always heard Alice's story echoing behind Kristeva's descriptions of carnival, as well as *One and Other*. Like Kristeva, Lewis Carroll goes beyond painting a picture of the curious world Alice sees in the mirror as simply a reversal of the world she inhabits. The Looking-glass world is a backwards version of Alice's world *and* more.

Lechte understands Kristeva to be telling us that:

Carnival is a specific kind of 'double' ... it becomes a totality which is not identical with itself and cannot be represented for it includes representation in its bosom, as it were."<sup>28</sup>

Bakhtin uses the structure of carnival, as he defines it, as a place in which to situate his exploration of Dostoyevsky's novels.<sup>29</sup> I particularly like Bakhtin's use of the word "polyphonic" when describing the carnival aspect of Dostoyevsky's fiction. Bakhtin says that this writing is carnival-like, because "It includes its other (voice) within itself."<sup>30</sup> Although Kristeva prefers to use 'word' instead of 'discourse,' she and Bakhtin concur that

the meaning differs greatly from that used by linguists when they talk about communication. For both Bakhtin and Kristeva, communication is not static, but dynamic.<sup>31</sup> Kristeva goes on to describe this communication as the "intersection of meanings rather than a fixed point, or single meaning."<sup>32</sup> Polyphony falls within this definition also, because it is "multiple, not singular; it includes what would be excluded by a representation of it."<sup>33</sup>

This conjures the image of a double Ferris wheel in my mind. Taken apart, there would be two single Ferris wheels. Put together, however, the ride changes into something beyond the scope of a single wheel spinning around . It occupies a much different space.

Kristeva's understanding of carnival is not based on the logic of 'this or that,' but rather, it insists on being a " 'correlational' logic of 'One and Other' or 'true and false.' "<sup>34</sup> By all intents and purposes, the concept of carnival, embodying as it does "both truth and falsity," is beyond representation, because "representation is founded on the true-or-false logic of identity. Carnival is a transgression, then, because it shakes thought based on the logic of identity to its foundations."<sup>35</sup>

We like to clearly identify things in order to understand them better. If something eludes representation it makes us nervous, because it makes identification "based on the exclusion of falsity"<sup>36</sup> difficult, if not impossible. Discourses that fall into the "bi-valent" category are "subject to the law of 'One,' because they can only be one or the other, never

one *and* the other. Bi-valent discourse does not allow for the inclusion of difference.<sup>37</sup>

Kristeva tells us that things not bi-valent are *ambivalent*. Webster's defines ambivalence as:

**1:** simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person, or action **2a:** continual fluctuation (as between one thing and its opposite) **b:** uncertainty as to which approach to follow.

Kristeva questions the possibility of including poetic language "within bivalent logic."<sup>38</sup> In fact, poetic language seems to become synonymous with ambivalent logic when Kristeva explores the relationship between it and its bi-valent counterpart.

Carnival and poetic language are similar, because of their ambivalent natures. Kristeva calls this aspect of simultaneously being 'One and Other' "paragrammatic."<sup>39</sup> It is hard to analyse poetic language and carnival, because there is not an accepted theory which allows for their inherent contradictions. " 'Paragrammatic writing' ( '*écriture paragrammatique*' ) is the movement between: the real and the non-real; being and non-being; speech (*parole*) and non-speech, etc."<sup>40</sup>

Poetic language does exist in every-day speech and language, but it is difficult to perceive, because our methods of analysis tend to be bi-valent in nature and "Poetic language cannot be contained within this logic."<sup>41</sup> It is " 'unobservable' (meaning) that poetic language is not localizable in words, or unities of words, because it is the very 'undulation'

(Mallarmé), or the very movement of language as such."<sup>42</sup>

This undulation is also the wonderful problem which Kindergarten presents: wonderful in its boundary-defying desire to dance; problematic precisely because of this defiance. Kindergarten is very similar to mercury in this regard. I remember accidentally breaking the thermometer when I was exploring the medicine cabinet one day. Not wanting to "get caught" by my mother, I tried to clean up the mess. I soon discovered that this was not going to be a simple matter. It seemed that the moment I was about to capture one of those shiny, errant, balls it would change its shape, gushing out from under my fingertip in tiny, silver beads which regrouped into a halo formation around their attacker. Too young yet to have taken any chemistry classes, I was ignorant in the matter of the magical properties of this substance. The panic to remove the evidence of my mischief soon gave way to utter absorption in these funny little balls; so fascinating in their deceptive nature. Through my child's eyes I saw what appeared to be solid spheres which should have been easy to pick up. I remember marvelling at how something which appeared to be solid could also be fluid. Mercury, I discovered, was neither a solid nor a liquid, but some strange mixture of the two which placed it outside the definitions of the things I knew. It was a delightfully disturbing discovery: "not localizable in words."

Just as Kristeva was striving to find another dimension in which to situate her thoughts, so, too was I searching for a place in which to put not only

my childhood discoveries, but also my ever-increasing number of grown-up beliefs which lacked a home; the structure of bi-valent logic stifling the ability of individual interpretations, indeed life, to be given to language. When our focus is on the exclusion of falsity, we become entrenched in an Aristotelian logic of 'either/or.' I agree with Kristeva's sentiments, as expressed by Lechte when he writes:

When seen as part of poetic language, on the other hand, the problem of whether the notion is true or false does not arise, or rather the question of truth alone is not important. What is important is the effect of the relationship between the words as such - the effect of their materiality, we could say.<sup>43</sup>

Poetic language, ambivalent logic, the rhythm and musicality of words are all *irreducible*, to use Kristeva's term, to a simple 'either/or' situation.<sup>44</sup> Regarding poetic language, Lechte poses the question, "through whom or what does the speaking subject emerge..."<sup>45</sup> Kristeva's answer would be that this is the point where the subject dissolves into something that is not identical with itself. This is the *negativity* of which Kristeva writes; a state that does not imply a cancellation as much as "an 'empty' space - a 'paragrammatic space.'" <sup>46</sup>

We see evidence of Kristeva's philosophy of irreducibility when we examine her understanding of semiotics:

Distinguishing between 'semiology' or 'structuralism' on the one hand and 'semiotics' or 'semanalysis' on the other, Kristeva maintains that structuralism, by focusing on the 'thetic' or static phase of language, posits it as a homogeneous structure, whereas semiotics, by studying language as a discourse enunciated by a speaking subject, grasps its fundamentally heterogeneous nature. For semanalysis language is a *signifying process*, not simply a static system....

Linguistic practice, as she sees it, is at once a system and transgression (negativity), a product of both the 'drive-governed basis of sound production' and the social space in which the enunciation takes place.<sup>47</sup>

With the stage set, as it were, let us now turn the spotlight on Kristeva's suggestion that abjection disturbs the symbolic order of things. Knowing that Kristeva's explorations confound the taken-for-granted binary nature of the arena in which much scholarly discourse takes place, we can perhaps better understand when she writes: "Thus the corpse which is neither human and non-human...."<sup>48</sup>

Kristeva believes that, for western capitalists, it is the symbolic law, which has seemingly thrust itself in our midst, that has become the cornerstone of our society. This law, essentially patriarchal in nature, occupies a place of prominence, privilege and position; in other words, *authority*. Kristeva introduces an interesting phrase in her discussion of this topic: the "two-sided sacred."<sup>49</sup> This is another name for the division inherent in the "subject-object dyad;"<sup>50</sup> the split between what Kristeva calls 'murder' (the death of the pre-symbolic mother when the symbolic father intrudes during the mirror phase) and 'incest' (the act of turning away from the mother once the father enters the scene).<sup>51</sup>

The 'sacred' is another name for the divided foundation simultaneously giving rise to social and individual life. No sacred, then, without murder and incest, 'totem' and 'taboo', to use Freud's terms.<sup>52</sup>

The importance of the corpse, therefore, can be seen in light of the position it occupies in this context. Remembering that the mother

occupies a place of abjection, Kristeva tells us that filth and defilement, which can be found "on the border of identities threaten the unity of the ego (and) epitomize the separation from the mother."<sup>53</sup> Like blood, which blurs and makes ambiguous the edges of the bodily boundaries, "the corpse and all items subject to decay - that is, objects with an ambiguous status - become subject to ritual activities in a variety of forms."<sup>54</sup>

My children, caught in the vortex of Kristeva's two-sided sacred, are trying to define themselves. At the beginning of the journey, their status is ambiguous. Perhaps the reason we hurl ourselves so vigorously in our Hallowe'en celebrations can be found in this very argument.

The body, in particular a corpse, supports Kristeva's notion of the fragility of boundaries, especially those pertaining to identity, in this way. As she tells us, a body in the throes of decay becomes:

lifeless, completely turned into dejection, blurred between the inanimate and the inorganic, a transitional swarming, inseparable lining of a human nature whose life is undistinguishable from the symbolic....<sup>55</sup>

Referring to Céline, Kristeva describes his writing as something which " 'speaks' horror."<sup>56</sup> Céline's subject matter, evil, reaches beyond the realm of the symbolic, because rather than focusing on evil within the context of morality, it takes place within the arena of a "barely apocalyptic evil. Céline, says Kristeva, is *inside* horror desperately striving to give it a name - to *speak* it."<sup>57</sup> Here is someone, Kristeva feels, who tried to face horror, instead of repress it, which makes it

abject and, thus, apocalyptic.<sup>58</sup>

I believe I understand Kindergarten in very much the same way that Kristeva understands semiotics. Both refuse to be limited, preferring instead to "subvert(s) established beliefs in authority and order."<sup>59</sup>

Situating Kindergarten within a Kristevan context allows me, therefore, to see the abjection that would not commonly be associated with this subject. If I am sincere in my beliefs, then I must not be afraid to acknowledge the potential for the apocalyptic that exists within my Kindergarten children; indeed within myself.



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<sup>1</sup> Charles Perrault, "Little Red Riding-Hood," The Blue Fairy Book, ed. Andrew Lang (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1965) 51-53.

<sup>2</sup> John Lechte, Julia Kristeva (New York: Routledge, 1990) 6.

<sup>3</sup> William Shakespeare, "MacBeth," The Oxford Shakespeare Complete Works, ed. J. Craig (London: Oxford University Press, 1906) 860.

<sup>4</sup> Lechte, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Lechte, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Lechte, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Lechte, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Lechte, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Lechte, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Lechte, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Lechte, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Lechte, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Lechte, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Lechte, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Lechte, 103.

<sup>16</sup> Lechte, 103.

<sup>17</sup> Lechte, 103.

<sup>18</sup> Lechte, 03.

<sup>19</sup> Lechte, 03.

<sup>20</sup> Lechte, 104.

<sup>21</sup> Lechte, 104.

<sup>22</sup> Lechte, 104.

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23 Lechte, 104.

24 Lechte, 104.

25 Lechte, 105.

26 Lechte, 105.

27 Lewis Carroll, "Looking-Glass House," Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass (Chicago: The John C. Winston Company, 1923) 159-161.

28 Lechte, 105.

29 Lechte, 106.

30 Lechte, 106.

31 Lechte, 106.

32 Lechte, 106.

33 Lechte, 106.

34 Lechte, 108.

35 Lechte, 108-109.

36 Lechte, 109.

37 Lechte, 109.

38 Lechte, 109.

39 Lechte, 109.

40 Lechte, 109-110.

41 Lechte, 111.

42 Lechte, 111.

43 Lechte, 113.

44 Lechte, 114.

45 Lechte, 114.

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46 Lechte, 114.

47 Julia Kristeva, The Kristeva Reader, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 24.

48 Lechte, 160.

49 Lechte, 162.

50 Lechte, 162.

51 Lechte, 162.

52 Lechte, 162.

53 Lechte, 163.

54 Lechte, 163.

55 Lechte, 164.

56 Lechte, 165.

57 Lechte, 165.

58 Lechte, 166.

59 Kristeva, 24.

### "A Mad Tea-Party"

There was a table set out under a tree in front of the house, and the March Hare and the Hatter were having tea at it: a Dormouse was sitting between them fast asleep, and the other two were using it as a cushion, resting their elbows on it, and talking over its head. "Very uncomfortable for the Dormouse," thought Alice; "only, as it's asleep, I suppose it doesn't mind."

The table was a large one, but the three were all crowded together at one corner of it: "No room! No room!" they cried out when they saw Alice coming.

"There's *plenty* of room!" said Alice, indignantly, and she sat down in a large arm-chair at one end of the table.

"Have some wine," the March Hare said in an encouraging tone.

Alice looked all round the table, but there was nothing on it but tea. "I don't see any wine," she remarked.

"There isn't any," said the March Hare.

"Then it wasn't very civil of you to offer it," said Alice angrily.

"It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited," said the March Hare.

"I didn't know it was *your* table," said Alice; "it's laid for a great many more than three."

"Your hair wants cutting," said the Hatter. He had been looking at Alice for some time with great curiosity, and this was his first speech.

"You should learn not to make personal remarks," Alice said with some severity: "it's very rude."

The Hatter opened his eyes very wide on hearing this; but all he *said* was, "Why is a raven like a writing-desk?"

"Come, we shall have some fun now!" thought Alice. "I'm glad they've begun asking riddles - I believe I can guess that," she added aloud.

"Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?" said the March Hare.

"Exactly so," said Alice.

"Then you should say what you mean," the March Hare went on.

"I do," Alice hastily replied; "at least - at least I mean what I say - that's the same thing, you know."

"Not the same thing a bit!" said the Hatter. "Why, you might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see'!"

"You might just as well say," added the March Hare, "that 'I like what I get' is the same thing as 'I get what I like'!"

"You might just as well say," added the Dormouse, who seemed to be talking in his sleep, "that 'I breathe when I sleep' is the same thing as 'I sleep when I breathe'!"

"It *is* the same thing with you," said the Hatter, and here the conversation dropped, and the party sat silent for a minute, while Alice thought over all she could remember about ravens and writing-desks, which wasn't much.

The Hatter was the first to break the silence.

"What day the month is it?" he said, turning to Alice: he had taken his watch out of his pocket, and was looking at it uneasily, shaking it every now and then, and holding it to his ear.

Alice considered a little, and said, "The fourth."

"Two days wrong!" sighed the Hatter. "I told you butter wouldn't suit the works!" he added, looking angrily at the March Hare.

"It was the *best* butter," the March Hare meekly replied.

"Yes, but some crumbs must have got in as well," the Hatter grumbled: "you shouldn't have put it in with the bread-knife."

The March Hare took the watch and looked at it gloomily: then he dipped it into his cup of tea, and looked at it again: but he could think of nothing better to say than his first remark, "It was the *best* butter, you know."

Alice had been looking over his shoulder with some curiosity. "What a funny watch!" she remarked. "It tells the day of the month, and doesn't tell what o'clock it is!"

"Why should it?" muttered the Hatter. Does *your* watch tell you what year it is?"

"Of course not," Alice replied very readily: "but that's because it stays the same year for such a long time together."

"Which is just the case with *mine*," said the Hatter.

Alice felt dreadfully puzzled. The Hatter's remark seemed to her to have no sort of meaning in it, and yet it was certainly English. "I don't quite understand you," she said, as politely as she could.

"The Dormouse is asleep again," said the Hatter, and he poured a little hot tea on to its nose.

The Dormouse shook its head impatiently, and said, without opening its eyes, "of course, of course; just what I was going to remark myself."

"Have you guessed the riddle yet?" the Hatter said, turning to Alice again.

"No, I give up," Alice replied: "what's the answer?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," said the Hatter.

"Nor I," said the March Hare.

Alice sighed wearily. "I think you might do something better with the time," she said, "than wasting it in asking riddles that have no answers."

"If you knew Time as well as I do," said the Hatter, "you wouldn't talk about wasting *it*. It's *him*."

"I don't know what you mean," said Alice.

"Of course you don't," the Hatter said, tossing his head contemptuously. "I dare say you never even spoke to Time!"

"Perhaps not!" Alice cautiously replied: "but I know I have to beat time when I learn music."

"Ah! that accounts for it," said the Hatter. "He won't stand beating. Now, if you only kept on good terms with him, he'd do almost anything you liked with the clock. For instance, suppose it were nine o'clock in the morning, just time to begin lessons: you'd only have to whisper a hint to Time, and round goes the clock in a twinkling! Half-past one, time for dinner!"

("I only wish it was," the March Hare said to itself in a whisper.)

"That would be grand, certainly," said Alice thoughtfully: "but then - I shouldn't be hungry for it, you know."

"Not at first, perhaps," said the Hatter: but you could keep it to half-past one as long as you liked."

"Is that the way you manage?" Alice asked.

The Hatter shook his head mournfully. "Not I!" he replied. "We quarrelled last March - just before *he* went mad, you know - " (pointing with his spoon at the March Hare), " - it was the great concert given by the Queen of Hearts, and I had to sing

'Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!  
How I wonder what you're at!'

You know the song, perhaps?"

"I've heard something like it," said Alice.

"It goes on, you know," the Hatter continued, "in this way:

'Up above the world you fly,  
like a tea-tray in the sky.  
Twinkle, twinkle - ' "

Here the Dormouse shook itself, and began singing in its sleep "*Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle* -" and went on so long that they had to pinch it to make it stop.

"Well, I'd hardly finished the first verse," said the Hatter, "when the Queen bawled out, 'He's murdering the time! Off with his head!' "

"How dreadfully savage!" exclaimed Alice.

"And ever since that," the Hatter went on in a mournful tone, "he won't do a thing I ask! It's always six o'clock now."

A bright idea came into Alice's head. "Is that the reason so many tea-things are put out here?" she asked.

"Yes, that's it," said the Hatter with a sigh: "it's always tea-time, and we've no time to wash the things between whiles."

"Then you keep moving round, I suppose?" said Alice.

"Exactly so," said the Hatter: "as the things get used up."

"But when you come to the beginning again?" Alice ventured to ask.

"Suppose we change the subject," the March Hare interrupted, yawning. "I'm getting tired of this. I vote the young lady tells us a story."

"I'm afraid I don't know one," said Alice, rather alarmed at the proposal.

"Then the Dormouse shall!" they both cried. "Wake up, Dormouse!" And they pinched it on both sides at once.

The Dormouse slowly opened his eyes. "I wasn't asleep," he said in a hoarse, feeble voice: "I heard every word you fellows were saying."

"Tell us a story!" said the March Hare.

"Yes, please do!" pleaded Alice.

"And be quick about it," added the Hatter, or you'll be asleep again before it's done."

"Once upon a time there were three little sisters," the Dormouse began in a great hurry; "and their names were Elsie, Lacie, and Tillie and they lived at the bottom of a well -"

"What did they live on?" said Alice, who always took a great interest in questions of eating and drinking.

"They lived on treacle," said the Dormouse, after thinking a moment or two.

"They couldn't have done that, you know," Alice gently remarked: "they'd have been ill."

"So they were," said the Dormouse; "very ill."

Alice tried a little to fancy to herself what such an extraordinary way of living would be like, but it puzzled her too much, so she went on:

"But why did they live at the bottom of a well?"

"Take some more tea," the March Hare said to Alice, very earnestly.

"I've had nothing yet," Alice replied in an offended tone, "so I can't take more."

"You mean you can't take *less*," said the Hatter: "it's very easy to take *more* than nothing."

"Nobody asked *your* opinion," said Alice.

"Who's making personal remarks now?" the Hatter said triumphantly.

Alice did not quite know what to say to this: so she helped herself to some tea and bread-and-butter, and then turned to the Dormouse, and repeated her question. "Why did they live at the bottom of a well?"



The Dormouse again took a minute or two to think about it, and then said, "It was a treacle-well."

"There's no such thing!" Alice was beginning very angrily, but the Hatter and the March Hare went "Sh! sh!" and the Dormouse sulkily remarked, "If you can't be civil, you'd better finish the story for yourself."

"No, please go on!" Alice said very humbly: "I won't interrupt you again. I dare say there may be *one*."

"One, indeed!" said the Dormouse indignantly. However, he consented to go on. "And so these three little sisters - they were learning to draw, you know - "

"What did they draw?" said Alice, quite forgetting her promise.

"Treacle," said the Dormouse, without considering at all this time.

"I want a clean cup," said the Hatter: "let's all move one place on."

He moved on as he spoke, and the Dormouse followed him: the March Hare moved into the Dormouse's place, and Alice rather unwillingly took the place of the March Hare. The Hatter was the only one who got any advantage from the change: and Alice was a good deal worse off than before, as the March Hare had just upset the milk-jug onto his plate.

Alice did not wish to offend the Dormouse again, so she began very cautiously: "But I don't understand. Where did they draw treacle from?"

"You can draw water out of a water-well," said the Hatter; "so I should think you could draw treacle out of a treacle-well - eh, stupid?"

"But they were *in* the well," Alice said to the Dormouse, not choosing to notice this last remark.

"Of course they were," said the Dormouse, "well in."

This answer so confused poor Alice, that she let the Dormouse go on for some time without interrupting it.

"They were learning to draw," the Dormouse went on, yawning and rubbing its eyes, for it was getting very sleepy; "and they drew all manner of things - everything that begins with an M - "

"Why with an M?" said Alice.

"Why not?" said the March Hare.

Alice was silent.

The Dormouse had closed its eyes by this time, and was going off into a doze; but, on being pinched by the Hatter, it woke up again with a little shriek, and went on: " - that begins with an M, such as Mouse-traps, and the moon, and memory, and muchness - you know you say things are 'much of a muchness' - did you ever see such a thing as a drawing of a muchness?"

"Really, now you ask me," said Alice, very confused, "I don't think - "

"Then you shouldn't talk," said the Hatter.

This piece of rudeness was more than Alice could bear: she got up in great disgust, and walked off; the Dormouse fell asleep instantly, and neither of the others took the least notice of her going, though she looked back once or twice, half hoping that they would call after her: the last time she saw them, they were trying to put the Dormouse into the teapot.<sup>1</sup>

That Kristeva questions the generally accepted premise that the study of linguistics can adhere to a rigid definition is something that appeals very much to me. She tells us that this rigidity:

has merely served to throw into relief a shortcoming of linguistics itself: established as a science in as much as it focuses on language as a social code, the science of linguistics has no way of apprehending anything in language which belongs not with the social contract but with play, pleasure or desire....<sup>2</sup>

When faced with the mystery of a code, the first thing I want to do is crack it. I grew up learning how to do this in comic books. Extending my encoding and decoding skills to childhood secrets confided to friends in the presence of those whom I wanted to keep in the dark, I would slip into the vernacular known to every school-age child as Pig Latin. What fun we had "fooling" those around us with our secret language. All the allure of a code dissipates once we shed light on it/find the key/figure it out; becoming nothing more or less than a linguistic equation:  $A + B = C$ . Language, if understood to be strictly communication, is a code; a way of revealing our thoughts to others. This understanding of language, however, reduces it to something that is ordinary and commonplace. All the mystery is gone when once we solve the puzzle.

The elements of language that remain outside this definition are the ones which intrigue me. These are the harder-to-define aspects, linguistic nuances, if you will, that flesh-out the bare bones of the scientific definition that Kristeva cautions us against accepting as the complete version of

the essence of language. Like air, we know these semiotic qualities, more easily felt than seen, exist. They are harder to prove and require faith. Trained as we generally are to hear language a certain way, the semiotic voices often appear nebulous; more difficult to trace. I am discovering, however, that the more time I spend in Kindergarten, the more attuned I become to the semiotic chorus. I liken it to the need I have to analyse at the end of the evening the way the party *felt*. A joke among my friends, they are slowly learning to avoid being near me at "closing time," for fear of becoming trapped in my analytical discussion. "I'm a social sponge," I say, as my friends roll their eyes. "I feel things," I call after them as they scurry off to replenish still-full drinks.

Kristeva writes that:

Semiotics must not be allowed to be a mere application to signifying practices of the linguistic model - or any other model, for that matter. Its *raison d'être* if it is to have one, must consist in its identifying the systematic constraint within each signifying practice (using for that purpose borrowed or original 'models') but above all in going beyond that to specifying just what, within the practice, falls outside the system and characterizes the specificity of the practice as such."<sup>3</sup>

Kristeva's desire to examine "what falls *outside* (emphasis mine) the system" is what draws me to her. Taking up the challenge to try to see more clearly those things which seem impossible to see puts her in the position of never standing still. Kristeva constantly pushes at and blurs the boundaries.

The Kindergarten project remains an antagonistic one at the best of

times. My children pour into the physical box that is our classroom and constantly fight their desire, as do I, to accept that box. As a result, we find ourselves hovering on quicksand/trying to remain steady at the fault line/attempting to put one foot in front of the other in the face of hurricane winds.

I recall the childlike awe with which I experienced as an adult the confounding enigma of this mysterious geographical anomaly in Oregon; a magical spot where a broomstick can stand by itself and where bottles roll uphill. A place that is an optical illusion, while simultaneously being real. Scientifically, it can all be explained. The magic can be reduced to a code:  $A + B = C$ . Even though I ask why and how, the scientific answers are not what remain with me. What I carry away from discoveries such as this is their semiotic nature; the beauty of the outside.

In brief, we have gone just about as far as we can go in understanding the nature of education by focusing on the externals. It is not that the public world - curriculum materials, instructional techniques, policy directives - has become unimportant; it is that to further comprehend their roles in the educational process we must take our eyes off them for a time, and begin a lengthy, systematic search of our inner experience.<sup>4</sup>

They tell me my father is slowly going mad. What began innocuously enough as bouts of forgetfulness, nothing to worry about given my father's advancing years, has now acquired an official name: Alzheimer. Securing his condition within the confines of a name has done nothing to ease my heart. The Name-of-the-Father - my father's name - has disappeared, only to be replaced by that of a stranger whose name begins with the letter A. Re-placed - does that mean my father has been put somewhere else? Maybe he moved away from his place and, in the process of returning to it, he missed the mark. His position is skewed. If he does not know where he is much of the time, how can we find him? Alzheimer has displaced my entire family.

It is against this backdrop that I find myself orchestrating the end of my thesis. My father's one-way slide into dementia may be the last piece to be locked into the puzzle. This paper, an attempt to explore our notions of identity and our desire to fix ideas and stories to one spot, is being concluded from a classic Kristevan perspective; a place of disruption and loss of presumed identity. I am afraid that one day soon my father will not know who I am. When I was a child I used to watch a show on T.V. about a time tunnel. I am reminded of this now, because some days I

feel as if I have lost my father in this tunnel. I wonder if, when he retreats back farther than the moment of my birth, the cord that binds us will snap and I will never have been. We will never have been. The psychodrama we all go through when leaving our mothers to align ourselves with our fathers, has become fraught with cosmic black humour for me; an unexpected twist of fate.

In this way the literary narrative that is autobiography resembles the social event that is curriculum: Both function as mediating forms that gather the categorical and the accidental, the anticipated and the unexpected, the individual and the collective. The gap or error or surprise that erupts in the midst of the well-made text is what deconstructionists seek, not to embarrass the author of the erratum but to demonstrate that the power of the person, the text, the meaning, is spurious when we impute it to an utterly consistent, exclusive, bounded and delineated logic.<sup>5</sup>

On days when I can look at this situation through less fearful eyes, I see my father as the sweet and charming man he has always been. Indeed, in moments of lucidity, my father is able to turn his finely-honed sense of Irish humour toward himself; cracking jokes about his ever-loosening grip on our identities. "Who are you again?" he chortles into the receiver during one of our phonecalls. Sometimes I make up a name - "Sophie" is a favourite. At other times I find it important to stress my connection: "It's your daughter, Dad - the beautiful one." "Oh," he says, "that one! Well, o.k." I don't remind him that I am his only one. I must still allow room for laughter.

My mother tells me: "He's not the person he used to be. Everything has changed. You can't expect him to be the same. Your Dad, as you

used to know him is gone." Her loving efforts to protect me sometimes make me so mad; not at her, but the situation that has come to be. It makes me, in turn, want to protect my father. "I know," I tell her, "but he's still a great guy." I also know I speak from a position of luxury, not living with him day-in and day-out. "He hides things in the strangest places," she tells me. "Yesterday he gathered all the batteries he could find in the house." "He does such goofy things! I have to stay one step ahead of him all the time. I never know what he'll do next. He's completely unpredictable."

Seeing people who have long since departed this Earthly plane is an indicator of further decline. My father has entered this phase with much gusto. In a macabre sort of way it is quite humorous. My mother tells me she never knows from one day to the next who their house-guests will be, or who she will end up sitting beside at night when they are watching T.V.

"She was here just a little while ago," my father told me. "Who was, Dad?" "Your Grandma Mac," he said. This would be my father's mother who also had Alzheimer Disease. She died a long time ago. Grandma Mac had been one of Dad's nightly visitors, but suddenly she had disappeared and he felt responsible. Thinking he had lost her, he was very upset. Although three-way telephone conversations between my parents' home and mine are nothing out of the ordinary for us, this one reached a new level of bizarreness. My mother, believing that honesty is the best policy, kept saying, "Tell him she's dead, dear. It doesn't do him any good to let him think otherwise." Meanwhile, my father kept asking if



we had seen her. Finally I managed to say, "Grandma Mac is dead, Dad. She's been dead for a long time." "Well, are you sure? Did you see her?" He seemed more concerned about verifying this piece of information as fact than about hearing that his mother was dead; which, in a way, was a relief. "You know I wouldn't tell you anything that wasn't true, don't you Dad?" "Oh, I know. I know. You're sure, then? I guess if you tell me it's so, then it is." Thinking another hurdle had been overcome, my father quickly dispelled this notion by abruptly declaring, "We better tell the others, then. Someone will have to tell Gord." Upon hearing mention of my father's brother, my Uncle Gordon, I felt hysterical laughter well-up inside me. I guess the tension had been a bit too much. "Well, Dad," I said, "We can't do that, because Gord is dead." "Oh. He's dead, too, is he? Well, we better tell Bob, then, unless he also is dead." Unable to contain my laughter anymore, it burst forth in huge guffaws. Wiping the tears from my eyes I fairly shrieked, "Yep! He's dead, too!"

Repressed, psychic energy escapes in gasps when unpredicted events in the external world preoccupy the social self sufficiently so that its 'lid' on the unconscious loosens, and energy escapes.<sup>6</sup>

The sixth chapter of John Lechte's book, Julia Kristeva, opens with an epigraph containing a quote from Kristeva's Powers of Horror. In this quote Kristeva describes the subject matter of Céline's writings as "horrified laughter: the comedy of abjection.... An apocalyptic laughter."<sup>7</sup> Some of Kristeva's writings focus on the three emotional

conditions of horror, love and melancholy; these states being, she feels, indicative of the "times in which we live."<sup>8</sup> Lechte understands Kristeva to be saying that the condition or state of horror in which we sometimes find ourselves is terribly powerful, but the more we ignore or repress this feeling, the more power we actually accord it:

Through a refusal to confront the abject, therefore, a fundamental aspect of individual and social life remains in oblivion, and our understanding and capacity to cope are thereby greatly diminished.<sup>9</sup>

It may help to understand Kristeva's belief that we must face the abject and the horrible in our quest to truly understand language, if we turn our attention for a moment to the topic of the acquisition of language. Regarding this subject, Lacan and Kristeva diverge somewhat in their interpretations. Lacan believes that language is acquired when an infant is between 6 and 18 months of age; the 'mirror phase' as he calls it. Lechte writes that, for Lacan, this:

marks the intervention of the symbolic (Name-of-the-Father) into the child's universe, and his/her separation from the idyllic state of harmony and continuity which, psychically, *is* the mother.<sup>10</sup>

We experience this loss through language and desire. Put another way, it is through language that we are able to verbalize the way things were before the advent of the symbolic father. It is a mixed blessing, because while acquiring language is seen as a positive occurrence, it marks, however, a death of sorts; the death of the relationship with the mother. Although things will never be the same, now that the father has

intruded upon the scene, this newly-acquired language allows for the description of the former (pre-symbolic) maternal relationship to occur - "a time when the 'I' (subject) was united with the 'mother' (object)."<sup>11</sup> We may not have it anymore, but at least we can talk about our loss.

Even though we have the power of language, we remember the way things were when we were united with our mothers and we desire this state. Before the separation wrought by the acquisition of language we actually did not desire anything, because all our needs were met; a type of ignorant bliss. With the advent of language comes the realization of "as-yet-unsatisfied desire (awakened by) the original sense of loss."<sup>12</sup> This is Lacan's point of view, which differs from Kristeva's at this juncture.

Kristeva questions the notion that we desire all things we do not have. She asks whether there are indeed some things which we do not want; things which, in fact, repulse us. Given the existence of these things, which are repulsive and even full of horror, Kristeva then asks from where they come. If, as Lacan tells us, all our desires harken back to the original sense of loss of the mother, where do these *other* things fit in?

Kristeva tells us that this condition is possible - these *things* are possible - because the advent of the symbolic Name-of-the-Father is not as cut-and-dried as Lacan purports it to be. Rather than portraying an either/or scenario, Kristeva puts forth the idea that the advent of the symbolic is not in itself strong enough to cause the separation from the

pre-symbolic state. In other words, there had to have been moves made on the part of the subject, *prior* to the intrusion of the symbolic, away from the idyllic place of the maternal. This prior state is "the repressed *desir * and (emphasis mine) the symbolic. Before the 'beginning' of the symbolic, there must have already been moves, by way of the drives, towards expelling/rejecting the mother."<sup>13</sup>

Kristeva describes this as being the abjection of the mother. The separation can only occur if the symbolic force combines with the already-in-motion abjection of the mother. "In other words, the abject is what allows the drives to have complete and uninhibited reign."<sup>14</sup> Nor is this state of abjection able to be portrayed or understood easily and clearly. It is fraught with ambiguity, being the:

in-between, what defies boundaries, a composite resistant to unity. Hence, if the subject's identity derives from the unity of its objects, the abject is the threat of unassimilable non-unity: that is, ambiguity. Abjection, therefore, is fundamentally 'what disturbs identity, system, order.'<sup>15</sup>

Although for the purposes of this paper I want to limit the discussion to this part of Kristeva's definition of the abject, I believe it is important to include the concept in its entirety. It is important to understand the distinction made by Kristeva between one who is 'amoral' and one who is 'abject.' Someone who is amoral aligns him/herself with the flip side of the law, as it were. This is the person who abandons all sense of socially-sanctioned moral principles in favour of those which satisfy his/her needs, regardless of the consequences. Morality and ethics do not hold sway for an amoral person. One who is abject, on the other hand, is a

hypocrite, according to Kristeva. This is the person who appears to be law-abiding, moral and upright, but really is just hiding behind that façade, continuing to do evil, amoral and unethical deeds:

In light of Kristeva's insight, we see that the epitome of abjection is the one who is outwardly beyond reproach (like a judge), and yet secretly getting away with murder. In a word, the one who is abject lacks authenticity, that is, lacks any detectable moral consistency.<sup>16</sup>

In order to reconcile ourselves with the "maternal body," Kristeva argues that we must *signify* horror.<sup>17</sup> The split from the semiotic (pre-symbolic) authority that is the mother to the symbolic law that is the father, never a clean separation at the best of times, is further compounded when we refuse to acknowledge the things we abhor; the things that fill us with fear, loathing and horror.

At the same time, we label the mother as a threat to our recognized boundaries, because, to paraphrase Kristeva, she comes to represent the ultimate blurring and eventual erasing of these very same boundaries.<sup>18</sup> Attempting to replace the semiotic mother with the law won't work, Kristeva tells us, because the abject refuses to be controlled by the law. It listens instead to the sounds emanating from the energy drives of the maternal body. This is what Kristeva calls the "writing of the real."<sup>19</sup>

**"Why did the chicken cross the road?" Without even bothering to wait for a response from me, C. hurtles into the punch line: "Because it was white!" Amid shrieks of laughter, C. and her little group of friends run off to play, oblivious (more likely uncaring) of the fact that I don't get it.**

"What is a Joke?" is the title of Daniel Cottom's first chapter in his book, Text and Culture<sup>20</sup>. At first glance the reader might be deceived into thinking the answer simple. I would argue that it is not, for what I consider to be funny, may not even elicit a smile from someone else. I would also venture to say that what is a joke to me today may not strike me as being funny tomorrow. Having emphasized the dependence of humour on individual

sensibilities, I must also acknowledge its universal nature. I believe that there are some kinds of humour that make us all laugh. I begin this discussion on humour, therefore, by stating what may be the obvious: humour is an enigma.

In his attempt to define what makes us laugh, Cottom includes an assortment of responses from, for example, Freud, who suggested jokes "represent a fundamental rebellion against all social laws extorted from our unconscious drives," and Bakhtin, who saw laughter as a kind of liberation.<sup>21</sup> Cottom himself writes that a joke is about the seriousness and power of language, as well as the demystification of that power. He goes on to say that we all want to be able to reject an arrogant cultural authority.<sup>22</sup>

It is true. Language is cloaked in an aura of mystique. My Kindergarten children find themselves ensconced in this atmosphere of words. For some it must be like a dense fog; unpenetrable in its opaqueness. I find myself constantly ensnared in its swirling tendrils. I am often excluded from the "in-group" of stand-up comics in my room; barred for reasons of so-called sophistication and, yes, age. I am forced to admit that I become, at least in their eyes, that arrogant cultural authority described by Cottom; rejected by this powerful lobby of young wits.

The subject of laughter occupies a prominent place in the writings of Julia Kristeva. I also believe that she understands laughter to be something other than what most would believe it to be. Not to say that Kristeva does not understand laughter as being a release of tension, or a joyous moment to either be savoured alone or shared; she does. But, in true Kristevan fashion, she understands laughter in a variety of ways, with no one definition sufficient to cover all aspects of this condition. She describes laughter as a rupture, a practice and as being apocalyptic.<sup>23</sup> She associates it with what she calls poetic language. Kristeva regards laughter very seriously and, if we are to follow her thinking in this area, we need to understand laughter in this context as well.

Laughter may not be a laughing matter after all.

Kristeva's view of language is also multi-faceted. Not only does she talk about language being poetic, but she also describes it as being feminine, musical, negative, thetic, semiotic and symbolic, to name a few. Visualizing language through Kristeva's eyes offers us a vantage point from which to examine her ideas in more depth.

In his book, Julia Kristeva, John Lechte concludes his first chapter with a section called, "The missed (Anglo-Franco) encounter."<sup>24</sup>

In this section Lechte directs our attention to the notion that, "Two different conceptions of language can be seen in operation."<sup>25</sup> He

uses the following terms, employed by Shoshana Felman in her book about J. L. Austin, to clarify his thoughts and ideas. Felman calls the first conception of language "constative." It is descriptive and used as " 'an instrument for the transmission of *truth*, ... of the real.' " Contrasted with this is the second conception of language, which Felman calls "performative." It means " 'to do; to act . ' " Austin, in Felman's book,

**During snack time the other day  
I overheard J. chanting:**

**Cinderella,  
Had a fella,  
Went upstairs  
And kissed a snake,  
How many doctors  
Did that take?**

**Not only did this make all the  
children at that table laugh  
uproariously, but it opened the  
door for a barrage of rhymes  
and chants made up on the  
spot; each child unabashedly  
contributing, confident in his or  
her ability to make the others  
laugh.**



describes performative language as a " 'field of enjoyment (jouissance) and not of knowledge (connaissance).'"<sup>26</sup>

Although the preceding ideas were presented by Felman and Lechte in support of their argument that the French intellectual scene in the early 1960s was quite different from its American counterpart, I believe that they also illustrate well the enigmatic character of humour. Some of the French writers and thinkers during this time felt that language was more than *écriture*, which limits it to its connection to truth and reality; the constative conception of language. Kristeva and her contemporaries

**Knock, knock.** put forth the notion that language is also *écriture*.

**Who's there?** This allows for a "view of writing as an

**Mickey Mouse's** experience of limits ... and jouissance."<sup>27</sup> "The

**Underwear!** performative is 'doing things with words' - thus I make a promise when I say 'I promise.'"<sup>28</sup>

Austin, in Felman's book, says that we have failed to accord the proper amount of consideration to humour that we should. It is more than simply a matter of style or an incidental piece of writing. Humour, Felman tells us, "centres Austin's theory in the '*force d'énonciation*' - the 'force of uttering.'" She goes on to say that, "Humour rather insists in his discourse and, in this way, simultaneously seduces, and produces jouissance in, the listener/reader."<sup>29</sup>

Toward the end of Lechte's first chapter he concludes his remarks about the French and American intellectual scenes by writing that Felman

herself follows the tradition of the important French thinkers not by:

avoiding Don Juanesque scandals in thought, but ... by provoking them to the maximum extent possible. And, above all, the scandal committed by the Don Juans of history is to infuse a joy of language into language as communication.<sup>30</sup>

*To infuse a joy of language* - I witness this every day in my Kindergarten class. There is a playfulness in the way my children talk that, I think, sets them apart from the older children in the rest of our school. They derive great pleasure from just saying sounds. There is a reckless abandon of the rules governing meaning. Perhaps the meaning exists in the sound; notes versus lyrics. As an adult, I am anxious to understand what someone is saying to me; so anxious, in fact, that I zero in on that particular aspect of communication without allowing the sounds of the words as they are uniquely strung together to affect me. In order to hear the sounds, I must make a conscious effort to suspend my conscious efforts. I am reminded of James Joyce, who writes in Ulysses:

Curly cabbage *à la duchesse de Parme*. Just as well to write it on the bill of fare so you can know what you've eaten too many drugs spoil the broth. I know it myself. Dosing it with Edward's dessicated soup. Geese stuffed silly for them. Lobsters boiled alive. Do ptake some ptarmigan. Wouldn't mind being a waiter in a swell hotel. Tips, evening dress, halfnaked ladies. May I tempt you to a little more filleted lemon sole, miss Dubedat? Yes, do bedad. And she did bedad. Hugenot name I expect that. A miss Dubedat lived in Killiney. I remember. *Du, de la, French*.<sup>31</sup>

When he reads Joyce, Lechte tells us that:

Non-meaning - the poetry - captures my imagination, grips me from outside myself. I accept the challenge Joyce lays down ... I accept the challenge of non-meaning."<sup>32</sup>

Within the scope of his project, Lechte situates Kristeva's intellectual explorations in three distinct periods, the first of which concerns her writing from the 1960s and early 1970s, which:

<b>Give me five!</b>	<p>... outline a theory of semiotics capable of describing poetic language both as the 'productivity' of the text and as a specific form of negativity. Kristeva scrutinizes linguistics, various logics, and some aspects of mathematics in order to see whether they offer a rigorous way of developing a theory of the dynamic and unrepresentable poetic dimension of language: its rhymes, rhythms, intonations, alliterations - melody; the music of language, in short; music which is even discernible in everyday speech, but which is in no sense reducible to the language of communication.<sup>33</sup></p>	<b>Stuck in the barnyard,</b>
<b>On the side.</b>		<b>P. U.!</b>
<b>In the pool.</b>		<b>Somebody blew it.</b>
<b>You're cool!</b>		<b>It's you!</b>

The same word, for Kristeva, can have a different meaning, depending on whether it is used as poetic language or as communication.

Referring to Joyce once more and the repetition of the word "yes" in the final section of his novel Ulysses, Kristeva tells us that every time the character Molly Bloom says "yes", she endows it with a different meaning. This is a poetic use of the word "yes"; one that is to be

**J. was a child who found talking difficult and eating easy. One day he and another child got into a fierce argument. Being falsely accused angered J. so much that speaking became even more difficult than usual. After an inordinate amount of spluttering, J. calmed down enough to issue this invective:**

**You ...**

**You lie!**

**You lie!**

**You lie like ...**

**You lie like ...**

**Ice cream!**

**It was one of J.'s finest moments.**

understood in a different context than that of communication.

It is this "realm of the pre-symbolic, or that dimension of language which constitutes the basis of poetic language" that Kristeva refers to as '*le sémiotique*'.<sup>34</sup> When dealing with poetic language Lechte cautions us not to rush the process. In a specific reference to the writings of Joyce, Lechte (and through him, Kristeva) tells us that, "A rush to interpretation risks forcing Joyce's work (or any work of art) into a rigid framework of the 'same' where the 'other' could not become part of ourselves, that is, become part of our own identity."<sup>35</sup>

This is also a process that is never-ending and, as such, will be a work-in-progress; an unfinished tale. This is the interplay of the meaning and "non-meaning," or poetic referred to earlier by Lechte.<sup>36</sup>

I particularly like the way Lechte describes poetic language as "words caught between the real and the symbolic."<sup>37</sup> He talks about a landscape of language and a 'warping

process' that results in a:

deformation of the symbolic that at one and the same time pluralizes meaning and gives rise to the *echo* ... of the real: language returning to its origin in the semiotic, poetic dimension of the signifying process.<sup>38</sup>

When Lechte writes about facing the challenge

of understanding Joyce, he echoes Kristeva's

belief that we, as readers, must be put into

question or "feminized." This is the way to a

'resurrection' as a renewal of the self in

language."<sup>39</sup> For Kristeva, this is feminine, because when we question

our identities we are also questioning or disrupting "the Name-of-the-

father as the embodiment of the paternal function ... and thus the

Symbolic as the order of language and signification."<sup>40</sup> Kristeva also

describes the "feminine element as '*chora*' (a receptacle, as well as a distinctive mark)," which corresponds "to the 'poetic' in language."<sup>41</sup>

Kristeva locates the feminine in "language's unrepresentable materiality

- its indeterminate and almost ephemeral aspect...."<sup>42</sup>

**Knock, knock!**

**Who's there?**

**Orangey.**

**Orangey who?**

**Orangey like**

**my new cool jeans?**

Kristeva writes about poetic language,

particularly at the end of the nineteenth century,

as being "heterogeneous rupture."<sup>43</sup> Although

Kristeva's focus here is directed more toward the

larger arena of what I call "political transgression"

and the pivotal role of the Avant Garde

movement in redefining society during this time, I believe it also speaks

**Liar, liar,**

**Pants on fire,**

**Cut your nose**

**On a telephone wire.**

to us on a more personal level. At first reading it might not seem as if Kristeva's intent is to apply this train of thought to the microcosm of society, such as we find in small groups or individuals. Describing poetic language as being 'signifying practice' (understanding that in contrast to 'experience,' " 'practice' here is homologous with the difference between 'subjective' and 'objective' "), leads one to think in larger terms.<sup>44</sup> This impression seems to be borne out when Lechte writes that "Practice is therefore equivalent to a loss of subjectivity in a 'nonsymbolizable outside....' "<sup>45</sup> For Kristeva, practice (of which transgression is the 'key moment') is the "key to understanding the possible political and social implications of poetic language."<sup>46</sup>

Different from "self-conscious action," which is determined by the predictability of the symbolic, practice "can usher in something new. And for Kristeva, laughter is the prototypical instance of a truly innovative practice...."<sup>47</sup>

**Trick or treat,  
Smell my feet,  
Give me something  
Good to eat!**

Laughter, unpredictable in the time and place of its occurrence, carries a potency that renders it elusive. It explodes. It erupts. It results in varying degrees of loss of control. The energy involved in laughing releases tensions and emotions. Laughter can unite people, as well as isolate them. Kristeva tells us that:

Every practice which produces something new (a new device) is a practice of laughter: it obeys laughter's logic and

provides the subject with laughter's advantages. When practice is not laughter, there is nothing new; where there is nothing new, practice cannot be provoking: it is at best a repeated, empty act.<sup>48</sup>

Generally, it is acknowledged that laughter is a happy thing. It more often than not is associated with the positive, bright side of life. I know, however, that I have also experienced the hysterical side of this emotion; when I did not know if my tears were from laughing or crying. It is unsettling to be in the space evoked by this emotion, because there is a sense of losing control and not knowing what will happen; a feeling of being unhinged.

Abjection and apocalyptic laughter are, perhaps, two of the more difficult terms to understand when exploring Kristeva's work. As unlikely as it might seem, Kristeva shows us how they go hand-in-hand with laughter and carnival. In accordance with her belief in inclusion, rather than exclusion, Kristeva tells us that while we recognize the mother as the person who gives us life, we must also recognize that she gives us death. It is this wrecking of 'the infinite' that "reveals the other repressed face of human existence."<sup>49</sup> Anything that reveals what we tend to repress is apocalyptic and abject, according to Kristeva. I also understand her to be saying that it is necessary, as well.<sup>50</sup> Using the writing of Céline, who instead of distancing himself from what he writes "speaks from within horror,"<sup>51</sup> as a framework for her ideas, Kristeva tells us that he:

has no threats to utter, no morality to defend. In the name of what would he do it? So his laughter bursts out, facing abjection, and always originating at the same source, of

which Freud caught a glimpse: the gushing forth of the unconscious, the repressed, suppressed pleasure, be it sex or death.<sup>52</sup>

**Jingle bells,** Shoving abjection in our faces, as it were, forcing us to  
**Santa smells** look at what we really do not want to see is "beside the  
**90 miles away!** point."<sup>53</sup> We are, however, morbidly fascinated with  
 precisely what we do not wish to see. "Horror and fascination are here  
 entwined."<sup>54</sup> Kristeva tells us that the way to deal with this enigma lies not  
 in repression, but "through a kind of laughter (the expenditure of affect):  
 an apocalyptic laughter, given that we are faced with abjection."<sup>55</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Lewis Carroll, "A Mad Tea-Party," Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass, (Chicago: The John C. Winston Company, 1923) 74-86.

<sup>2</sup> Julia Kristeva, The Kristeva Reader, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) 26.

<sup>3</sup> Kristeva, 26-27.

<sup>4</sup> William F. Pinar, Autobiography, Politics and Sexuality (New York, N. Y.: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1994) 16-17.

<sup>5</sup> Madeleine Grumet, Bitter Milk (Massachusetts: The (Women and Teaching) University of Massachusetts Press, 1988) 67.

<sup>6</sup> Pinar, 38.

<sup>7</sup> John Lechte, Julia Kristeva (New York: Routledge, 1990) 157.

<sup>8</sup> Lechte, 158.

<sup>9</sup> Lechte, 158.

<sup>10</sup> Lechte, 158.

<sup>11</sup> Lechte, 159.

<sup>12</sup> Lechte, 159.

<sup>13</sup> Lechte, 159.

<sup>14</sup> Lechte, 159.

<sup>15</sup> Lechte, 160.

<sup>16</sup> Lechte, 160.

<sup>17</sup> Lechte, 162.

<sup>18</sup> Lechte, 163.

<sup>19</sup> Lechte, 163.

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Cottom, "What is a Joke?" Text and Culture (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

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- 21 Cottom, 4.
- 22 Cottom, 3.
- 23 Lechte, 139-167.
- 24 Lechte, 24-28.
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- 31 James Joyce, Ulysses (England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1922) 175.
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45 Lechte, 139.

46 Lechte, 139.

47 Lechte, 139.

48 Lechte, 139.

49 Lechte, 165.

50 Lechte, 166.

51 Lechte, 167.

52 Lechte, 167.

53 Lechte, 167.

54 Lechte, 167.

55 Lechte, 167.

### "It's Perfectly True"

"That's a terrible thing!" said a Hen; and she said it in a quarter of the town where the occurrence had not happened. "That's a terrible affair in the poultry house. I cannot sleep alone tonight! It is quite fortunate that there are many of us on the roost together!" And she told a tale, at which the feathers of the other birds stood on end, and the cock's comb fell down flat. It's perfectly true!

But we will begin at the beginning; and the beginning begins in a poultry house in another part of the town. The sun went down, and the fowls jumped up on their perch to roost. There was a hen, with white feathers and short legs, who laid her right number of eggs, and was a respectable hen in every way; as she flew up on to the roost she pecked herself with her beak, and a little feather fell out.

"There it goes!" said she; "the more I peck myself the handsomer I grow!" And she said it quite merrily, for she was a joker among the hens, though, as I have said, she was very respectable; and then she went to sleep.

It was dark all around; hen sat by hen, but the one that sat next to the merry Hen did not sleep: she heard and she didn't hear, as one should do in this world if one wishes to live in quiet; but she could not refrain from telling it to her next neighbour.

"Did you hear what was said here just now? I name no names; but here is a hen who wants to peck her feathers out to look well. If I were a cock I would despise her."

And just above the hens sat the Owl, with her husband and her little owlets; the family had sharp ears, and they all heard every word that the neighbouring Hen had spoken, and they rolled their eyes, and the Mother-Owl clapped her wings and said.

"Don't listen to it! But I suppose you heard what was said there? I heard it with my own ears, and one must hear much before one's ears fall off. There is one among the fowls who has so completely forgotten what is becoming conduct in a hen that she pulls out all her feathers, and then lets the cock see her."

"*Prenez garde aux enfants*," said the Father-Owl. "That's not fit for the children to hear."

"I'll tell it to the neighbour owl; she's a very proper owl to associate with." And she flew away.

"Hoo! hoo! to-whoo!" they both screeched in front of the neighbour's dovecot to the doves within. "Have you heard it? Have you heard it?"

Hoo! hoo! there's a hen who has pulled out all her feathers for the sake of the cock. She'll die with cold, if she's not dead already."

"Cool! cool! Where, where?" cried the Pigeons.

"In the neighbour's poultry yard. I've as good as seen it myself. It's hardly proper to repeat the story, but it's quite true!"

"Believe it! believe every single word of it!" cooed the Pigeons, and they cooed down into their own poultry yard. "There's a hen, and some say that there are two of them that have plucked out all their feathers, that they may not look like the rest, and that they may attract that cock's attention. That's a bold game, for one may catch cold and die of a fever, and they both are dead."

"Wake up! Wake up!" crowed the Cock, and he flew up on to the plank; his eyes were still very heavy with sleep, but yet he crowed. "Three hens have died of an unfortunate attachment to a cock. They have plucked out all their feathers. That's a terrible story. I won't keep it to myself; let it travel farther."

"Let it travel farther!" piped the bats; and the fowls clucked and the cocks crowed, "Let it go farther! let it go farther!" And so the story traveled from poultry yard to poultry yard, and at last came back to the place from which it had gone forth.

"Five fowls," it was told, "have plucked out all their feathers to show which of them had become thinnest out of love to the cock; and then they have pecked each other, and fallen down dead, to the shame and disgrace of their families, and to the great loss of the proprietor."

And the Hen who had lost the little loose feather, of course did not know her own story again; and as she was a very respectable Hen, she said -

"I despise those fowls; but there are many of that sort. One ought not to hush up such a thing, and I shall do what I can that the story may get into the papers, and then it will be spread all over the country, and that will serve those fowls right, and their families too."

It was printed in the newspaper; and it's perfectly true - one little feather can easily become five hens."<sup>1</sup>

And now introducing, an introduction of sorts:

Once upon a time ... long, long ago ... there once was ... any one of these fairy tale beginnings could launch an introduction leaving, as they do, room in the imagination of the reader for the existence of a time both before and after. This project, like a fairy tale in more ways than one, is duty-bound to have a beginning, a place to start. This seemingly simple step has proven to be elusive and slippery; turning me into a firm non-believer in placing the definitive article in front of "beginning."

Having said that, I find myself envisioning some sort of end - a denouement - without having established a beginning.

Becoming an atheist in this way has pushed me into Jacques Daignault's skin; an uncomfortable fit at the best of times, as I do not think there is enough room in there for him, let alone my ephemeral substance.

Reading his extraordinary piece, "Traces at Work from Different Places,"<sup>2</sup> left me greatly puzzled, yet intrigued. On a surface level, words being transmitted to the brain, he was indecipherable; annoyingly so! But, somewhere else a resonance ensued, more easily felt than put into verbal straight-jackets. Obsessed with trying to understand his point, I found an onion. Peeling away one layer only led to another; leaving tantalizing odours and perfumes, but nothing to chop, cook and eat. "A 't' TOO MANY"<sup>3</sup> should perhaps have been called "A WRITER TOO MANY," for it led me to Saussure, Foucault, Roussel and Rousseau. Around and around we all went; a dizzying dance that some say is smoke and mirrors created by the master illusionist Daignault, who

remains hidden behind a velvety-black curtain, laughing as we struggle like captured bugs to get out of the jar.

But, back to the "t." Daignault seems to be tormented in his own quest to try to understand school, great thinkers, revered writers and his existence in the midst of it all. He finds himself confused and wondering if he will "ever have the patience to read those pages?"<sup>4</sup> He further writes:

I translate the interpreter: the diversity is a pure inside without any dialectical or analytical relationship to the inside; rather a pure translationship. I am but the effect of a folding, a suture that will not resist for long the passages' forces; impossible to bridge the soul; the infarction is severe. I am even forgetting my name. An unfolded wave carries out the letters, all the letters of my name; throw of the dice (*dé/D*). *Jactus linguae ad 10*.<sup>8</sup> Throw of the dice of language; Q times the letters fall. The signature is the same; but I forgot myself at the very edge of my last name. Only letters remain, tracing the twofold edge of it: D and T. What remains of my name: a lamb, between T and D, strays to a misspelling (*aignaul* instead of *agneau*). To extract from the D a written dictionary. I have already begun, I will pursue *ad infinitum*. Still the T remains. I, a "t." Here is a shortened story of It.<sup>5</sup>

I, in turn, find myself in the awkward position of interpreting the translator. It has been said of Daignault that he resists being tied down; hating his ideas to be trussed, gagged and bound by inflexible words. He makes this resistance palpable by making us squirm. One never knows, when reading Daignault, if he is having us all on, stringing us along, or if he indeed is baring his soul and handing us the straight goods. But, that is part of the allure when the first forbidden bite has been taken. Deciding not to spit out the fleshy pulp forces us to embark on an intriguing journey; not to imply that this will be easy to understand or without frustration.

Why does this murky paragraph draw me in so? I admit to finding it difficult and full of twists and turns. Yet, underneath the inky squiggles, I hear what I think is Daignault's soul beat. I fear I do not understand him, yet he speaks to me clearly. Like Molly Bloom I answer, "Yes"<sup>6</sup> to this underlying beat. Yes, because this is how I feel about teaching and myself as a teacher. I am an effect of a folding that may not be able to resist the pressures of the forces that exist outside who I am, while at the same time trying to shape my very being.

Having finally, in 1985, published a piece over which he had been fretting, Daignault writes that this physical evidence of his thinking strengthened his faith in himself: "The printing form gives rise to the public expression of I. A book as a proof of an existing self."<sup>7</sup> This euphoria was short-lived, for there was a mistake; a "typo." Intending, (and indeed having actually written), to say "*médiation*," the word now read as "*méditation*." Although there were too many "ts," Daignault points out that:

*Méditation* was not the right word but it was written rightly. No one to blame. The anagram of my name - even though I was not aware of it at that time - clearly celebrates what happened: a throw of the dice of language ... I was born to be confused. I am writing at the dictation of errors.<sup>8</sup>

My first instinct, upon reading Daignault's passage about the role of the dice, was to shut the book and vow never to read anything written by this person again! But, when curiosity got the better of me and I immersed myself in this short, yet saturated paragraph, I actually found myself



chuckling. He was funny, this Daignault! His playfulness delighted me. After much probing and turning of the passage this way and that, I made a few discoveries. The French word for the letter "D" is the same as the word for "dice:" *dé*. When he writes about the throw of the dice, Daignault is also writing about the tossing about of his name. Did it take 10 rolls of the dice to come up with *Jactus linguae ad* (all the letters in Jacques Daignault's name), or did it take 18 rolls of the dice to come up with the ten-letter mix that results in *Jactus linguae ad*? Then again, "J" is the tenth letter of the alphabet. This, however, leaves the 18 unaccounted for. Could Rubic's cube be this literal? Referring to the remains of his name as a lamb (the French word for lamb being "agneau," but the misspelling "aignaul" still conceivably being pronounced the same way and definitely falling inbetween the "D" and the "T" in D-aignaul-t), conjures up the image of Daignault the lamb, either meekly following, or about to be slaughtered by the big, bad wolf. A wolf in sheep's clothing, perhaps? Fairy tales abound.

I think it is funny. I also think it is amazing that something as simple as an extra letter can completely alter the intended message of any writer. No matter how perfect the author's manuscript may be, the proof-reader has the ultimate power to undo everything with one quick stroke of the pen, intentional or not; which brings me to the notion of fixed narrative. Just as I think that the priestly requirement of celibacy may be asking the impossible, so do I also question the vow of fixed narrative to which educators are asked to adhere, as well as preach.

Daignault found more errors. He even discovered that a sign he had used intentionally, quoted from another, was itself a mistake; one that had been erroneously printed and reprinted in a work by Roussel from 1742.<sup>9</sup>

... running after rigorous demonstrations and after confirmations is a hunt: literally; for the semiotician reason is not completely innocent. "From Plato and a tradition which lasted throughout the classical age, knowledge is a hunt. To know is to put to death - to kill the lamb, deep in the woods, in order to eat it.... To know is to kill, to rely on death, as in the case of the master and the slave.... Today we live out the results of these wolfish actions. For the 'I,' who played out the role of the lamb by minimizing his powers and placing the declared powers upstream from himself, this 'I' is the wolf.... It has taken the wolf's place, its true place. The reason of the strongest is reason *by itself*. *Western man is a wolf of science*. (Serres, 1983, p. 28)<sup>10</sup>

"Food for thought" suddenly has acquired unpalatable connotations.

The poet kept silent; he probably knew the critical tribunal was calling for executions. To know is to kill. The poet's silence, perhaps confirming the wolf's critique, perhaps not, makes difficult the complete execution of the death penalty. Thinking is still alive. But the play is tight. More and more. Even the middle attracts new people committed to reducing it to a matter of knowledge, to a new epistemological stake: the wolf's place. Thinking happens only between suicide and murder, between miscarried anagrams and applied semiotics; at the letter. Between nihilism and terror. The passage is really hazardous. We always invite the third, but only to exclude it. And the exclusion is all the more violent because the wolf is there. I am in danger.<sup>11</sup>

These are dangerous times. I find myself teetering at the edge; one foot on the ground, the other tentatively poking a toe into an unknown space. Do I jump? Is this leap one of faith? If the space is unknown, unfathomable, how can I be expected to have faith/be faithful? You

see my dilemma, or perhaps not.

A Kristevan spin-off of the "t in transition" can be found in her book, The Kristeva Reader. In her piece, "Stabat Mater," Kristeva writes:

It would seem that the 'virgin' attribute for Mary is a translation error, the translator having substituted for the Semitic term that indicates the socio-legal status of a young unmarried woman the Greek word *parthenos*, which on the other hand specifies a physiological and psychological condition: virginity.... The fact remains that Western Christianity has organized that 'translation error,' projected its own fantasies into it and produced one of the most powerful imaginary constructs known in the history of civilizations.<sup>12</sup>

Staggering implications indeed! I include these examples to draw attention to the precarious position in which words and language find themselves. It is also my intention to portray the emotional flux and intellectual quandary in which I find myself as I write my thesis. Fearful that others will find my ideas lacking substance and stability, my courage is further eroded when I realize how easily my meanings can change shape ... at the drop of a ... "t."

During our weekly seminars one term, Dr. Ted Aoki urged me to "clarify my research question." From there, he assured me, all will unfold as it should. I have never doubted the wisdom of this fine man, yet I avoided this particular part of my project for as long as I could. Not tying myself down to these specifics created a silence; deafening in its unspoken implications. The very term "research question" makes me feel as if I am on the wrong side of the equation. By writing that, I am fully aware of having retreated to that old binary standby; Cartesian dualism at its finest.

My friends and colleagues, in their efforts to support and encourage me, have frequently asked what my thesis was all about. It has consistently been difficult to explain my project to them. At first this really bothered me. Some intellectual weakness on my part was surely at the bottom of this inability to clarify the simple question: "What are you writing about?" As the difficulty continued and the waters remained muddy, I decided to explore this embarrassing situation. For, I thought, if I cannot explain what I am writing about, my thesis must lack substance and merit. How, I rationalized, can I carry on if no one understands what I am talking about?

It strikes me now, after months and months of soul-searching, that the heart of my inquiry lies within that space described by Kristeva. Very much semiotic in nature, it eludes the conventionality of the symbolic realm. This is not to say that this project rejects any connection with things symbolic; however, the very nature of its semiotic aspect likens it to a bar of soap trying to be held onto by a small, wet hand in a bathtub full of hot water and bubbles. Captured only fleetingly, it sails through the air the moment any controlling pressure is exerted, and disappears from sight beneath layers of bubbly foam. In order to be retrieved, it must be touched first, groped for as it were, before being brought to the surface again. Its felt existence now verified through sight.

A beginning equation, then, could read like this: my thesis = a bar of soap!

As I neared the end of my coursework and was about to begin teaching

Kindergarten for the first time, (in hindsight, a critical point in my life), I had the extraordinary experience of being a student in the class of a Noted Scholar: Dr. William Pinar from Louisiana State University. It was summer session at UBC; the course, "Advanced Seminar in Curriculum." Bill's course description, although interesting, did not at first seem out of the ordinary:

This course is an introduction to representative works of contemporary curriculum theory. Students are expected to acquire a working knowledge of contemporary curriculum thought, its historical antecedents, and to link aspects of that knowledge to their own specializations (if these are other than curriculum theory) and/or to their classroom experience.

As I read farther down the page of his course outline I got my first clue that this class might be ... different. In the "Requirements/Assignments" section Bill had written: "Theatrical presentations are encouraged." Under "Evaluation" I found: "Originality will be the primary although not exclusive determinant of grades." I remember Bill telling our small group that he was not adverse to humour. It was only the first day, but already I felt the promise.

The course readings were comprised of mostly, to me, unfamiliar names. I knew Anyon, Apple, Giroux and Kliebard; but Grumet, Doll, Padgham, Jagodzinski, Aoki, Taubman, Daignault and even Pinar himself, to name but a few, were strangers to me. Who were these people and why had I not encountered them before?

I can honestly say that, so near the end, this was the beginning.

A few years later I find I still use superlatives whenever I try to describe what happened in that class. Like some unplanned chemical experiment, all the elements in that compound called "EDCI 572, sec. 952" came together in a combustion, the likes of which none of us had experienced before.

The ramifications for me were great. I switched from an M. Ed. to an M.A. in Education programme, which meant thesis instead of comprehensives and a paper. I had the great honour to do an independent study with Dr. Ted Aoki. It was during those Saturday morning seminars at Ted's that I met Julia Kristeva, literally, although not in person.

There was to be no end of corners being turned.

My original form describing my Masterly intentions is creased and worn, the edges softened from so much handling. It seems so long ago that I set out to explore "The Year 2000." Dis-illusioned, -gruntled and -satisfied, my well-laid plans disintegrated in the twinkling of an "I."

The final ingredient in this mixture that turned my world upside down and inside out was Dr. Ricki Goldman-Segall, my brave advisor. It was in her course on "Video Ethnography" that my faith in this project was shored-up. When she asked me *how* my thesis would look I knew I was headed in the right direction, or at least that I would not be traveling alone.

When I was doing my undergraduate work, "training" to be a teacher I

remember being on a practicum where the teacher would not allow one of the children to use his left hand to write something on the chalkboard. I remember disliking writing dayplans that had to follow a precise formula. I remember one of my most exhilarating classes and practicums; exhilarating because my professor gave me and a fellow student room to move. By that I mean we were made to feel that already we were great teachers and could do anything and do it well. I remember taking classes where some students felt if they could figure out the angle the professor was coming from they would know how to write and what to write in the assignments; a notion that never sat well with me.

I remember the greatest principal I ever had seemed to truly enjoy the way I teach. He believed in me and encouraged me to listen to my heart when I was in my classroom with my children; a powerful legacy indeed.

One of the best things a student ever said to me was, "Ms. McMillan, you are so funny!"

I have been teaching for 14 years; a drop in the bucket that is also as vast as an ocean. Sometimes I derive comfort from sitting at my desk late on a Friday afternoon, when the children have gone and the school is diffused with a calmer energy, writing a day plan for every day of the week to come. It looks so neat, those five compartmentalized sections.

I often forget to look at these day plans.

I love the way school feels. The storage room, (with its floor-to-ceiling shelves stocked with every kind of paper imaginable, painting and drawing supplies, the haunted house with the plastic black spider dangling from one of its windows that occupies a place of honour in the foyer of my school every year at Hallowe'en and then is packed away in this room until the next year when it is dragged out and dusted off once more) sends me into paroxysms of joy. Sometimes I just go in there to look at and smell everything. School pulsates with its own special rhythm and music. September has become my New Year's Eve, filled as it is with hope, expectations and dreams.

I love being a teacher.

All of this, my story, is why Kristeva calls to me. It is her discussion of the semiotic that draws me to her writing. I believe that, in our effort to "validate" education, we have forsaken something that has always been difficult to put into words. Words, like currency, are tangible. Evidence is tangible; "hard" evidence even more so. I have been told the history of Sputnik and how that gave science the upper-hand. My descriptions, even now, speak in gendered terms of hierarchy.

Post-structuralism/-modernism is "hard," but defined differently than in the preceding paragraph. Julia Kristeva is "hard." Some of what she writes is completely unpenetrable to me. Other things pierce me to the quick, leaving me gasping a single affirmation. One might say Julia Kristeva is marginalized; a theme she herself expounds when describing her own



existence as an exile and a foreigner.

Kindergarten is marginalized. Considered unnecessary by some, it has met its demise in other places. Kindergarten teachers exist on the fringes. Physically, our classrooms are often located away from the centre. Our schedules do not mesh with the rest of the school. Our curriculum, lacking definition, presents us with general milestones of achievement. I include this not as a negative, but as another example of how we remain set apart. I do not think that Kindergarten is taken seriously by many. I know we are loved and adored by the rest of the school community ("Look at the little Kindergarten kids. They are so cute."), but there is inherent danger in that sentiment, as well.

Anything goes in Kindergarten. Philosophically I am not opposed to that, but I tend to think that my personal framework for understanding that statement bears more weight and substance, speaking as I do from somewhere on the inside edge, than when uttered from another place by someone else. What I mean is that the space of Kindergarten is fluid. The children who come through my door at the beginning of September represent every point on the continuum. Some are only four-years-old. Some are terrified. Others can hardly wait to jump in the thick of things. I do not think that there is *one* place from which to start. Kindergarten has many different doorways and windows through which the children can enter.

### "A Confederacy of Dunces"<sup>13</sup>

I find the ideas of Cleo Cherryholmes in his intriguing book, Power and Criticism: Poststructural Investigations in Education,<sup>14</sup> to be provocative and stimulating, especially in light of the notion of fixed narrative. In his discussion about the ease with which we take as "givens" the various things we do in education (e.g., testing and grading), Cherryholmes emphasizes what I think is a vital issue. He tells us that we must question what structures us in the first place. His belief is that these structures are very much an issue of power relations. Cherryholmes writes that when we are immersed in our teaching, we accept certain ways of doing things. These are the initial givens we must be diligent about questioning.

This foundation that we so readily accept becomes the metanarrative upon which our basis for educational discourse rests. The use of the definitive article in front of metanarrative is crucial, because within that small word lies the powerful assumption that there is only *one* way to understand what is being said in this conversation. Cherryholmes expresses his doubt in the belief in this monologue. Instead, he suggests, it is much more likely that there are layers upon layers of narratives. Bakhtin's concept of polyphony is evident here.

In his argument against structuralism Cherryholmes writes that "structuralist assumptions contain arguments that subvert themselves".<sup>15</sup> For him this is the most serious objection to this way of thinking. Because systematic knowledge is a given in structuralism, it involves the creation of a

"transcendental signified."<sup>16</sup> Cherryholmes understands a transcendental signified to be a foundation or piece of knowledge that is considered to be above the rest and against which other knowledge is measured. He cites Tyler's Rationale, Bloom's Taxonomy, Schwab's "Practical 4," "effective schooling," "back-to-the-basics," "critical thinking" and "excellence in education" as examples of transcendental signifieds. As poststructuralists we must, therefore, ask: *Where* do these transcendental signifieds come from?; *How* were they produced?; *Why* did they originate?; *How* are they reproduced?; *Why* are they authoritative? and *What* do they assert?<sup>17</sup>

I find Cherryholmes' reference to Derrida pertinent to my thesis. Cherryholmes tells us that Derrida focuses on the written text in his argument that meanings are always *dispersed* and *deferred*. According to Derrida, meanings are dispersed, because when trying to define one word the words in that definition must also be defined, resulting in the definition of the definition having to be defined *ad infinitum*. Meanings are deferred, because the constant defining of the definitions keeps thrusting or deferring the meaning of the word into the future. The result of this is always an open-ended process, which destroys the structuralist position of fixed-meaning or -narrative. *Poststructural*, therefore, denies the presumption of fixed meaning.<sup>18</sup>

Cherryholmes believes that we have a shared sense of "meaning." Even though he goes on to say that this sense tends to be structural, we recognize that a poststructural view of "meaning" can be found in

ongoing discourses, rather than isolated words. Structuralism tends to work with binary opposites which, in turn, tend to become aligned with more rigid ways of thinking and ideologies which prefer to draw inflexible boundaries.

Regardless of whether a work is quantitative or qualitative in nature, it will always be "incomplete and interest-relative:"<sup>19</sup> incomplete, because no matter how thorough an explanation is, it can never cover all aspects of each situation or event <sup>20</sup> and interest-relative, because researchers must choose what they want to explain. This leads nicely into Cherryholmes' assertion, which I find to be a persuasive argument, that instead of viewing some knowledge as transcendental signifieds, or as pieces of information in competition and conflict with each other, it would be more beneficial to think of them as "critical discourse." This turns the focus away from the binary position of right or wrong and winning or losing to what instead becomes "a search for the best argument."<sup>21</sup> I understand Cherryholmes to be telling us that the problematic of transcendental signifieds happens as a result of institutional pressure or positional authority. Rather than allowing the search for the best argument to take place we sometimes allow power and ideology to distort the direction we take. His most pertinent question then becomes directed toward the issue of classroom practices which occur as a result and for the sake of accountability.<sup>22</sup>

In the course of this argument, Cherryholmes also cites some of the views put forth by Apple and Giroux. Apple cautions against the deskilling of

teachers, something that can happen when too much reliance is placed on pre-packaged curriculum materials and texts. Becoming too dependent on these materials can result in a distancing of the teacher from the very intimate and personal activities of planning and creating for a specific group. Giroux supports this line of thinking by pointing out that the false assumption that schools are politically neutral can easily be made when approaches to literacy become too technical.<sup>23</sup>

I have been struck over and over again, throughout the many varied readings I have done while researching this project, with the repeated appearances of the concepts of multiple truths, layers of meaning, the deconstruction and rejection of ideas which have been taken to be *the* truth for so long and the overpowering sense of the move away from dualism and binary opposites to a position which allows and, indeed fosters, a climate for polyphonic vocalizing. Monologues are no longer enough to sustain us.

Foucault shouts at me when he tells us that everything is *dangerous*! In fact, Cherryholmes writes that Foucault might say " ... words do violence to

things."<sup>24</sup> Continuing with this train of thought, Cherryholmes writes that the ethical and political choices we make every day are based on which ones we determine to be the most dangerous.<sup>25</sup>

The history of curriculum, according to Cherryholmes, is full of conflict and turmoil (echoes of Kristeva's ruptures), because it lacks the structure of an

academic discipline which would be able to shape our goals, orient our research, or define our problems.<sup>26</sup> I find it interesting to note that, similar to Kristeva again, Cherryholmes writes that metaphors of death and illness have been used over and over to describe curriculum. He goes on to say that while all fields of study experience turmoil and conflict, the field of curriculum has been particularly exacerbated by its independent nature.<sup>27</sup>

Tending as we do to pair things in binary opposites, Cherryholmes cautions us to examine these pairings closely, because the concept we value most tends to be the first one of the pair. When talking about child-centred versus subject-centred education and theory versus practice, for example, the order within the pairs will ever be dynamic, depending "upon the reigning transcendental signified."<sup>28</sup> Cherryholmes says it well when he writes that it is possible to have a structural analysis of curriculum and be able to gain insights from it, but " ... structural assumptions contain elements that eventually undermine structural interpretations."<sup>29</sup>

Since World War Two there has been a succession of attempts to somehow ground or fix curriculum, *but none have worked*.<sup>30</sup>

During my first course of my Master's programme I learned about the four types of educational philosophy, or the four "approaches," if you will, towards teaching: fundamentalist, traditional, progressive and radical. At first I liked the idea of being able to fit everything neatly into these four packages. I was not sure if I could live up to the standard of a

radical Freire, but was convinced I would find good companions in the progressive party. After all, how could I go wrong with Dewey?

And then I came across Elliot Eisner and The Educational Imagination. His ideas began the unraveling of the fabric with which I had so carefully cloaked myself. He kept tugging away at that thread until the edges were frayed and the material itself had lost its ability to protect me from the elements, due to all the holes.

What happens to the rhythm of the pendulum when it passes over a hole?

To criticize this phase for its 'ideological bias' - whether phenomenological or more specifically phonological or linguistic - without recognizing the truth it has contributed by revealing and characterizing the immanent causality and/or the presence of a social-systematic constraint in each social functioning, leads to a rejection of the symbolic and/or social *thesis* (in Husserl's sense of the word) indispensable to every practice. This rejection is shared both by idealist philosophy, with its neglect of the historical socializing role of the symbolic, and by the various sociological dogmatisms, which suppress the specificity of the symbolic and its logic in their anxiety to reduce them to an 'external' determinant.<sup>31</sup>

Kristeva emphasizes that the point is "not to replace the semiotics of signifying systems," but to "postulate the *heterogeneity* of biological operations in respect of signifying operations...."<sup>32</sup> She goes on to say that, because semiotics is a metalanguage it:

can do no more than postulate this heterogeneity: as soon as it speaks about it, it homogenizes the phenomenon, links it with a system, loses hold of it ... reordering the psychic drives which have not been harnessed by the dominant symbolization systems ... all (referring to poetic language, music, dancing,

painting) seek out and make use of this heterogeneity and the ensuing fracture of a symbolic code which can no longer 'hold' its (speaking) subjects."<sup>33</sup>

There can be no pendulum swing when, as Kristeva writes:

This is a moral gesture, inspired by a concern to make intelligible, and therefore socializable, what rocks the foundations of sociality. In this respect *semanalysis* carries on the semiotic discovery of which we spoke at the outset: it places itself at the service of the social law which requires systematization, communication, exchange. But if it is to do this, it must inevitably respect a further, more recent requirement - and one which neutralizes the phantom of 'pure science:' the subject of the semiotic metalanguage must, however briefly, call himself in question, must emerge from the protective shell of a transcendental ego within a logical system, and so restore his connection with that negativity - drive-governed, but also social, political and historical - which rends and renews the social code.<sup>34</sup>



**"no more 'i love you's'. The Language is Leaving Me in Silence."<sup>35</sup>**

Soon after school started in the Fall, A. joined our class. Usually I can recall these initial meetings clearly, but not in this instance. I think those first impressions, the ones I have always been cautioned against according too much weight, and which I have always chosen to value and believe, must have been overshadowed by the way in which A. has chosen to exist in the world into which he has been thrust. It is not a world of his choosing. That he has made abundantly clear; an amazing statement, given the complete silence in which it has been delivered.

A.'s brief six-year-existence has already been crammed with more events than many of his contemporaries; in fact, more than many of mine. The move from his birthplace led to the break-up of the family. What started as separate lives lived on different continents ended in a failed attempt at reconciliation in another new country. A smaller move, yet one that seems to have promoted the biggest schism, propelled A. through our classroom door.

These intimate details, learned much after the fact, have given me something on which to hang the odd persona which A. prefers to don every time he joins us at school. Although it is cold and small, comfort is still derived from being able to label A.'s behaviour.

Although silent and uncomfortable about initiating any action, A. has never been self-effacing. It is hard to imagine such a silent, unmoving person having so powerful a presence.

The other children were immediately intrigued with their new friend and remain so even now. They found him amusing, because of his behaviour. A. became a game for them in a way and, now that they have worked out their existence together they delight in his antics. Watching this from the sidelines has been a constant source of wonder for me. What requires considerable effort on my part comes easily to my children. Their intuition about A. is so accurate it is almost frightening. Their patience with him is apparently never-ending. They sense his achievements, (although whether these feats are recognized as such from A.'s perspective remains unanswered for the time being), applauding and cheering with all their hearts whenever A. does something that makes him "fit in." For his part, A. grins widely, but hides his face whenever this raucous reaction erupts.

The dreams began around Christmas. Haunting visions, in which I heard the sound of A.'s voice, inhabited my nights and began to spill over to my waking hours. The desire to hear A. speak took on more than a tinge of obsession. Fearful that I had unconsciously put on the instigator's hat, I knew that I had at the very least become a witness to some sort of psychotic break-down. A. had become quite ingenious in his evasion of speech. Like preverbal identical twins, we had developed our own unique language; a combination of signs, remembered by me, and gestures created by A. Having never lost my love and fascination of visual language I became spell-bound by this enchanting young sorcerer. By the time I realized what was happening the web had been

spun.

Have you ever "heard" a small child laugh soundlessly?

Working with deaf children shattered the myth that being deaf was synonymous with being silent. Although the pitch and intonation of a deaf child's vocalizations differ from those of his or her hearing peers, the fact remains that even the language of the hands is frequently accompanied by sounds.

Have you ever "heard" a small child make a conscious effort to laugh soundlessly?

Can you imagine the terrible amount of energy it takes to suppress the voice; to keep it stuffed deep inside?

I began to see the toll this decision was taking on A. The change was very subtle, but when I deleted the middle and looked at only two images, that of the first time I saw A. contrasted with what he had become by Christmas, I was shocked.

On one level A. had become a sophisticated communicator, albeit a completely silent one. I felt almost smug about the way I had resolved this "problem." A. and I communicated well. Unwilling to utter a sound, he was most enthusiastic about using his hands; tugging on my arm, patting my leg, pointing to desired objects or destinations, painting 3D pictures in the space around him and mimicking my formal signs back to him. I was teaching him, I reasoned with myself. Look at how well he

was signing! Eventually it dawned on me that to some deaf children, this may have been a "normal" progression of language development, but A. was not deaf. Nor was he nonverbal outside school. His family assured me that A. talked so much at home, in fact, that they had to ask him to stop in order to let someone else get a word in edgewise.

I was horrified! Ask A. to *stop* talking? It was incomprehensible to me.

This revelation opened the door to a closer observation of A.'s behaviour while in our room. It had become "normal" for me to think of A. as being "odd." If anyone familiar with autistic children had come into our room they would have spotted A. right away. He was engaging in repetitive motions, circling his outstretched arm around and around. The other children delighted in this, immediately imitating him. They were forming connections, laughing and playing together in this strange manner. A. was also mesmerized by minute patterns; drawn to designs on the carpet, on the clothing of a child sitting next to him or in objects that he found in our room. When he was visually captivated by one of these patterns A. would contort himself to get as close to the design as possible, in an effort to touch the design and trace its shape with his finger over and over again. The other children were not as tolerant of this particular behaviour and would edge nervously away from A. as soon as they could.

Ritualistic would be a good descriptor for the behaviour that was now emerging with an alarming frequency. He would not eat his snack (often

potato chips or pretzels) unless he pulverized them into a near-powder state. Sometimes A. would "palm" his chips, placing one at the base of his palm and pressing it into tiny pieces with his finger. I felt that A. was on a downward spiral to some sort of "abnormal" state. I felt responsible for the deterioration of his mental health. I felt some sort of action was required of me. I could not allow this psychosis to continue.

How did I come to wear God's coat?

It was not planned. It just happened. At the end of one day I decided to "make" A. say goodbye to me. I cringe at this language, but it is true. I was trying to force the issue/break the mold/snap him out of it. Knowing that this first step had to be small, I asked A. "only" to make a sound. "Mmmm" would do nicely, I told him. Just a little "mmm." How simplistic of me to use words like "only" and "little." The truth of the matter is, I was demanding a lot from A.; nothing short of his soul, really. I did not know this, however, until we were in the middle of things; impossible to turn back and seemingly impossible to move forward. The Sisters at Holy Name were right. There was such a thing as limbo and it was as terrible as they had described.

A. and I were mired in our own private limbo for hours. He could not bring himself to utter the sounds that I could not bring myself to abandon. Even the intermittent presence of his mother and older brother had no effect until, exhausted, he dredged forth this rusty voice ... so small and nothing like my dreams.

My reactions were mixed. A. had given me what I had asked, but it did not feel sweet.

The next day the rules were established. A. now had to pay a price; his admission fee to our world. Instead of this being a monetary exchange, A.'s fee was verbal. In order to cross our threshold A. had to utter a sound. (Did any of us question A.'s desire to enter our world? I rather think that we all assumed that he would want to join us. Not joining our club was never an option offered to A.)

I will never forget this first day that the law was laid down. Reminiscent of "The Scream" by Munch, A. froze in the doorway, holding his backpack in both hands, his big brown eyes peering at me through his blue wire-frame glasses. His mouth was identical with the screamer's in that it was not a perfect circle, but a wavering loop that reminded me of an elastic band. His mouth, so close to my face (I did not want to risk any little sound escaping my attention), became the opening to a cave leading into dark mystery. It was hypnotic and impossibly surreal.

I became witness to a battle, awful in its raw reticence. A. did as I asked. He opened his mouth, but nothing would come out. He stood awkwardly and open-mouthed for what seemed an eternity.

Squeezing his eyes shut, shifting his weight from one foot to the other and back again, A. struggled with his own private demons. For the first time ever in my life as a teacher I was afraid; afraid of the power I had commanded and fearful that I might have pushed A. over the edge.

"What if he cracked?", I asked myself.

An hour later A. wrenched something resembling "hi" from deep within. It sounded like it had been torn from its secret hiding place and feebly flung into the open for anyone within range to hear. A.'s demeanor made me feel sullied and somehow unclean; a birth gone slightly awry. But ... a birth nonetheless.

These are not, I know, extraordinary stories. I tell them at the risk of boring you. I imagine you have many stories like them and may be impatient with me for telling mine here and for expecting you to read them as if they were special, for designating this very conventional childhood as deserving narration in these scholarly pages. But here is our dilemma: When these accounts are omitted from our scholarship, when we look elsewhere, anywhere, for our sources, our reasons and motives, we perpetuate and exaggerate our exile. We deny that whatever it is we fear we have lost ever existed, and in that denial we cut the ground out right from under us. Unsure, refusing to speak what we know, and practising the sounds and cadences of the canon - of standard English, les paroles, the basics, etc. - we try to connect children to a world that refuses to hear the songs of our own connections.<sup>36</sup>

Madeleine Grumet aligns herself with Kristeva in this regard. In Bitter Milk she writes that, "if the fundamental is an epistemological chimera, it is also a political ploy that promises cohesion but delivers domination."<sup>37</sup>

The story of Hansel and Grettel seemed destined from the beginning to occupy a central place within this project; standing as it does as a metaphor for several things, not least among them the notions of fixed narrative and my own unintentional role as the witch. Until I seriously began writing at the computer, however, I did not realize how integral the concept of "story" is, not only to this project, but to my identity within

my classroom, as well. As a teacher, I am constantly telling stories throughout the day; as do the children tell their stories to me. Every day they burst through the door at the start of school with stories spilling and tumbling from wide-open grins. Envisioning this whole thesis as a story has always felt right to me. Perhaps a more accurate statement would be that I see it as a large story composed of smaller vignettes or portraits, tied together with connecting threads; which brings me back to one of the questions asked by Clifford and Marcus in their book, Writing Culture: "Are not all ethnographies rhetorical performances determined by the need to tell an effective story?"<sup>38</sup>

As I wrote, more stories surfaced; unplanned and often surprising in both their clarity and insistence at being told. They complement and augment each other. By providing these stories with their own space, it has been my intent to illustrate some of the notions put forth by Kristeva. I have tried to avoid a statement-by-statement reiteration of Kristeva's ideas, favouring instead the style with which I have written this thesis, in the belief that my attempt to "be semiotic" throughout adds a depth that would not otherwise exist. This additional interpretive layer has forced me to stretch all the boundaries; self-imposed and otherwise. At the same time it has been hard to wage the battle against the fear that this work will not be considered "scholarly," because it does not involve numbers and tests.

"Who has the right to challenge an 'objective' cultural description?"<sup>39</sup>



I believe we all have.

Challenging the objective while supporting the subjective does not imply accepting one over the other. Singing the praises of the semiotic, as it were, does not imply that the choir will not also sing the symbolic. One of the major cornerstones of Kristeva's work is that of multiplicity. Why do we crave the binary when we could make room for other choices?

"So the curriculum that we study is the presence of an absence."<sup>40</sup>

As I look back on my undergraduate years in the education programme I realize how steeped we were in the indoctrination of: "either/or, Cartesian dualism, if A then B, the symbolic realm, and  $A + B$  always = C." I felt then that I did not fit in with this way of thinking, but I was not confident enough to say I *knew* it. As Madeleine Grumet writes in Bitter Milk:

Our silence certifies 'the system,' and we become complicit with theorists and teachers who repudiate the intimacy of nurture in their own histories and in their work in education.<sup>41</sup>

Near the end of my graduate coursework my hopeful suspicions were confirmed when I began to read other voices. Rather than discovering the flip side of an equation, I felt as if a parallel universe had suddenly become accessible to me; something akin to Einstein's fourth dimension.

Lechte uses the word "trajectory"<sup>42</sup> to describe Kristeva's work. I like that word, because it enables me to visualize only a beginning; a starting-off point, like a shooting star. We might be able to predict a possible end-

point, but there is room for a change in plans. Suddenly we have the option to take the scenic route, which affords us the opportunity of getting lost and discovering uncharted territory. Trajectory implies an arc, not an already delineated course that can only travel from point A to point B.

Pausing for a moment in this notion of trajectory may help us to understand what Roland Barthes, described as Kristeva's most important teacher, meant when he wrote:

I already owe her a lot and have done so right from the start. And now I have been made to feel again - and this time in its entirety - the force of her work. *Force* here means *displacement*. Julia Kristeva changes the order of things: she always destroys the latest preconception, the one we thought we could be comforted by, the one of which we could be proud: what she displaces is the *already-said*, that is to say, the insistence of the signified; what she subverts is the authority of monologic science and filiation.<sup>43</sup>

Kristeva, who constantly promotes multiplicity, is herself described in plurals: "This double heritage, at once Marxist and Formalist, enabled her to make the most of the structuralist impulses she met with in Paris..."<sup>44</sup>

Kristeva used this complex intellectual background to encounter the structuralist movement in a critical fashion. "Even her earliest work (from 1967-8) exhibits that dynamic, process-oriented view of the sign which in many ways still stands as the hallmark of her theoretical production."

Kristeva was able to present a "radical attack on the rigid, scientific pretensions of a certain kind of structuralism," while at the same time also attacking "the subjectivist and empiricist categories of traditional

humanism."<sup>45</sup>

In her discussion of the notion of the abject, Kristeva shows the connection between it and the concept of phobia:

Phobia further complicates both the articulation of the structure of subjectivity, and the concept of abjection. With a phobia, fear goes together *with* an object."<sup>46</sup>

In fact, Kristeva continues, the phobic is someone who is actually afraid of the "unnameable: the lack, or absence at the origin of language which psychoanalysis links to castration."<sup>47</sup> To elaborate further, it is the *difference* of/in the mother (i.e., the fact that she lacks a penis), which cannot be symbolized. This difference lies beyond the realm of the nameable.

Ironically, the phobic, Kristeva believes, tends to be highly verbal. Not being able to name the real source of his/her fear, he/she puts a lot of energy into naming and labelling everything else; dragging, as it were, everything possible into the symbolic realm; everything that is, but the one thing the phobic wants to name:

The void, or lack, resists this naming. A sign, inseparable from its object (because of the frailty of the subject's signifying system), comes to be put in the place of the unnameable void .... Fear is the mark of the failure of language to provide a symbolization (object) to contain drive activity. Fear is thus also the mark of the failure of the paternal function to separate the subject from the mother. The unnameable - precisely because of its link with castration and separation - provides the subject's signifying system with its severest test.<sup>48</sup>

*The void, or lack, resists this naming ... a sign ... comes to be put in the*

*place of the unnameable void* - this speaks to me about curriculum. I think that we have experienced so much difficulty clarifying curricular practices as a result of our failure to recognize this inherent resistance. Curriculum, for me, occupies the very void of which Kristeva speaks. Try as we might, and we have repeatedly done so over the decades, we cannot put curriculum in a neat little box with a pretty, decorative ribbon and bow. It defies us at every turn of the way. Why, I wonder, do we insist upon going over the same ground?

Too much (scientific) formalization, and the poetic or musical side of language becomes imperceptible. Without words or concepts of some kind, however, our appreciation, or even awareness of the musical, material - in a word, poetic - dimension of language remains intuitive, speculative, or maybe leads us to mysticism.<sup>49</sup>

Kristeva talks about "intertextuality".<sup>50</sup> I find myself drawn to that term as one of the clearest ways to describe my own project; this "exercise in intertextuality" as I have come to think of it, multiple truths and layers situated within a narrative that strives to be anything but fixed. Once having said that I am aware of the need to continue with an "about-face", by now voicing my doubt in the existence of anything *but* a fixed narrative of one sort or another.

The very possibility of my thought, of consciousness, rests upon the presence of a 'you' for whom I exist. My thought is a moment suspended between two primordial presences, the 'you' who thinks me, and the 'you' whom I think.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hans Christian Andersen, "It's Perfectly True!" Fairy Tales of Hans Christian Andersen (New York: The Orion Press) 221-223.

<sup>2</sup> William F. Pinar, and William M. Reynolds, eds., Understanding Curriculum as Phenomenological and Deconstructed Text, (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992), 195-215.

<sup>3</sup> Jacques Daignault, "Traces at Work from Different Places," Understanding Curriculum as Phenomenological and Deconstructed Text, eds. Pinar and Reynolds, 196-200.

<sup>4</sup> Daignault, 196.

<sup>5</sup> Daignault, 196-197.

<sup>6</sup> James Joyce, Ulysses (England: Penguin books Ltd., 1922) 704.

<sup>7</sup> Daignault, 197.

<sup>8</sup> Daignault, 197.

<sup>9</sup> Daignault, 198.

<sup>10</sup> Daignault, 198.

<sup>11</sup> Daignault, 199.

<sup>12</sup> Julia Kristeva, The Kristeva Reader, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 163.

<sup>13</sup> John Kennedy Toole, A Confederacy of Dunces (New York: Grove Press, 1987)

<sup>14</sup> Cleo Cherryholmes, Power and Criticism: Poststructural Investigations in Education (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988)

<sup>15</sup> Cherryholmes, 31.

<sup>16</sup> Cherryholmes, 32.

<sup>17</sup> Cherryholmes, 32-33.

<sup>18</sup> Cherryholmes, 38.

<sup>19</sup> Cherryholmes, 79.

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- 20 Cherryholmes, 79.
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  - 23 Cherryholmes, 95.
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  - 26 Cherryholmes, 131.
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  - 36 Grumet, "Curriculum and the Art of Daily Life", N.p. : n.p., n.d. 83-84.
  - 37 Grumet, Bitter Milk (Massachusetts: The (Women and Teaching) University of Massachusetts Press, 1988) 6.
  - 38 James Clifford, and George E. Marcus, eds., Writing Culture, (California: University of California Press, 1986) inside front cover.
  - 39 Clifford, and Marcus, inside front cover.
  - 40 Grumet, Bitter Milk, xiii.
  - 41 Grumet, xvi.
  - 42 John Lechte, Julia Kristeva (New York: Routledge, 1990) 91.

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- 43 Lechte, 1.  
44 Lechte, 2.  
45 Lechte, 2.  
46 Lechte, 160.  
47 Lechte, 161.  
48 Lechte, 161.  
49 Lechte, 91-92.  
50 Lechte, 104.  
51 Grumet, Bitter Milk, 7.

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