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On the Notion of Negativity in Julia Kristeva's Aesthetics

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Abstract

On the Notion of Negativity in Julia Kristeva's Aesthetics

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In this thesis, I investigate the implications of negativity in Julia Kristeva's (1941–) aesthetics mainly through her early works. The notion of negativity, rooted in G. W. F. Hegel's (1770–1831) philosophy, indicates an abstract power to generate and preserve the differences within the dialectical movement towards the truth as a whole. Kristeva partly accepts Hegel's negativity as a principle, or a power engine, that synthesizes the conflicting moments together and constructs the rational subject. However, she critically suggests that the movement of negativity in artistic practices does not converge into the teleological and ideological synthesis in a Hegelian sense. Instead, owing to Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theories, Kristeva claims that such negativity allows the works of art to resist the authority of reason and the autonomous self that have been valued throughout philosophical traditions. For Kristeva, this register of negativity can reactivate psychoanalytic drives in the body and disclose that the seemingly self-identical structure of language and society is split by heterogeneous drives, which can be especially powerful in modern avant-garde literature.

Addressing her notion of negativity, I will mainly examine *Revolution in Poetic Language* (*Révolution du langage poétique: L'avant-garde à la fin du XIXe siècle: Lautréamont et Mallarmé*, 1974) because it features Kristeva's reconceptualization of Hegel's negativity with psychoanalytic premises. I categorize three registers that are complexly implied in Kristeva's negativity. This approach to negativity will ultimately reveal the process in which creating and appreciating particular works of art contest the authority of the rational subject by affirming that subject's drive-based corporeality. Each of these three registers of negativity specifically illuminates how the subject and the sociolinguistic structure are (1) prepared by somatic functions, (2) constructed and stabilized through socialization, and (3) deconstructed, particularly when they engage with the arts.

In conclusion, negativity rendered in the arts can radically dissolve the fixed, self-identical subject and social structure in Kristeva's aesthetics, since such a register of negativity can mediate but not synthesize the rational subject with the heterogeneous bodily drives underlying it. Without reflecting the complex horizons of negativity, Kristeva's claims about art would be rendered mystifying, or reduced either to a simple amalgamation of consciousness and unconsciousness or to the victory of one of them. Therefore, I argue that taking the notion of negativity to be pivotal to Kristeva's theory potentially offers a new understanding of the value of artistic practices in her aesthetics.

Keywords: Julia Kristeva, G. W. F. Hegel, negativity, the semiotic, chora, abject, abjection, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, poetic language, Lautréamont

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Introduction

This thesis investigates the implications of negativity (*négativité*) in Julia Kristeva's (1941–) aesthetics through her early works, mainly *Revolution in Poetic Language* (*La Révolution du langage poétique: L'avant-garde à la fin du XIXe siècle: Lautréamont et Mallarmé,* 1974). Negativity in Kristeva's theory is a notion which she has developed since the late 1960s, and can be understood as a "cause and the organizing principle of the process" which aims to generate, sublate, or revivify the difference through its dialectic movement.[1] Negativity operates through the subject, who is not an ontological entity or autonomous agent in a traditional sense, but a place where meaning is generated and unfolds under the sociolinguistic structure of society. This movement constitutes the subject as procedural, mobile, and fluid, rather than as a fixed model. Starting from this precondition, Kristeva suggests that the movement of negativity conditions irrational contents and distortions of form in modern, avant-garde artistic practices, which are able to fluidize the subject by reactivating drives in the body and by modifying the seemingly static structure that constitutes the subject.

Revolution in Poetic Language shows the Hegelian roots of negativity, Kristeva's psychoanalytic reinterpretations of this concept under the influence of Freud and Lacan, and her subsequent reconceptualization of it in her own vocabulary. In so doing, Kristeva affirms drives, impulses, and bodily urges, together with their objects and their heterogeneity, which have been underestimated as "otherness" throughout the various traditions of philosophy. In her theory, negativity makes it possible to join these irrational objects with the rational signification system, especially when they are presented through the arts. She reformulates this concept of negativity under the influence of Hegel, Freud, and Lacan, each of whom challenged the predominance of the hierarchal mind–body dichotomy in his own way.

[1] Julia Kristeva (1974), *La Révolution du langage poétique: L'avant-garde à la fin du XIXe siècle: Lautréamont et Mallarmé,* Seuil, p. 101. Julia Kristeva (1984), *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Columbia University Press, p. 109. This thesis follows the English translation, with my modifications, in *Revolution in Poetic Language* published by Columbia University Press in 1984. Stated as "Eng" below.

Criticizing their limitations, on the other hand, she endorses more visceral and heterogeneous moments within the sociolinguistic structure, illuminating the radical potential of negativity in the avant-garde art of the late 19th century.

In applying negativity to her criticism of traditional views of the self, Kristeva argues that an affirmative change is only possible when involving oneself in a constant process of engendering differences, rather than settling oneself within a fixed idea of self-identity. G. W. F. Hegel had a strong influence on her perspective, having reformulated difference as something inevitable for identity. In Hegel's philosophy, the spirit develops dialectically through a process of negating its differences from, and conflicts with, the other, then including it as the negative side of the spirit, which thereby attains a more fully determined content. Ultimately, according to Hegel, this constant dialectical movement leads the spirit to its absolute unity, which is truth as a whole. This apparently teleological view has provoked some scholars, such as Theodor W. Adorno, to advance the criticism that this movement towards unity essentially amounts to a subordination to identity.[2] Similarly, while adopting Hegel's thoughts on the movement of negativity and the relationship with the other, Kristeva also attempts to modify his teleological view. In particular, by introducing Freud's psychoanalytical idea that bodily act of expulsing (negating) something is the origin of reason, and Lacan's theory that the subject is always divided within itself, she puts forward her own distinctive standpoint: that the corporeal and intellectual operation of negativity constantly splits the seemingly self-united subject.

In the study of Kristeva's aesthetics, negativity itself has received much less

[2] Theodore W. Adorno, for example, criticizes Hegel for finding positivity that constitutes a whole in every negativity, reducing the individual to the abstract; as an alternative, Adorno suggests a dialectic of nonidentity rather than identity. (아도르노 (이순예 역, 2012), 『부정변증법 강의』, 세창출판사, p. 13, 42.) On the other hand, this sort of criticism faces anticriticism that it misesteems Hegel's emphasis on the difference. Arguments of anticriticism are that Hegelian identity still preserves the difference with the other that is considered nonidentical, and even criticizes the undifferentiated identity that erases the difference and individuality. (See 이성백 외 (2006), 『포스트구조주의의 헤겔 비판과 반비판』, 이학사, 한상원 (2016), 「변증법의 아포리아를 넘어-헤겔, 맑스, 아도르노 그리고 부정성의 생산성」, 『시대와 철학』, 27(2), pp. 103-139, 한상원 (2017), 「규정적 부정과 내재적 비판: 헤겔과 아도르노의 비판적 방법론」, 『철학』, 130, pp. 49-73, 백훈승 (2021), 「헤겔 변증법에 대한 아도르노의 비판은 정당한가?—동일성 개념과 부정 개념을 중심으로」, 『동서철학연구』, 101, pp. 407-428.)

attention than her other notions, such as the abject or abjection. Existing studies of Kristeva's negativity have been mostly developed within other fields; Estelle Barrett, Diana Coole, and Kelly Oliver map the notion of negativity with respect to Hegel, Freud, and Lacan's influences on Kristeva, but rarely differentiate the subtly different registers and functions which negativity implies.[3] Some scholars have reflected on negativity but without scrutinizing the complicated structure of negativity underlying Kristeva's theory of art. For example, Elaine Miller set out to investigate iconoclasm through negativity, but her research does not aim to unveil the different registers which are implicit in the notion of negativity itself.[4] Sina Kramer's review investigates the political subversiveness of negativity, and thereby distances itself from aesthetic implication of negativity.[5] None of these has noted the positive and productive moment of negativity, since they have all focused on the deconstructive register. Preceding studies have thus only vaguely outlined Kristeva's acceptance and criticism of the three theorists, obscuring how their works, and hers, are entangled within negativity, and how art gains its greatest potential through negativity.

In this context, this thesis aims to investigate the conceptual structure of negativity in a systematic way. This thesis categorizes Kristeva's notion of negativity into three registers. This precludes understanding negativity as an inconsistent notion that frequently changes its tune, which may happen if its complexity is not appropriately foregrounded. This approach also enables us to visualize how Kristeva's acceptances and modifications of Hegel, Freud, and Lacan appear differently in each register. Negativity's Hegelian roots are suggested in her first and second registers, reinterpreted through her critical modifications of Freud and Lacan's psychoanalysis. However, she radically differentiates her notion from Hegel's by presenting the third register of negativity, which operates in artistic

[3] Estelle Barrett (2010), *Kristeva reframed*. Bloomsbury Publishing. Diana Coole (2000), *Negativity and Politics: Dionysus and Dialectics from Kant to Poststructuralism,* Routledge. Kelly Oliver (1993), *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind,* Georgetown University Press.

[4] Elaine P. Miller (2014), *Head cases: Julia Kristeva on Philosophy and Art in Depressed Times,* Columbia University Press.

[5] Sina Kramer (2013), "On negativity in revolution in poetic language," *Continental Philosophy Review* 46.3, pp. 465-479.

phenomena. Examining all of these registers is essential in order to understand how the third register can be generated on the basis of the other two.

This thesis will also review Kristeva's later work, *Powers of Horror* (*Pouvoirs de l'horreur,* 1980), as her earlier notion of negativity also underlies the notions of the *abject* and *abjection* in this publication.[6] According to Kristeva, the abject is "neither subject nor object"—that is, something strange or heterogeneous that triggers disgust and a rejection of the subject.[7] It could be read as an in-betweenness that disturbs identity, and it appears in art as a distorted form or as destructive content.[8] *Abjection* means the expulsive action or movement which makes its object an abject. However, previous studies have tended to mystify these operations, or to fail to read the complex theoretical implications of these notions in depth. Scholars such as Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, and Rina Arya failed to describe precisely how the abject or abjection could be ambivalent in and against any culture, although they have implied that these notions have dual moments of construction and deconstruction of the subject and society.[9] Moreover, Barbara Creed and Keith Reader's readings simplify the borderless character of the abject, conditioning that character in terms of cultural relativism in an anthropological sense.[10] As a result, theoretical structures and principles regarding abjection and the abject have been blurred, although these notions implicitly *have* a more or less consistent structure in

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[6] These terms first appeared in Georges Bataille's *Abjection and Miserable Forms* (*L'Abjection et Les Formes Misérables,* 1934) and were later conceptualized in Kristeva's *Powers of Horror*, now being appropriated as an influential term in the wide range of disciplines; not only in aesthetics, art history, and criticism but also in cultural studies and social sciences despite of the abstruseness that Kristeva's original text shows. Winfried Menninghaus (trans. Howard Eiland & Joel Golb, 2003), *Disgust: Theory and History of a Strong Sensation*, Suny Press, p. 370. In 1993, Whitney Museum in the U.S. held an exhibition entitled after Kristeva's term, *Abject Art: Repulsion and Desire in American Art.* which illustrates her strong influence over the world at that time.

[7] Julia Kristeva (1980), *Pouvoirs de L'horreur: Essai sur L'abjection*, Seuil, p. 9. I follow the translated version in English with my modifications. Julia Kristeva (trans. L. S. Roudiez, 1982), *Powers of Horror,* Columbia University Press, p. 1. Stated as "Eng" below.

[8] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 12. Eng. 4.

[9] Hal Foster (1996), *The Return of the Real*, The MIT Press. Rosalind Krauss (1996), ""Informe" without Conclusion," *October* Vol. 78, pp. 89-105. Rina Arya (2014), *Abjection and Representation: An Exploration of Abjection in the Visual Arts, Film and Literature,* Springer.

[10] Barbara Creed (1986), "Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection," *Screen 27. 1*. pp. 44-71.

themselves.[11]

Nevertheless, by introducing negativity in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva did theoretically demonstrate how otherness could attain a special status which both constitutes and resists borders. Thus, visualizing the existing influences of negativity over the abject and abjection may offer a way to clarify their obscure structures. Accordingly, this thesis will explain how Kristeva's negativity affected the later notions of the abject and abjection, clarifying how her thoughts of negativity has been maintained in her later works.

In this thesis, Chapter I examines the pivotal concepts within Kristeva's aesthetics. Psychoanalytic concepts such as the drive and the symbolic will be reviewed first; these stem from Freud and Lacan's psychoanalysis and have been appropriated for Kristeva's aesthetics. The first chapter will also explain Kristeva's other key concepts, such as the semiotic and the chora, aiming in the process to outline the status of negativity in her thoughts.

Chapter II investigates the implications of negativity in its first two registers, distinguishing them by their respective affinity with semiotic organization and the symbolizing function. It first reviews the negativity in Hegel's philosophy from which Kristeva draws the basis of her own account of negativity. It then introduces Kristeva's notion of rejection, which is developed from that of negativity and has a logical analogy with it—she often uses these two terms without a strict distinction—but indicates more of its Freudian roots, and also Kristeva's intention to break with Hegel.[12] Lastly, Chapter II explains how Kristeva's revision of Hegelian negativity, and Freud and Lacan's psychoanalytic theories, are organized in the first two registers of negativity, and how they are implicit in each.

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[11] This problem may stem from the abstruseness of Kristeva's text, *Powers of Horror,* in which abject and abjection are introduced and conceptualized (if we could call them concepts in a strict sense). Maintaining the ambiguity of these concepts and refusing the systematic approach, Kristeva experiments with literary expressions frequently written by a first-person narrator in this publication. As a result, analyses merely focusing on abject and abjection have experienced difficulties in theoretically demonstrating how unpleasant and/or inapprehensible works of art are pleasurable for Kristeva.

[12] However, this thesis mainly uses the term *negativity* to indicate not only Kristeva's originality but also fundamentally Hegelian roots of her notion. In other words, it intends to focus on how Kristeva reinterpreted the thoughts of negativity that has been discussed in philosophical and aesthetic tradition.

Chapter III explains Kristeva's theory of art and adds the third register of negativity, which is characteristic of artistic phenomena. This kind of negativity undoes the stability of the linguistic subject who engages with the poetic language that Kristeva privileges among other genres of art. To illustrate this, Chapter III considers Lautréamont's literature, in which the third register of negativity causes the bodily drives and their objects to return through linguistic representation. Finally, Chapter III notes how the principle of negativity has been maintained in the abject and abjection in Kristeva's later works.

In sum, this thesis argues that Kristeva's negativity potentially explains the dynamic process in which the subject's drive-based body and its heterogeneity are mediated in artistic practices, challenging the long tradition of the supremacy of the unchanging truth, reason, and thought.

I. Background: The subject in process

Generally, Kristeva is known as a structuralist with poststructuralist tendencies, in that the basis of her aesthetics critically refers to European structuralist linguistic theories.[13] Ferdinand de Saussure, one of the representative pioneers of structuralist linguistics, distinguished two linguistic registers: the *langue* and the *parole*; the former stands for the shared system of a language, and the latter indicates the concrete variations in personal usage of the systematic language.[14] Saussure's linguistics focused on demonstrating the principles of language by analyzing how *langue* is static, systematic, and universal.

However, scholars with poststructuralist tendencies, such as Jacques Derrida, have suggested that the "universal structure" model of structuralist linguistics is inflexible. If Saussure's linguistics argued that the combination of the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, poststructuralist linguistics problematizes the closed structure itself that securely connects the signifier to the signified. First of all, it emphasizes the fundamental instability between the signifier and the signified, assuming that the signifier might not reach its genuine meaning and so can always fail to signify the object itself. The poststructuralist perspectives also contend that the structuralist model lacks any element of history, change, or processes. For instance, they draw attention to the potential fluidization of texts through readers' flexible interaction with them.[15] Kristeva accepts aspects of poststructuralist thought and avoids presupposing that the linguistic system is static; instead, she aims to capture the dynamic formations and transformations of texts which the open and fluid structure generates. In summary, Kristeva's aesthetics illuminates how language and society are not simply given but are always within a process.

Kristeva describes the process in which the subject and language are generated in relation to preceding psychoanalytic theories. This chapter therefore first traces

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[13] See Diana Coole (2000), p. 195, Julia Kristeva (ed. Ross M. Guberman, 1996), *Julia Kristeva Interviews,* Columbia University Press, p. 19.

[14] 문경환 (2007), 「소쉬르와 촘스키: 두 유형의 구조주의」, 『기호학 연구』, 21(0), pp. 428-429.

[15] 샤럽 (전영백 역, 2005), 『후기구조주의와 포스트모더니즘』, 조형교육, p. 14.

the concepts developed by Freud and Lacan, and then explains the notions introduced in Kristeva's aesthetics. In particular, Chapter I reviews the role of drives in Freud's theory, and the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real in Lacan's. This is because Kristeva's main theory of the semiotic, the symbolic, and the chora is based on the principle of drives, and is articulated by altering Lacan's subject model.

1. Freud and Lacan's psychoanalysis

1.1. Freud's concept of the drive

In addition to criticism of structuralist linguistics, another theoretical basis for Kristeva's aesthetics is a psychoanalytic approach toward dismantling the authority of the rational self. The Cartesian philosophical tradition has understood the self as a self-united being who can think and reason, and has valued the spirit and the mind over the material and the body. However, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory challenged the authority of the mind by arguing for the presence of the unconscious. The basic premises of Freud's theory are that the unconscious functions beyond the conscious and its objects are what has been culturally suppressed in order to sustain civilized society.[16]

The *drive* (*la pulsion*) appears in Freud's conception of *Triebe* as "the representatives of all the effective forces that arise within the body and are transferred to the mental apparatus," which are "the most abundant sources" of excitation.[17] In other words, it engenders bodily forces such as excitation but is not limited to the corporeal realm, because those forces are conveyed to what Freud calls the mental apparatus.

The quality of the drive may be diagramed as an ongoing wavelength of energy, in that the drive functions when excitement emerges and vanishes when it becomes inactive. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (*Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, 1920), Freud

[16] To illustrate, a child who loves his mother needs to repress his desire because the desire towards his mother is prohibited in a civilized society. However, the repressed object—the mother in this case—does not vanish but remains in the realm of the unconscious, only expressed in a detour, in the forms of tongue slips, jokes, or dreams.

[17] Sigmund Freud (trans. G. C. Richter, 2011), *Beyond the Pleasure principle*, Broadview, pp. 73-74.

distinguishes the two states of a drive's operation: one is called its "charge," which is a "freely moving neurological processes pressing toward discharge," and the another is a "bound neurological process" which is a "secondary process" and follows the charge.[18] When the drives are moving inside the body and produce stimuli, this is a process of the charge. The bound process, on the other hand, is the static state of inactive drives. When the mental apparatus binds the drives' forces as they arrive and transforms their "freely moving charged energy into mainly resting (tonic) charge," this is a bound process that controls the drives' mobile forces.[19]

Freud's theory assumes that the organism maintains a certain quantity of the excitement invoked by the drive in order to preserve itself. Freud "decided to associate pleasure and unpleasure with the quantity of excitation present in the mind but not bound in any way, and to do this such that unpleasure corresponds to an increase in this quantity and pleasure to a decrease."[20] To put it another way, the quantity of the excitation determines pleasantness and unpleasantness. The mental apparatus needs to control this quantity—that is, to inactivate the excitation to a certain extent—unless the organism is likely to fail at self-preservation: for instance, if it does not determine a strong smell from a corpse as unpleasant, it may suffer damage from toxic substances released by the corpse. According to Freud, to ensure self-preservation "the mental apparatus strives to keep the quantity of excitation within it as low as possible, or at least constant." This, in his theory, is how an organism experiences a larger amount of excitation as unpleasant and a smaller amount as pleasant.

Kristeva sees this operation as a "dialectic," because the drive internally arises from the body but the mental apparatus interferes with it.[21] Thus, the drive functions as a bridge between the corporeal and the psychical, the biological and the social.[22] Moreover, it fundamentally oscillates between the flexible and static states. This indicates that the principle of drives is, in other words, a refusal to be fixed in a single state, whether of movement or of stasis. In the functioning of the drives, Kristeva's

[18] Sigmund Freud (trans. G. C. Richter, 2011), p. 74.
[19] Sigmund Freud (trans. G. C. Richter, 2011), p. 98.
[20] Sigmund Freud (trans. G. C. Richter, 2011), p. 51-52.
[21] Julia Kristeva (1974), pp. 151-152. Eng. 167-168.
[22] Julia Kristeva (1974), pp. 151-152. Eng. 167-168.

aesthetics finds the dialectical moment that not only negates the subject's self-unity but also secures its stability.

1.2. Lacan's mirror stage and the subject

Since Kristeva's reinterpretation of the Freudian drives concerns Jacques Lacan's model, this section reviews Lacan's psychoanalytic theory. Problematizing the absence of the subject from existing structuralist linguistics, Kristeva found alternatives in Lacan's theory, which argues that the subject's unconscious is linguistically constructed.

Lacan suggests that three stages constitute the subject: the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real.[23] Firstly, the imaginary is the stage at which the primary subject is developed, especially through the *mirror stage* and the Oedipus complex, which will be discussed later. The term *mirror stage* indicates the infant's earliest phase of development, when he encounters his own image through the mirror. The newborn infant is not aware of his image, which will appear to him only at a certain phase of development, when he acknowledges himself reflected in the mirror. Lacan mentions that the infant up to the age of eighteen months makes "the jubilant assumption" that the specular image in the mirror is identical to himself.[24] The infant's delight comes from discovering the ideal image of himself, in contrast with a fragmented sense of his immature body that experiences "motor impotence and nursling dependence."[25]

Here, the infant makes an imaginary "identification" while imagining himself to be as ideal as the specular image is.[26] However, according to Lacan, this

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[23] Lacan emphasized the imaginary and the mirror stage in the 1930s and 1940s but stressed the dominance of the symbolic in the 1950s in that the mirror stage is inclusive of the symbolic frame. Later, in the 1960s, Lacan showed more interest in the real disclosed by the limitations of symbolic representations with skepticism on the power of the symbolic. 박찬부 외 (홍준기 엮음, 2010), 『라깡, 사유의 모험』, 마티, pp. 68-69, p. 177.

[24] Jacques Lacan (trans. Bruce Fink, 2006), *Écrits,* W. W. Norton & Company, p. 76.

[25] Jacques Lacan (trans. Bruce Fink, 2006), p. 76.

[26] Jacques Lacan (trans. Bruce Fink, 2006), p. 76. Besides, Lacan believes this identification occurs between the infant and his mother. At this stage, the infant satisfies his every desire thanks to his mother, and believes what the mother desires is the infant himself; that is, he is identical to the mother's desire. This will be further discussed in Chapter II.

identification is essentially a "misrecognition" because there is a gap between the ideal, self-united image of the infant and the fragmented senses of the impotent body that he experiences.[27] In other words, the infant and his mirror image are split; this mirror image, which Lacan also calls an *imago*, is an imaginary representative of the united self, and at the same time appears as the *other* to the infant. According to Lacan, the self's imaginary unification in this stage leads to a "fictional direction that will forever remain irreducible," before and even after the infant's socialization.[28] According to Lacan's theory, this fictional direction is what leads the subject, fundamentally divided within himself, to pursue an illusionary self-unity throughout his life.

Lacan notes that the child no longer jubilates before the imago at the age of eighteen months.[29] This is when the child ceases to equate himself with the mirror image, understanding his misrecognition. He now knows that the imago is not identical to himself, even if it seems so. The nonidentity between his mother and the child himself is also negated in this phase. The child transfers from the imaginary to the next stage under these conditions, which Lacan illustrates with the example of Freud's "Fort-Da" game.[30] For Lacan, what is most important is not that the child shouts the words "Fort" and "Da," but that the "first manifestation of language" occurs to the child through play.[31] As Lacan puts it, "[i]n this phonematic opposition,

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[27] Jacques Lacan (trans. Bruce Fink, 2006), p. 80.

[28] Jacques Lacan (trans. Bruce Fink, 2006), p. 76.

[29] 라캉 (맹정현, 이수련 역, 2016), 『자크 라캉 세미나 01권-프로이트의 기술론』, 새물결, p. 303.

[30] While investigating the functions of the mental apparatus, Freud exemplifies the compensation of forgiving the satisfaction of the child's play. The child, holding the end of the thread, throws the cotton reel under his bed, shouting "o-o-o-o" when the reel disappears from his sight. Then he pulls the thread to get the reel back in his hand, yelling "da!" as the object appears again. According to Freud, the sound "o" actually indicates "fort," which is a German word translated to "gone" in English, implying that the object left the child and disappeared. Another word "da" is also a German word for Freud, which means "there[it is]", suggesting the return of the object. Freud interprets this play as an analogy of the relationship between the child and his mother: the child wants to position himself as a controller of the absence of his mother. For the child feels unpleasant when his mother leaves him and does not guarantee the satisfaction of his desires, the child substitutes the mother's place with the object and then gets the satisfaction by freely regulating the presence and absence of the object. Sigmund Freud (trans. G. C. Richter, 2011), pp. 57-58.

[31] Jacques Lacan (trans. J. Forrester, 1991), *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique* (1953-1954), W. W. Norton & Company, p. 173.

the child transcends, brings on to the symbolic plane, the phenomenon of presence and absence. He renders himself as a master of the thing, precisely in so far as he destroys it."[32] The Fort-Da game, then, substitutes the thing with its symbol by introducing a manifestation of language with a pair of symbols. Throughout this process, the self attains the ability to handle the symbols: it becomes the subject which is dominated by the symbolic. The consequence, in which the subject understands and operates the linguistic symbols that are socially organized, is the symbolic stage in Lacan's theory.

The third stratum in Lacan's psychoanalysis is called *the real*. The real, in his words, "is what resists symbolisation absolutely."[33] Bruce Fink classifies the two moments of the real as those before and after the letter.[34] If the former indicates the realm that existed before language, the latter, a "second-order" real after the symbolic, signifies the realm that is resistant to the symbolic order, and therefore unreachable for the symbolic subject.[35]

According to Lacan, language is symbolized through the segmentation of the real.[36] This can be illustrated using a diagram from Saussure's work which shows how the structure of language consists of the "contiguous subdivisions" of thought and sound; this diagram also relates to the formation of language in Kristeva's aesthetics.[37]

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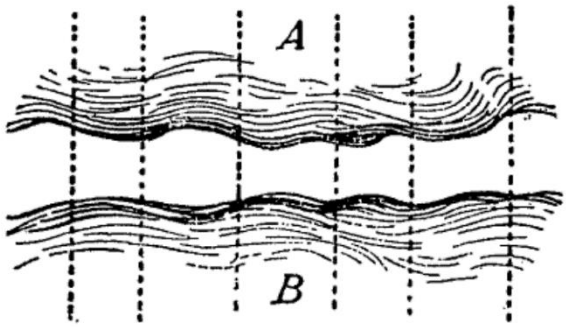
[32] Jacques Lacan (trans. J. Forrester, 1991), p. 173.
[33] Jacques Lacan (trans. J. Forrester, 1991), p. 66.
[34] Bruce Fink (1996), *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance,* Princeton University Press, pp. 25-27.
[35] Bruce Fink (1996), p. 27.
[36] 라캉 (맹정현, 이수련 역, 2008), 『자크 라캉 세미나 11권—정신분석의 네 가지 근본 개념』, 새물결, p. 312.
[37] Ferdinand De Saussure (trans. Wade Baskin, 2011), *Course in general linguistics*, Columbia University Press, p. 112. See Jacques Lacan (trans. Bruce Fink, 2006), p. 419.



<Table 1-1> The diagram in Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*

Saussure explains area A as "the indefinite plane of jumbled ideas," and B as "the equally vague plane of sounds."[38] At first, this vague and chaotic domain is jumbled without articulation, existing as a larger and undivided plane. However, according to Saussure, the dotted lines that mark the subdivisions cause an idea to be "fixed in a sound" and a sound to become "the sign of an idea."[39] This function of the lines gives rise to differentiation between each entity in a language, combining the units of thought and sound in a correspondence, and therefore forms the elements of language. In the diagram, the unarticulated plane of A and B might be considered equivalent to the Lacanian real before the letter, as in Fink's interpretation of the real that "is without zones, subdivisions, localized highs and lows, or gaps and plenitudes," and whose division is "a result of the symbolic order" that "cuts into the smooth facade of the real, creating divisions, gaps."[40] In other words, the symbolic articulates the real before the letter, and orders its state of chaotic mixture.

However, if the real before the letter is a vague unity without subdivisions, the subject transferred to the symbolic stage must then be unable to reach for the real itself, because the subject exists only after its articulations. That is, the subject which is subordinate to the symbolic order apprehends the real only as a lack. This positions the real behind the signs, where it always resists any rational understanding of itself.[41]

Kristeva accepts Lacan's basic premise that the subject is constructed by

[38] Ferdinand De Saussure (trans. Wade Baskin, 2011), p. 112.
[39] Ferdinand De Saussure (trans. Wade Baskin, 2011), p. 113.
[40] Bruce Fink (1996), p. 24.
[41] 라캉 (맹정현, 이수련 역, 2008), p. 88.

language and separated from its other. She also accepts Saussure and Lacan's thoughts on the matrix of idea and sound that composes a sign through articulation. Nevertheless, Kristeva modifies Lacan's triad by suggesting a notion of *the semiotic* (*le sémiotique*) that is similar to the imaginary in the chronological sense, and that invokes the real in its characteristics.

2. The semiotic in Kristeva's aesthetics

2.1. The notion of the semiotic

In general, the semiotic has a different character from the symbolic, closer to the realm of Freudian drives than to the social structure based on language.[42] If the symbolic can be exemplified by the syntax of a language, the semiotic can be illustrated as "the play of colors in an abstract painting or a piece of music": as "the effects of meaning that are not reducible to language or that can operate outside language."[43] This semiotic has two aspects in a chronological and logical sense: Firstly, it chronologically responds to the early stage of the subject's development that "precedes the establishment of the symbolic."[44] Secondly, it is a logical basis for the linguistic formation of signification, as its etymological roots suggest—the term "semiotic" originates from the Greek word σημεῖον, which means, according to Kristeva, a "distinctive mark, trace, index, precursory sign, proof, engraved or written sign, imprint, trace, figuration."[45] In other words, the semiotic is a primary form of meaning on the way to the establishment of the symbolic order.[46]

Let us examine the first aspect of the semiotic that precedes the symbolic order. Chronologically, in the developmental history of the subject, the semiotic predominates until the Oedipus complex is complete. This is when the infant's drives

[42] We need to bear in mind that this explanation risks a simplification of the two intertwined concepts; the semiotic and the symbolic are not mutually exclusive to each other, which will be further explained later.
[43] Julia Kristeva (ed. Ross M. Guberman, 1996), p. 21.
[44] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 40. Eng. 41.
[45] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 22. Eng. 25. The term "trace" is also mentioned twice in Kristeva's French writing.
[46] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 40. Eng. 41.

"are oriented and structured around the mother's body."[47] No symbolic concept of language exists in this early stage, and the mother's body is what organizes the bodily drives of the child. Diana Coole elaborates the semiotic as a stage without any division between the subject and the object, in which the child has yet to distinguish himself as a self which is independent from the mother's body.[48]

How does the second aspect of the semiotic involve these linguistic elements, then, when the semiotic consists of the drives and of corporeal functioning? In a basic sense, every meaning is generated by distinguishing between different elements: for example, the *I* and the *other*. For Lacan, the split between the I and the mirror image (the other) is what prepares the symbolic order. Although Kristeva accepts the splitting logic of the mirror stage, Lacan's and Kristeva's understandings of this stage are more or less different: while Lacan suggested the split between the infant and the imago as a preliminary phase of the symbolic, Kristeva finds the similar logic of the split, which is more material and corporeal, even before the mirror stage.[49] The division of the *I* and the imaginary *other* is already manifested in physical movement before the mirror stage. In Kristeva's theory, this movement indicates the "preverbal functional state" with "sensorimotor organization," i.e., the kinetic activity of the body.[50] For example, the division between the child and his *other* may be externally established through anal activity—by excreting—before the Lacanian imago appears.

In this way, sensorimotor movement in the semiotic implies the principle of differentiation and segmentation that is fundamental to the formation of language. Kristeva explains how this movement fits with language formation in the semiologic sense: at first, for the I and the expulsed material in this stage, "only one relation is possible—that of the sign, symbolic relation *in absentia*."[51] In other words, the child actively attains the opposing relationship between himself and the other, which is the

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[47] Julia Kristeva (1974), pp. 26-27. Eng. 27. The Oedipus complex indicates the definitive transition phase from the semiotic to the symbolic in Kristeva's aesthetics. This will be discussed further in Chapter II.
[48] Diana Coole (2000), p. 196.
[49] Julia Kristeva (trans. Leon Roudiez, 1980), *Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art,* Columbia University Press. p. 276.
[50] Julia Kristeva (1974), pp. 26-27. Eng. 27.
[51] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 138. Eng. 151.

object that once was himself but is now absent from him as a result of excretion. The object no longer remains inside the subject, but is isolated from it. Kristeva believes this expulsion shapes the primary sign because the excreta function as a sign of the other, its absence, and the fundamental separation. She describes it as "a step on the way to the object's becoming-sign." [52] In summary, the expulsion which predominates in the semiotic constitutes the primitive sign of the other through the act of separation, and this is how the semiotic connotes the basis of language on which the subject relies.

Kristeva emphasizes that the Freudian drive dominates the organization process in the semiotic, activating the body's motility.[53] For Kristeva, as well as for Freud, the drive consists of two phases: firstly, the movement towards the discharge, and secondly, the bound state of its movement. When the drive generates impulses while moving through the body, the living being tends to bind these impulses in order to control the drive's quality. The drive is therefore the oscillation between the charge and the bound process in Freud's theory. Accepting Freud's explanations, in *Revolution in Poetic Language* Kristeva structuralizes the former as "charges" and the latter as "stasis."[54] For example, when the drive is in a state of charge, a child who has filled himself with food develops a strong motivation towards discharge with the anal drive. If the child relieves his drive impulse by defecating, the drive enters into a state of stasis. This repetition of charges and stasis constructs the discontinuities within the semiotic components, such as rhythmical gestures. According to Kristeva, "[d]rive facilitation, temporarily arrested, marks *discontinuities* in what may be called the various material supports susceptible to semiotization: voice, gesture, colors."[55]

Kristeva suggests that "rhythm," the "rupture and articulations" of the bodily movement, is characteristic of the semiotic.[56] In other words, the drives engender articulations of bodily movement which may be oral or anal activities in particular, and these articulations are identified with the "rhythm." This especially involves the

[52] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 138. Eng. 151.
[53] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 26. Eng. 27.
[54] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 28. Eng. 28.
[55] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 28. Eng. 28.
[56] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 23. Eng. 26.

biological rhythm and sounds of the heart that the child experiences in the unity of the mother's body, or in the relationship with the mother soon after birth.[57] Interestingly, the bodily rhythm may be the fundamental component of language; it is generated by the repeated articulation of the body, which essentially forms intonation when it comes to language. Kelly Oliver summarizes this feature of rhythm as "the semiotic disposition that makes its way into language."[58] In short, rhythm prepares the establishment of language through the bodily movement of articulation.

Therefore, Kristeva's semiotic is not a site of complete and pastoral totality with the mother, lacking any differentiation. Diana Coole illustrates the semiotic as "where there is a pulsing of small fluctuations and splittings rather than undifferentiated plenitude."[59] What one must bear in mind is that the semiotic is organized with a rhythm of discontinuities, following the drives that motivate the sensorimotor movement of separation. More important is how the discontinuity which is followed by the drive's process works as a corporeal basis to establish language.[60] Kristeva argues that the separation, articulation, or differentiation leading to this discontinuity—the "process of charges and states"—implies the principle of "negativity."[61]

In addition, the semiotic has features contrary to the symbolic. Kristeva appropriates Lacan's usage of the "symbolic" and sees it as a social composition, structured by "syntax and all linguistic categories."[62] When the subject learns a language and transfers to the stage at which the symbolic is dominant, the semiotic is repressed; this repression prevents the symbolic's full apprehension of semiotic components such as the drives, voices, and rhythms. This is why the semiotic is dissimilar to the symbolic in Kristeva's aesthetics.

However, the binary structure of the semiotic and the symbolic is far from a simple dichotomy for Kristeva. As she expresses it, "[b]ecause the subject is always

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[57] Kelly Oliver (1993), *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind,* Indiana University Press, p. 34.
[58] Kelly Oliver (1993), p. 34.
[59] Diana Coole (2000), p. 196.
[60] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 152. Eng. 167.
[61] Julia Kristeva (1974), pp. 27-28. Eng. 28.
[62] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 29. Eng. 29.

both semiotic and symbolic, no signifying system he produces can be either 'exclusively' semiotic or 'exclusively' symbolic, and is instead necessarily marked by an indebtedness to both."[63] As we have seen before, the signification system of the symbolic follows the logic of discontinuities that articulates the minimum units of language, pre-established by semiotic functioning. Moreover, Kristeva notes that semiotic discontinuity is inscribed in the language of the symbolic as a trace.[64] The bodily rhythm predominant in the semiotic, for instance, is still "within language" in a form of "intonational" vocal modulations.[65] Therefore, the semiotic and the symbolic are always interrelated and not mutually exclusive in Kristeva's theory. According to her, the semiotic is what chronologically constitutes the primary subject, and at the same time "function[s] synchronically within the signifying process of the subject itself, i.e., the subject of cogitatio."[66]

In summary, Kristeva's theory places great significance on the subdivision of unarticulated material in the formation of the sign, as Lacan and Saussure did previously (see <table 1-1>). Kristeva also argues that articulation in the semiotic, which is a sensorimotor process driven by the charges and stasis of bodily drives, is a preliminary organization of the linguistic structure.

Since Kristeva modified Lacan's argument in order to elaborate on the semiotic and the symbolic, her notion of the symbolic is similar to Lacan's, despite some different premises. Does the semiotic, then, correspond to the imaginary and the real? Interviewed in 1985, Kristeva said that "if one really wants to find correspondences with Lacanian ideas," the semiotic may correspond to the imaginary and the real, but that she ultimately rejects the reduction of the semiotic to Lacan's two concepts.[67] Firstly, the semiotic cannot be reduced to the imaginary; Kristeva criticizes Lacan's views concerning the pre-symbolic stage, claiming that his theory eliminates the primary drives of the body from the symbolic, and she emphasizes that the semiotic operates after and within the symbolic, albeit to a repressed extent.[68] Secondly, if the

[63] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 22. Eng. 24.
[64] Julia Kristeva (trans. L. Roudiez, 1980), p. 159.
[65] Julia Kristeva (1974), pp. 28-29. Eng. 29.
[66] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 28. Eng. 29.
[67] Julia Kristeva (ed. Ross M. Guberman, 1996), p. 23.
[68] Julia Kristeva (trans. L. Roudiez, 1980), p. 277. 올리버 (박재열 역, 1997), p. 33.

Lacanian real is a hole or a void, as Kristeva understands it, then semiotic negativity, she argues, "is not reified directly as lack or as the impossible real."[69] For example, she describes the primitive expulsion of objects such as excreta as "a separation which is not a lack, but a discharge, and which, although privative, arouses pleasure."[70]

Also, the encounter with the semiotic produces the symbolic subject as the very subject of the "excess," not of a lack; semiotic components such as intonation and sound are maintained within language but are something more than the symbolic.[71] Kristeva calls this operation of semiotic components in symbolic language "musicalization," which is never "devoid of meaning or signification" but "pluralizes meanings."[72] John Lechte also emphasizes that the semiotic could not be the unmediated drive itself, for it is always organized by the principle of drives, and thereby different from the Lacanian real.[73]

Considering Kristeva's intentions and descriptions, the semiotic shares some characteristics with the Lacanian imaginary and real, but cannot be thoroughly explained in terms of these concepts. Furthermore, Kristeva's aesthetics employs another concept that differentiates her theory from Lacan's or Freud's: the semiotic *chora*.

2.2. Negativity of the maternal chora

Like other concepts in Kristeva's aesthetics, descriptions of the chora are rather evasive and never clearly stated in her writings, crossing the metaphorical and empirical horizons at the same time. Chronologically, in the subject's history, the semiotic is a developmental process arising when the child relies upon his mother for survival. In this sense, the chora may respond to a significant character of the

[69] Julia Kristeva (ed. Ross M. Guberman, 1996), p. 23, Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 94. Eng. 99.
[70] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 137. Eng. 151.
[71] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 181. Eng. 204.
[72] Julia Kristeva (1974), pp. 64-65. Eng. 65.
[73] John Lechte, Maria Margaroni (2004), *Julia Kristeva: Live Theory*, Bloomsbury Publishing, p. 13.

semiotic: primitive and maternal materiality, analogous to the mother's body.[74]

The term *chora* originated from Plato's *Timaeus*, indicating the "receptacle (or nurse, if you like) of all creation."[75] This book supposes the three moments that make existence and being possible: "the created world, the receptacle of creation, and the source, in whose likeness the created world is born." These may be compared, respectively, to the child, the mother, and the father.[76] Bearing the materials of creation like a mother, the chora cannot be spoken of as any particular "this" or "that" because it offers a place for everything, as "the receptacle of *all* kinds."[77] In Plato's thought, the chora is "invisible" and "formless," "almost incomprehensible" since it is a kind of totality, and cannot be defined as any partial aspect of the material it bears; it therefore inevitably remains obscure.[78]

Kristeva modifies this chora to be a primitive receptacle which symbolic language cannot reach. Language cannot apprehend the characteristics of the semiotic chora because it is always something incommensurable with the subject constructed by language; even if the symbolic subject strives to grasp its logic, "heterogeneity itself is lost" from the chora.[79] However, although theoretical descriptions always fail to capture the chora itself, Kristeva's theory can "situate the chora" and "lend it a topology."[80]

Above all, Kristeva emphasizes the motility of the semiotic chora. We may return to the explanation in the *Timaeus* here:

> As if it were not enough that the nurse of creation presents a complex appearance (as a result of being moistened and heated, of assuming the characters of earth and air, and of acquiring all the qualities that follow from all this), it is also thoroughly imbalanced (as a result of being filled with dissimilar and imbalanced powers), and not only is it shaken by the things it contains, so that it lurches

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[74] 이현재 (2009), 「"코라(chora)" 공간의 물질성과 사회 철학적 확장 가능성」, 『사회와 철학』, 18, p. 502.
[75] Plato (trans. R. Waterfield, 2008), *Timaeus and Critias,* Oxford World's Classics, p. 40.
[76] Plato (trans. R. Waterfield, 2008), pp. 42-43.
[77] Plato (trans. R. Waterfield, 2008), p. 41, p. 43.
[78] Plato (trans. R. Waterfield, 2008), p. 43.
[79] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 163. Eng. 182.
[80] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 23. Eng. 26.

> haphazardly all over the place, but its motion in turn further shakes them. This stirring causes them to be constantly moving in different directions and to become separated.[81]

The chora, according to the *Timaeus*, shakes up the "dissimilar and imbalanced powers" inside it and rearranges them so that "the least similar among them ended up the furthest apart, and those that were most similar were pushed the closest together."[82] Through this process, the mixture of materials is organized and sorted according to their characteristics. For Kristeva, this motility is an important part of the *Timaeus*.[83] The chora is always mobile in Kristeva's theory, preceding the symbolic sign but organizing the semiotic totality through the sensorimotor articulation that leads to signification. Kristeva finds negativity in material drives and in the motility of the semiotic chora: negativity that generates discontinuities through the kinetic movement of separation in the semiotic stage.[84]

Kristeva writes that the mobile energy prevailing in the chora is "arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this [subject's] body—always already involved in a semiotic process—by family and social structures,"[85] and she calls this organization "objective ordering" (*ordonnancement*).[86] What organizes the energy of the drives in the semiotic chora is at the same time a biological structure of the body and the social structures established by the symbolic order. Here, "the mother's body" is what "mediates" both the "ordering principle of the semiotic chora" and the social structures.[87] Kristeva gives as an example the satisfaction of the oral and anal drives.[88] For instance, the drive facilitated in the infant's mouth is concerned with the mother's breast as she nurses the child—with the body which is always ordered by the social structure of the family. Therefore, the semiotic chora is

[81] Plato (trans. R. Waterfield, 2008), pp. 45-46.
[82] Plato (trans. R. Waterfield, 2008), p. 46.
[83] Julia Kristeva (1974), pp. 24-25. Eng. 26.
[84] Julia Kristeva (1974), pp. 113-114. Eng. 123.
[85] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 23. Eng. 25.
[86] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 25. Eng. 26.
[87] Julia Kristeva (1974), pp. 26-27. Eng. 27.
[88] Julia Kristeva (1974), pp. 26-27. Eng. 27.

organized by the drives, and mediated with the symbolic society by the mother's body.

Using the metaphor of computer theory, Kristeva describes the semiotic "as both analog and digital": it is metaphorically analog in that "the functioning of the semiotic chora is made up of continuities that are segmented in order to organize a digital system," and it is digital as well because the drive facilitating the chora marks the "stasis" that comprises "the discrete elements in this digital system," and which binds the subject's drives in a certain way and generates the discontinuities.[89] This is how the semiotic chora is "a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stasis in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated," having two moments: of movement and of the static, regulated state.[90]

In general, Kristeva's aesthetics does not presuppose the self-united subject. Even if the subject is incorporated into the symbolic order, what is repressed under the symbolic always appears to the subject again, in accordance with the basic principle of psychoanalysis that the repressed repetitively returns to the self. As Kristeva puts it, the repressed heterogeneity of the semiotic "irrupts within" the symbolic.[91] This shows the limitations of the symbolic's ability to defend itself against this irruption. How, then, could we illustrate these phenomena of the invasion of the semiotic? Kristeva's aesthetics highlights the potential of art here: she claims that the moment in which the irruption distorts the symbolic is incarnated in art, especially modern art practices consisting of poetic language, which demonstrate the "influx of the death drive."[92]

In this sense, the subject is only available in a process that seesaws between the two moments of the semiotic and the symbolic—in Kristeva's words, the subject in process.[93] Kristeva's aesthetics assumes that the subject in process is not an absolute unity, but a place where meaning is constantly generated and developed. If the process is what composes the subject and mediates the two moments, how should we understand the negativity that functions in this process? How does Kristeva

[89] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 65. Eng. 66.
[90] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 23. Eng. 25.
[91] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 161. Eng. 179.
[92] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 47. Eng. 50.
[93] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 96. Eng. 101.

connect these two incommensurable models through negativity? Chapter II will reflect on the notion of negativity in Kristeva's aesthetics in order to clarify the answers.

II. The notion of negativity and its precedents in Kristeva's theory

In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva concurs with Hegel, Freud, and Lacan that negativity is inevitable to compose and maintain the self-identical subject. To track these precedents' influences over Kristeva, I will firstly review the notion of negativity in Hegel's philosophy, and outline how Kristeva reworks with Hegel's notions to arrive at her concept of the subject in process. Then, in the second section of this chapter, I move on to demonstrate Kristeva's notion of *rejection* (rejet), which is logically analogous to negativity. Above all, Kristeva often uses these two terms of rejection and negativity interchangeably without strict distinction. However, rejection indicates more of Freudian roots and clearly suggests Kristeva's intentions to break with Hegel. Nevertheless, I mainly use the term negativity to encompass not only Kristeva's originality but also fundamentally Hegelian roots of her notion. It intends to focus on how Kristeva reinterpreted the thoughts of negativity that has been discussed in philosophical and aesthetic tradition. In this context, in section 2.1., I review rejection's conceptual root in Freud's theory of *expulsion* (le repoussement), and then describe how rejection constructs the first register of negativity. Subsequently, in section 2.2., I investigate the Lacanian phase of Oedipus and the castration complex that Kristeva considered to be pivotal to compose/establish the second register of negativity. Through section 2.3., I explain how Kristeva's second register works after the Lacanian castration has been finished. In summary, chapter II will review the grounds of Kristeva's negativity and elucidate its implications by comprehensively accounting for the two registers of negativity.

1. Hegelian negativity

Kristeva states that her aesthetics is greatly influenced by Hegel, evidenced in her

quote that her notion of negativity came "from Hegel."[94] Hegel's philosophy presupposes that negativity is necessary for the spirit to dialectically move towards a more developed state. Reviewing Hegelian negativity is essential to ponder upon Kristeva's negativity since Kristeva emphasizes that negativity becomes a procedural concept through Hegel's thoughts. Therefore, I will firstly look through the basic meanings of negativity in Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit* that Kristeva mainly refers to.

In the preface describing the aim of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel criticizes the conventional thoughts recurring throughout Philosophy which insist that "the opposition between the true and the false is itself fixed and set."[95] For Hegel, they only end up seeing contradiction in the diversity between two. Hegel claimed that the philosophical system should reflect on "the progressive development of truth", not arguing conclusively for the fixed ideas of what is true or false because those contradictions are generated from the differences.[96] Hegel compares this progressive development to the growth of the plant.[97] If we only see the difference as a conflict, the process that the bud falls when the flower blossoms may seem like the bud is abandoned by the flower. It may also be read like the truth of the plant lies in the flower, and not the bud. However, when the fruit emerges the flower may then seem like "a false existence of the plant," as it is replaced with the fruit and once again negated of its existence at the expense of the other.[98] This is why one particular phase of plant's development could never be the nature of the plant: the plant's growth encompasses the germination and efflorescence, later the bearing of the fruit, and also the repetition of this whole process when the seed falls into the ground and shoots out the new bud. According to Hegel, this process where every aspect of the plant necessarily "constitutes the life of the whole" evinces "fluid nature."[99] In sum, if one deems one fragment of these process as the ultimate truth of a plant, such an assumption only skims the surface of its appearance and neglects its process as a

[94] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 101. Eng. 109.
[95] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (trans. Terry Pinkard, 2018), *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Cambridge University Press, p. 4.
[96] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (trans. Terry Pinkard, 2018), p. 4.
[97] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (trans. Terry Pinkard, 2018), p. 4.
[98] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (trans. Terry Pinkard, 2018), p. 4.
[99] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (trans. Terry Pinkard, 2018), p. 4.

whole, eventually failing to grasp the organic unity of the plant. Therefore, in Hegel's philosophy, contradictory relationships between different moments are essential to understand the whole rather than to discriminate truth from falsehood.

In this sense, Hegel claims that "[t]he truth is the whole."[100] This "whole," however, does not indicate the totality standing in opposition to individuality. Rather, the whole is a unity established by interrelated movements between totality and individuality. Let's recall the example of the plant here. On the one hand, the plant consists of a set of individual components including the bud and the flower. On the other hand, it is a singular organism. For Hegel, just like the plant, the whole is understood as an organic unity that includes its different aspects and develops through contemplating these two. In other words, the whole truth of the plant is only attainable by understanding the conflicting aspects that are related to each other and exist under unity with their differences.

Hegelian truth is conceptualized as a "self-restoring sameness, the reflective turn into itself in its otherness," that is "not an original unity as such, or, not an immediate unity as such."[101] When the very first, immediate being stops remaining in itself and opens itself to the otherness, placing itself on the contrary relationship with the other, it soon finds that this other is not external to itself but contains its other essence. For Hegel, the being here returns to itself while crucially preserving the differences between the two and eventually establishes the "self-restoring" unity. Above all, Hegel refuses to see the truth as a fixed given, claiming that the truth is "the coming-to-be of itself" through the repetition of movements towards the more developed unity.[102]

According to Hegel, the negative functions as the "very soul" of two moments or "what moves them."[103] "Negativity" meaning an "abstract power to move" generates the differences and is necessary for the process of the dialectic because contradiction is pivotal to restore self-unity.[104] Hegel puts it as below:

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[100] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (trans. Terry Pinkard, 2018), p. 13.
[101] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (trans. Terry Pinkard, 2018), p. 12.
[102] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (trans. Terry Pinkard, 2018), p. 12.
[103] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (trans. Terry Pinkard, 2018), p. 23.
[104] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (trans. Terry Pinkard, 2018), p. 14.

> On the one hand, the movement of "what is" consists in becoming an other to itself and thus in coming to be its own immanent content; on the other hand, it takes this unfolding back into itself, or it takes its existence back into itself, which is to say, it makes itself into a moment, and it simplifies itself into determinateness. In that movement, negativity is differentiating and positing of existence; in this later return into itself, negativity consists in the coming-to-be of *determinate simplicity*. In this way, the content shows that its determinateness is not first received from an other and then externally pinned onto it; rather, the content gives itself this determinateness, it bestows on itself the status of being a moment, and it gives itself a place in the whole.[105]

Specifically, negativity brings more determinate content to the being by driving it into its self-differentiation, and then into the negation of its other's externality to itself, which consequently leads to the self-restored unity of the being. Hegel suggests that negation, or the movement of negativity, is not external to the being as well as the other is derived from the being's *own immanent content*. Rather, negation allows the being to discover its otherness in itself. For Hegel, this very movement is what motivates the being to return to the whole. By meaning of the word negativity, it may allude to some simple notions of conflict or destruction, but in fact, it moves the being back into itself and crucially supports the whole.

As such, Hegelian philosophy formulates negativity with its two registers. The first register of negation establishes the contradiction between the being and its own otherness, and the second negates the opposition from the first negation and drives the being to unity. Hegel names this second negation *sublation*. Sublation does not eliminate the contrary other to reach the unity but bestows the content to this contrariness—determining the other with its "property", thus defining the unity as "not-this" when the other is posited as "this,"—and is therefore "a *negating* and at the same time a *preserving*."[106] Thus, Hegel proposes that negativity as a sublation does not only negate the other but also retain it.

For Hegel, development of self-consciousness also requires the dynamic interchange between the two moments. The Hegelian concept of desire illustrates

[105] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (trans. Terry Pinkard, 2018), p. 33.
[106] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (trans. Terry Pinkard, 2018), p. 69.

this point. For Hegel, according to Kristeva, desire is "the most faithful representation" of the "collapsing of negativity into unity."[107] In general, Hegel's conceptualization of desire indicates the motivating power of the "I" as a living being to destroy the other by negating its self-sufficiency, moving towards the unity of self-consciousness in itself.[108] The I intends to break away from the opposition between itself and the other and be "certain of itself through the sublating of this other," because the I in this stage knows the movement headed for the unity is its truth.[109] Therefore, the I desires to eliminate the other.

However, Hegel claims that the I fails to relinquish the other even under a negative relationship as the certainty of itself involves the other as an object. This is because such certainty is only attainable via sublation of it: "[d]esire and the certainty of itself achieved in its satisfaction are conditioned by the object, for the certainty is through the sublating of this other."[110] This reveals that the object, which seemed to be the opposing other at the first time, consists of another moment of united self-consciousness.

As illustrated so far, Hegelian theory of desire shows how self-consciousness is developed through the process of double negation. Kristeva argues that Hegel's dynamics of negativity becomes "the organizing principle of the process" of the subject in her aesthetics.[111] In particular, Kristeva draws from Hegel's dual structure of negativity which includes first and second negation: the first presupposes the other opposed to the being, and the second sublates the other to acquire self-unity. I contend that Hegel's first negation correspond to the sensorimotor expulsion in Kristeva's theory, for instance, the excretion of the child that generates the very first sign of an object. Also, the second register of negation may respond to the repression of the semiotic for Kristeva. Kristeva interprets Hegel's desire as follows: "Self-consciousness is constituted through the supersession of the heterogeneous Other, and Desire is this very supersession."[112] This supersession, which corresponds to

[107] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 124. Eng. 135.
[108] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (trans. Terry Pinkard, 2018), p. 103, 107.
[109] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (trans. Terry Pinkard, 2018), p. 107.
[110] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (trans. Terry Pinkard, 2018), p. 107.
[111] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 101. Eng. 109.
[112] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 123. Eng. 134.

Hegel's second negation, forms the symbolic order of the subject in Kristeva's theory by sublating the semiotic drives that fractures the subject and substitutes its predominance with the symbolic order.

Recognizing the repression of the semiotic as the second negation and a sublation supports the formation of a dialectic relationship between the symbolic and the semiotic in Kristeva's aesthetics. At first, these two may look like opposite to one another since the semiotic is ruled by the drive impulses and the symbolic follows the linguistic order. However, the semiotic generates the segmentation or the articulation whose accumulation composes the language as discussed in Chapter I. Also, the symbolic retains traces of the semiotic in forms of intonation, sound, and rhythm inscribed in the symbolic language. This is how the other—the semiotic, in this case—is preserved, rather than being eradicated, through the Hegelian sublation in Kristeva's aesthetics.

Accordingly, Kristeva claims that Hegelian desire as a driving force of sublation implies the "most differentiated and most *superseded (supprimé)* movement" of negativity.[113] In other words, the second negativity that establishes the subject is the most differentiated one because of its significance in the subject's history, as well as the most easily erased/neglected one when the symbolic sense of the subject is considered as a given. For Kristeva, Hegel's theory was insufficient to fully capture the process of subject formation, including its very establishment based on the materiality.

To recapitulate, Hegel's negativity for Kristeva "reformulates the static terms of pure abstraction as a process, dissolving and binding them within a mobile law."[114] For Kristeva, "negativity can only produce a subject in process/on trial" who always renews itself through the movement, refusing to remain as a fixed entity.[115] And this subject is under process because the subject not only transfers from the semiotic to the symbolic, but also experiences the invasion of the semiotic drives after the symbolization, which I discuss in Chapter III. For the remaining parts of this chapter, I address the notion of rejection in Kristeva's aesthetics, and thereby rearranging her

[113] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 122. Eng. 133.
[114] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 101. Eng. 109.
[115] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 103. Eng. 110-111.

theory on the subject in process. Also, I review how Kristeva reads Freud and Lacan while remaining based on Hegel's negativity. This task is necessary because Freud and Lacan's theories of expulsion and Oedipus and the castration complex undergird Kristeva's notion of negativity.

2. Kristeva's negativity: rejection

2.1. Semiotic negativity: the first register of negativity

In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, rejection indicates a mode of operation or movement driven by negativity.[116] According to Kristeva, "[w]hat we mean by *rejection* is precisely the semiotic mode of this permanent aggressivity and the possibility of its being *posited*, and thus *renewed.*"[117] And these different moments of (1) semiotic mode, (2) position of the semiotic, and (3) renewal of the position constitute the process of Kristeva's rejection. In other words, rejection, as "the signifying process' powerful mechanism," involves a process in which the semiotic motility operates at a primary level, posited under the linguistic order, and later reactivated in particular within the domain of art.[118] I see this description as essential, as it demonstrates how rejection implies different registers of negativity that have different functions. Thus, I contest that Kristeva's claim can be understood more clearly by distinguishing and characterizing each function of negativity. Categorizing Kristeva's negativity in three registers helps understand her concept as well as rejection more thoroughly, in particular considering how Kristeva herself describes somewhat enigmatically the different registers of negativity without clear distinctions between them. Making a more certain distinction among the three

[116] Kristeva is not very strict at distinguishing these two terms in *Revolution in Poetic Language.* However, the term negativity is borrowed from Hegel, and rejection is appropriated from Freud. The latter may imply more of Kristeva's originality since she reinterpreted Hegelian philosophy with Freud's psychoanalysis to develop this term. Nevertheless, as stated in the introduction, this thesis uses the term negativity throughout the discussion not to neglect Hegel's significant influence on Kristeva's aesthetics, and to start from more traditional grounds on which Kristeva relies (and also radically criticizes).
[117] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 137. Eng. 150.
[118] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 147. Eng. 161.

registers of negativity resolves the potential inconsistency in reading Kristeva's otherwise pivotal conceptualization. It can alleviate the problem of ambiguous uncertainty in Kristeva's elaboration of negativity; sometimes it appears to be semiotic for Kristeva, and at other times it is described to be closer to the symbolic.

Kristeva takes a cue for her notion of rejection in Freud's term "expulsion" elaborated in his thesis *Negation* (*Die Verneinung,* 1925). In *Negation,* Freud argues that the act of negation discloses the "psychological origin [of] the function of intellectual judgment."[119] According to Freud, "we never discover a 'no' in the unconscious," and no negation exists in the very primal state of the self.[120] That is, the unconscious does not distinguish what to affirm and negate; it affirms everything for it cannot make the intellectual judgment to exclude something. Freud writes: "[w]hat is bad, what is alien to the ego and what is external are, to begin with, identical."[121] Jean Hyppolite's interpretation of this concept states that the judgment distinguishing "the foreign and [an ego] himself involves an operation, an expulsion."[122] Such an act of expulsion result from the judgment to preserve the organism, in that excluding the harmful objects and incidents is essential to the organism's survival. According to Freud, the very primitive judgment is "expressed in the language of the oldest—the oral—instinctual impulses," in the form of "I should like to eat this," or "I should like to spit it out."[123] In other words, oral inclusion or expulsion is decided in terms of intellectual functioning from the beginning.

In *Sèméiotikè: Researches for semanalysis* (*Σημειωτική: Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, 1969), Kristeva agrees with Freud that the negation is an origin of thoughts and judgment.[124] After a few years, in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva suggests that Freud "joins dialectical logic by making expulsion the

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[119] Sigmund Freud (trans. J. Strachey, 1986), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XIX* (1923-1925), London: The Hogarth Press, p. 236.
[120] Sigmund Freud (trans. J. Strachey, 1986), p. 239.
[121] Sigmund Freud (trans. J. Strachey, 1986), p. 237.
[122] Jean Hyppolite (2006), "A Spoken Commentary on Freud's "Verneinung" by Jean Hyppolite," *Écrits* (B. Fink, ed.), W. W. Norton & Company, p. 751.
[123] Sigmund Freud (trans. J. Strachey, 1986), p. 237.
[124] Julia Kristeva (1969), *Σημειωτική: Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, Tel Quel. p. 211.

essential moment in the constitution of the symbolic function."[125] For Kristeva, Freudian expulsion contributes to separating the other from the subject, which is the first moment in which negativity is activated. This separation positions the presence of the other, the process which later establishes the symbolic by foregrounding language and thought.

Kristeva criticizes Freud for only emphasizing the intellectual aspect of the negation at the cost of considering physical aspect of the expulsion—he "remarks that the symbolic function is instituted on the basis of *expulsion*," but "says nothing about the *drive bases* of this *act.*"[126] Unlike Freud, Kristeva's aesthetics considers the primary act of negation within both intellectual and corporeal dimensions, capturing the contribution of its "drive bases" to the development of the rational subject. Kristeva reinterprets such expulsion expanded from Freud as an operation of negativity, which is characterized by the functions of the semiotic. In sum, for Kristeva, corporeal expulsion is identical to the semiotic functions of negativity.

In Kristeva's theory, rejection is at first this expulsive operation of negativity implying "a pre-verbal "function"."[127] **I frame the first register of Kristeva's negativity and its movement as characterized by the semiotic. Therefore, I call this register of negativity "semiotic negativity," and its accompanying rejection "semiotic rejection."** Nevertheless, semiotic rejection continuously repeats itself with the realm of the symbolic because the sensorimotor expulsion empirically sustains the organism□vr□s life to a restrained extent after the repression.

Since rejection is fundamentally organized according to the principle of drives, it also has two moments as the semiotic chora does: the charges and the stasis. It is precisely these two moments that generate the discharge and bind the drives. For instance, when the child expulses his excreta as the anal drives are charged and exercise their power towards the discharge, this act of rejection leads the anal drive to the stasis once the discharge became successful. Consequently, such acts of semiotic rejection engender the discontinuities that constantly fragment the subject into the state of the charges and the stasis. For Kristeva's aesthetics, this construes

[125] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 144. Eng. 158.
[126] Julia Kristeva (1974), pp. 135-136. Eng. 148.
[127] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 134. Eng. 147.

the precondition of language as I discussed in Chapter I.

Kristeva finds Freudian psychoanalysis advantageous to adapt Hegel to a more radical extent. This is because, according to Kristeva, Freud's drive is essentially "contradictory forces" that are always ambivalent.[128] Kristeva reads Freudian drive as ambivalent because it oscillates between the mentally bound state and the physically moving state towards the discharge, making it unable to be fixed on the certain phase. Also, Freud's drive holds two moments of life and death at the same time. On one hand, it tends to preserve life by sustaining the self; on the other hand, it moves toward death by returning to nature.[129] In this regard, the fundamental ambiguity of Freudian drives establishes the "heteronomy of drives—not their dichotomy" for Kristeva.[130] Namely, Freudian drive preserves the conflict between two heterogeneous moments in itself, while not confining itself dichotomically but allowing itself to be a fluid, implying simultaneous movements between the contradictory two.

Then, how is this ambivalence helpful for Kristeva to adapt Hegelian dialectic in her theory of negativity/rejection? Kristeva finds it useful that Freudian drives are "[n]either inside not outside, […] neither the ideational interior of a subject of understanding, nor the exteriority of the Hegelian force."[131] Freudian drives do not reside inside or outside of Hegelian spirit, neither being the spirit nor its other, since drives always keep their ambivalence in themselves. Kristeva reads Freud as establishing "the materialist dialectic" different from Hegel What differentiates Freud's dialectic from Hegel's is that it opens another scene of the unconscious based on the drives, marking a radical heterogeneity within the Hegelian spirit.[132] This

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[128] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 151. Eng. 167.

[129] This duality of the drives will be explained further in Chapter 2.3.

[130] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 151. Eng. 167.

[131] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 152. Eng. 167. The exteriority of the Hegelian force here indicates the "substantialized extreme" of the force, that is, the purely material source of the force in Hegel's philosophy. Briefly speaking, the concept of force is developed by the sublation between the very simple thought of the force and the material source of the force; in other words, this material source appears as the other to the very first and simple thought of the force which does not include the materiality in itself. For Hegel, the matters of the force, in this stage, are placed on the exteriority of the force: "[t]he stable existence of the unfolded matters is thereby excluded from force, and it is an other than force." See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (trans. Terry Pinkard, 2018), p. 82.

[132] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 144. Eng. 158.

scene constitutes the subject on the "shattered and doubly differentiated site of conflict and rejection," where drives are placed.[133] Kristeva argues that this fundamentally shattered duality in Freud's theory "allows us to account for a heterogeneous conflictual process," including the "psychotic experience or any kind of renewable practice" by which she means art.[134] In sum, by advocating the significance of Freudian drives in Kristeva's theory, I seek to undo the self-returning unity of the Hegelian spirit. More radically heterogeneous, Freudian drives scatter the unity in itself which is distinctive from the way of Hegel's sublation.

2.2. Thetic negativity: the second register of negativity

Kristeva's rejection exercises its negativity that is radically semiotic, while simultaneously preparing the transition to the symbolic. If the first register of negativity was the rejection characterized by the semiotic functions, the second could be said to the one characterized by the symbolic functions. This register does not only operate under the symbolic order but is also implied from the very beginning of the semiotic subject.

For Kristeva, this negativity contributes to the establishment and/or maintenance of the symbolic. She names such a register in various ways including "the thetic (le thétique)," "a thetic phase (phase thétique)," and the "thesis (la thése)."[135] In this publication, Kristeva uses the *thetic* to indicate every moment of negativity that prepares or supports the symbolic. Kristeva uses the term *thetic* to indicate moments of negativity that prepare or support the symbolic. For Kristeva, the *thetic phase* signifies the definitive transition period in which the subject accumulates thetic moments and finally becomes subordinated to the symbolic order, whereas the *thesis* represents the formation of the self and its following function of symbolic order in a broader sense.[136]

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[133] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 151. Eng. 167.
[134] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 154. Eng. 169.
[135] Julia Kristeva (1974), pp. 41-43. Eng. 43-44.
[136] The thesis originates from Husserl's philosophy but was refined by Kristeva in a rather different meaning. For Kristeva, it indicates the definite break between the semiotic and the symbolic as suggested here: "[b]ut the semiotic we find in signifying practices always

In Kristeva's design, the thetic is placed "on the basis of which the human being constitutes himself as signifying and/or social."[137] Thetic moments do not appear out of a sudden but have been accumulated ever since the infant's very first babbling towards the completion of the thetic phase: as Kristeva writes, "[a]ll enunciation, whether of a word or of a sentence, is thetic."[138]

The thetic phase is crucial to the formation of the symbolic subject as it demarcates the limits of the subject. Kristeva claims that "[t]he thetic phase marks a threshold (un seuil) between two heterogeneous realms: the semiotic and the symbolic," which means when the subject refuses to be dominated by the semiotic they enter the symbolic order.[139] For Kristeva, the thetic phase is repeated twice in the history of a subject that Lacan has described. The first thetic phase, although incomplete in itself, stems from the Lacanian mirror stage which Kristeva calls "the first esquisse of the thetic (la première esquisse du thétique)."[140] As I have addressed in Chapter I, in the Lacanian mirror stage, the child negates the identity between the imago and himself while preparing his own self. Kristeva accepts this claim of Lacan and insists that his mirror stage is situated on the path that transfers the subject from the pre-symbolic to the symbolic.

Kristeva also notes that primitive thetic moments, which may be "child's first holophrastic utterances (énoncés holophrastiques)" or the "*fort-da* game", appear in the same developmental phase with the mirror stage.[141] First of all, the fort-da game assumes that the gesture of throwing the reel happens prior to the spoken utterance of the word "fort". In other words, the word "fort" only appears after the bodily rejection separating the child and the reel—the object. This case of the Fort-da game illustrates that the "instinctual rejection is already kinetic and gestural", and "it

comes to us after the symbolic thesis, after the symbolic break." Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 67. Eng. 68. Also, the difference between the thetic and the thesis is also written as: "however, poetry no longer encounters a sacrifice that is suggestive of the thetic but rather thesis itself (logic—language—society)," which describes the "thesis itself" as the more essential and representative notion that connotes the establishment and sustenance of the symbolic per se. Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 78. Eng. 81.

[137] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 67. Eng. 67.
[138] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 41. Eng. 43.
[139] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 46. Eng. 48.
[140] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 67. Eng. 68.
[141] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 44. Eng. 47.

projects biological material rejection onto a rejection that constitutes a signifying space."[142]

Secondly, Kristeva interprets the "holophrastic utterances" of the child as "the voice that is projected from the agitated body (from the semiotic chora) onto the facing imago or onto the object, which simultaneously detach from the surrounding continuity."[143] To put it simply, this voice implies the detachment of the child from the continuity by assuming his counterpart. The holophrastic voice is a primitive form of the word that is projected to his correlative other, the imago or the object. Thus, the holophrastic utterances are already thetic as it presupposes the split of the egoistic continuity and generates differences between the I and the other.

Kristeva alludes that such a separation between the child and his object corresponds to the relationship between the child and the imago in the Lacanian mirror stage, inevitably entailing the "spatial intuition (intuition spatiale)" of separation.[144] That is, the discovery of the imago only happens after such intuition of separation. Extending from Lacan who put emphasis on the split between the child and the imago within the logic of the image, Kristeva focuses on more physical and spatial divisions that she thought to be present in the mirror stage. Moreover, Kristeva underscores the fragmentary state of the child's body in this stage to a greater extent than Lacan, articulating it as the "agitated body" affected by the semiotic chora.[145]

These two examples of the fort-da game and the child's babbling exemplify how the first thetic phase works in Kristeva's aesthetics. While still under the influence of the semiotic, the thetic crucially alludes to the symbolic. This first thetic phase shows that rejection prepares the symbolic subject because even the simplest bodily expulsion engenders the sign of the other that is distinguished from the subject. In the second thetic phase, the operation of negativity represses the semiotic and transfers the subject into the symbolic order. According to Kristeva, the second thetic phase involves "castration [that] puts the finishing touches on the process of

[142] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 154. Eng. 170.
[143] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 44. Eng. 46-47.
[144] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 44. Eng. 46.
[145] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 44. Eng. 46.

separation that posits the subject as signifiable."[146] Kristeva borrows the concept of castration from Lacan's psychoanalysis to denote that the castration complex contributes to the moment of transition from the imaginary to the symbolic. Therefore, I now move on to review how Kristeva animates the castration complex as an entry point to the symbolic order, considering his concept of Oedipus complex and the desire together.

2.2.1. Lacan on the castration complex and desire

In Lacan's theory, desire signifies the subject's urge to attain the unity it lacks. At first, the I in the mirror stage re-recognizes the imago after acknowledging its misrecognition, and makes the "dialectical syntheses" that compose it as a subject, related to the image but not identical to it, to resolve "his discordance with his own reality."[147] For Lacan, this illustrates the early form desire takes in the imaginary subject.[148]

However, the subject fails to attain self-identity since its reality is not its own but is always conditioned by its other, no matter how successful its dialectical syntheses seem to be.[149] Lacan suggests this impossibility throughout his explanation of the Oedipus complex and the castration complex. In *Formations of the Unconscious: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book V*, Lacan distinguishes between three moments in the Oedipus complex.[150] The first is located in the relationship between the child and the mother. Even after the mirror stage, the child remains within the identity shared between himself and his mother, who satisfies the child's needs. In other words, the child wants to be the mother's object of desire, compensating for what she is presupposed to lack. Lacan designates "the object of the mother's desire" that the child identifies with himself as, in this stage, the

[146] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 44. Eng. 47.
[147] Jacques Lacan (trans. Bruce Fink, 2006), p. 76.
[148] 라캉 (맹정현, 이수련 역, 2016), p. 307.
[149] Jacques Lacan (trans. Bruce Fink, 2006), p. 76.
[150] Jacques Lacan (ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russel Grigg, 2017), *Formations of the Unconscious: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book V,* Polity Press, p. 168.

"phallus."[151]

Nevertheless, this identification is also misrecognition; the mother's own desire, insofar as she is under the symbolic order, always involves something more than nursing her child. She does not devote herself exclusively to her relationship with the child.[152] She might be absent, for instance, leaving her child alone and being certainly unable to satisfy his needs; or she might desire the child's father.

The second moment of the Oedipus complex now emerges. It is when "the father enters into play" as a third person who mediates between the child and the mother, and who is "the vehicle of the law and prohibitor of the mother as object."[153] In other words, the child helplessly succumbs to the law that prohibits having the mother exclusively as the child's object—that is, prohibition of an incestuous relationship. This law is exercised, or supported, by the father, who deprives the child of the mother. The mother upholds this: she does not resist the law that he presents, but accepts it. The consequence is that the child fails to equate himself with his mother's desire once he becomes aware of this misrecognition through the father's interference.

This second moment is when the castration complex starts. The castration complex indicates the child's acknowledgment of the mother's lack of a phallus, and how the father's law becomes a substitute for what the mother lacks. According to Lacan, "the father enters into his function as depriver of the mother" at this moment, delimiting the child's satisfaction and his identification with the phallus as long as the father is the one who can give the mother what she desires.[154] Therefore, "what is castrated, in the event, is not the subject," but "the mother," insofar as the child no longer finds that the phallus—the object of the mother's desire—belongs to his mother, whom the child previously considered to be identical to himself; rather, the child conceives that the father and the law supported by him have it.[155]

The third stage is when the child desires to attain the phallus that the father likely has. "The third stage," according to Lacan, "is as important as the second, for

[151] Jacques Lacan (ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russel Grigg, 2017), p. 168.
[152] Jacques Lacan (ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russel Grigg, 2017), p. 166.
[153] Jacques Lacan (ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russel Grigg, 2017), p. 171.
[154] Jacques Lacan (ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russel Grigg, 2017), p. 169.
[155] Jacques Lacan (ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russel Grigg, 2017), p. 169.

the outcome of the Oedipus complex depends on it. The father testified that he was giving the phallus insofar as, and only insofar as, he is the bearer, or the *supporter,* if I may put it like that, of the law."[156] If the father was "the all-powerful father who is the depriver" in the second moment, now the father must prove that he has the phallus.[157] This proof may be given as long as he shows that he follows the law, which is constructed by the language of prohibition and is therefore always social and symbolic.

In this phase, the child wants to be identified with his father, who has the phallus that is absent from the imaginary mother–child unity. Lacan understands this process as "the substitution of the father as a symbol or signifier in the place of the mother."[158] Finally, the child enters into the symbolic order by following the father's law, which functions as a symbol of prohibition.

Accordingly, the Oedipus complex demonstrates that the subject is subjugated to the desire for the absent unity. This desire, in Lacan's theory, is what drives the subject towards the symbolic, ensuring a self-unity with the phallus through having the powerful law of the father.[159]

2.2.2. The second thetic phase

If the primary thetic phase in Lacan's theory is located in the mirror stage, the second is when the castration is discovered and the child recognizes the difference between himself and his mother. The second thetic phase, Kristeva then claims, is the process in which the subject conducts the critical repression of the pre-symbolic state. This second phase is also when the articulations which semiotic rejection engenders have accumulated sufficiently to build up the symbolic order as the subject gradually gains the mastery over the object and the symbol. In this phase, with the Lacanian

[156] Jacques Lacan (ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russel Grigg, 2017), p. 177.
[157] Jacques Lacan (ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russel Grigg, 2017), p. 177.
[158] Jacques Lacan (ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russel Grigg, 2017), p. 164.
[159] However, this identification process with the father's law as a result of the desire is also incomplete and deficient. This is because the subject's desire is always determined by the Other, which could be exemplified by the social structure, and therefore, even the subject's desire in itself is unidentical to the subject. This thesis will not go further since it does not investigate Lacan's psychoanalysis but focuses on Kristeva's.

castration complex, the subject finishes the "thesis" by transferring "semiotic motility onto the symbolic order."[160]

Kristeva sees this moment as a definitive break from the semiotic.[161] She also argues that this is when the mother, as "the receptacle and guarantor of demands" for the child, "occupies the place of alterity."[162] This is because transference from the mother's order to the father's entails the repression of the mother, as the Lacanian castration complex shows. In Kristeva's aesthetics, then, the mother must be repressed in order for the subject to produce signification.

This thesis calls this movement of negativity, which transfers the subject from the semiotic to the symbolic, "thetic negativity," which is the second register of negativity. This thesis sees this particular mode of rejection, which will be termed "thetic rejection," as one that implies this second register.

One might ask whether rejection in the second register aims at semiotic objects and *rejects* the semiotic. This may be confusing, since Kristeva does not seem to limit rejection to semiotic operations. For example, she writes: "Although repeated rejection is separation, doubling, scission, and shattering, it is at the same time and afterward accumulation, stoppage, mark, and stasis."[163] This seems to suggest that rejection has two moments of charge and stasis in itself; it shatters the subject through the operation of the drives, but at the same time stops that very shattering. Accordingly, "*the thetic moment of rejection*," as Kristeva puts it, might be when rejection renders the drives static after its accumulation.[164] Kristeva writes of "the mechanism of rejection that pulverizes or brings him [the subject] together again," suggesting that rejection also has a unifying mode.[165] In Kristeva's view the unification comes after the accumulation of rejection, so this "thetic moment of rejection" seems to be close to *the result of repeated rejection*; although it may potentially be *the rejecting act itself towards the semiotic*.

Kristeva also claims, following Hegel and Lacan, that the thetic moment

[160] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 45. Eng. 47.
[161] Julia Kristeva (1974), pp. 44-45. Eng. 47.
[162] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 45. Eng. 47.
[163] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 155. Eng. 171.
[164] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 182. Eng. 206.
[165] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 182. Eng. 206.

accompanies the tendency to destroy the other.[166] Her explanation of the sacrificial rite in an anthropological sense illustrates this eradication of the other as the "murder" of a victim.[167] A sacrifice allows "semiotic, presymbolic" violence only by "focusing" it on a particular victim; by doing so, the rite "displaces it onto the symbolic order" by symbolizing the meaning of the victim's murder.[168] To put it simply, in naming the murder of a victim a "sacrifice" the rite designates the semiotic violence as a sign, and this is how the consequence of the sacrificial rite is similar to the thetic moment. Consequently, Kristeva highlights the power of representation by interpreting this sacrifice as a sort of symbolic representation of the semiotic: "it indicates that all order is based on representation: what is violent is the irruption of the symbol, killing substance to make it signify."[169]

Therefore, symbolizing the object of the sacrifice functions to reject semiotic violence by confining it to the victim. This rejection is thetic insofar as it replaces the semiotic with the symbolic by bestowing the sign upon the violence. In Kristeva's aesthetics, the thetic moment establishes the symbolic by rejecting the other—the semiotic drive and its object.

In short, Kristeva's second thetic phase corresponds to the Lacanian castration complex in the third phase of the Oedipus complex, despite their subtle theoretical differences. Nevertheless, Kristeva's theory places greater emphasis on the mother's role compared to Lacan's. As we have seen before, Lacan's psychoanalysis argues that the father prohibits identification with the mother, thereby replacing the mother with the father's law. Kristeva accepts that detachment from the mother forms the symbolic subject, but she pays less attention than Lacan to the logic of the phallus.

A more radical difference between Lacan and Kristeva is demonstrated by her reinterpretation of Hegelian dialectics through Lacan's theory. As the previous section explained, Lacanian desire is the subject's urge towards self-identification. In the Oedipal phase, according to Kristeva, desire functions as the crossroads between language and the drive-based objects, as it makes the subject accept the

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[166] Lacan interprets the desire to resolve the split between the subject and the imago as a desire to kill the other, and thereby attain unity. 라캉 (맹정현, 이수련 역, 2016), p. 307.
[167] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 72. Eng. 75.
[168] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 72. Eng. 75.
[169] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 73. Eng. 75.

father's law and forsake instinctual satisfaction with the mother.[170] Lacan shows that the subject's dialectical movement is driven by this desire, but will remain incomplete; the subject is naturally divided within itself, thereby undoing Hegel's absolute unity as a goal and a truth. Besides, Lacan assumes that the real, a unity the subject lacks, lingers in the symbolic order and motivates the subject's desire towards itself. Presupposing that the subject will never be united with its own self, Lacan's psychoanalysis aims to undo the self-returning unity of Hegelianism.

For these reasons, Kristeva asserts that desire logically represents the appearance of the process of negativity.[171] For Kristeva, Lacan's "desire takes up the logic of Hegelian negativity through the notions of the first Freudian topography, but raises them out of their biological and material entrenchment into the domain of social praxis where 'social' means 'signifying.'"[172] In other words, Lacan re-reads Hegelian dialectics through Freud, mediating the drive-based objects and their materiality with society, but differentiates himself from Freud by introducing the symbolic structure of signification.

Nevertheless, in Kristeva's view Lacan's theory still lacks the heterogeneous process of the Freudian drives to regulate "psychosomatic articulation."[173] This is because Lacan neglects the fundamental drive bases that come before the mirror stage, and confines the possibility of their return: in his view the mother (and the satisfaction with her which is based on the drives) is always lost to the symbolic subject. Thus, Kristeva finds Lacan's ideas about desire insufficient because Lacan did not pay enough attention to the drive bases in this process. The next chapter will show how Kristeva locates Freud's drive and its duality in the subject after symbolization.

2.3. Thetic negativity after the completion of the thetic phase

[170] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 120. Eng. 130.
[171] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 120. Eng. 130.
[172] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 120. Eng. 130-131.
[173] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 121. Eng. 131.

2.3.1. Repetition compulsion and the death drive

Rejection, in Kristeva's understanding, continues to operate even after the thetic phase is completed. In other words, the symbolic subject continues with thetic functionings of negativity. Indeed, this is necessary for the subject, since the drive and its objects constantly linger after the thesis. Freud's notions of "repetition compulsion" and the "death drive" explain this lingering semiotic in Kristeva's theory. In Freud's psychoanalysis, these two concepts demonstrate that the repression of objects in the unconscious is imperfect, and show how these objects return to and affect the self.

In the 1920s, Freud developed the idea of repetition compulsion in light of the theoretical insufficiency of the pleasure principle. The pleasure principle is what regulates one's degree of tension, avoiding an unpleasant tension or pursuing a pleasurable one.[174] However, Freud found that this principle could not explain cases of traumatic neurosis, which is the psychosis that occurs among patients who have experienced traumatically life-threatening incidents, such as railway crashes.[175] Freud observed that these patients are "mentally fixated to the trauma."[176] For instance, a survivor of war might experience a traumatic event from the past again and again while dreaming; this event is definitely unpleasant to the patient, yet he constantly reintroduces the frightful situation into his dream.[177] Since he does not avoid the unpleasant tension, but rather re-evokes it in the dream, the pleasure principle is not sufficient to explain this case of traumatic neurosis.

Freud then claims that repetitive compulsion is "more primal, more elementary, more drive-oriented than the pleasure principle," and that it comes into play in such cases of traumatic neurosis.[178] Repetition compulsion is the tendency to repeat an operation of drives that has been experienced before, even if it was unpleasant. Under this compulsion, the patient "supersedes the pleasure principle" by bringing the

[174] Sigmund Freud (trans. G. C. Richter, 2011), p. 51.
[175] Sigmund Freud (trans. G. C. Richter, 2011), p. p. 55.
[176] Sigmund Freud (trans. G. C. Richter, 2011), p. 56.
[177] Sigmund Freud (trans. G. C. Richter, 2011), p. 56.
[178] Sigmund Freud (trans. G. C. Richter, 2011), p. 61, 65.

unpleasant event from the past into the present.[179]

In Freud's theory, repetition compulsion leads to the conservative character of the drive. Investigating the return of the past in this compulsion, Freud concludes that "all drives aim to restore an earlier state," as the drive is "oriented toward regression."[180] If the nature of the drive is conservative, for Freud, its ultimate goal might be a return to nothingness—to death: "*the goal of all life is death,* and, looking backwards, that *the nonliving existed before the living.*"[181]

Thus, the drive tends to move "toward change and development" for the living substance, but at the same time it also does the "complete opposite."[182] In other words, the drive has two characteristics: firstly, it sustains the biological perpetuation of the living and contributes to self-preservation, and secondly, it obstructs this very perpetuation and aims at death. In Freud's theory, the former is named the sex drive, and the latter is called the death drive.[183]

2.3.2. Negation as maintenance of the symbolic order

For Kristeva, the drive is destructive, as Freud claimed, because it is in itself semiotic, and thus incommensurable with the symbolic: "[w]e must emphasize that 'drives' are always already [...] destructive."[184] This drive and its objects, unable to be fully apprehended under the symbolic system of language, can threaten the stability of the symbolic order when the drive penetrates the symbolic in the form of the death drive. This is when the subject preserves the symbolic order that sustains it against the death drive, by repressing the returning drive.

In Kristeva's aesthetics, the symbolic subject activates negativity as a defense against the inevitable return of the death drive.[185] This is a thetic operation of

[179] Sigmund Freud (trans. G. C. Richter, 2011), p. 75.
[180] Sigmund Freud (trans. G. C. Richter, 2011), pp. 76-77.
[181] Sigmund Freud (trans. G. C. Richter, 2011), p. 77.
[182] Sigmund Freud (trans. G. C. Richter, 2011), p. 76.
[183] Sigmund Freud (trans. G. C. Richter, 2011), p. 82.
[184] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 26. Eng. 27.
[185] Kristeva mentions the significance of Freud's theory in her aesthetics, in that Freudian drives dialectically mediate the binary opposition between life and death, the body and

negativity, re-facilitated afterward the thetic phase. **This thesis will include this rejection in the second register of negativity that sustains the symbolic, because its main character is retention of the symbolic order against the invasion of the semiotic drives.**

This sort of negativity in Kristeva's theory refers to Freud's concept of "negation". To explore its role more closely, this section will investigate Freud's *Negation* once again. Freud's negation signifies the clinical phenomenon in which the patient negates what he or she is recalling in the mind.[186] Freud gives the example of a patient who confronts an enigmatic person in his dreams but does not know who he or she is. The patient says: "You ask who this person in the dream can be. It's *not* my mother."[187] However, Freud thinks the patient is doing exactly what he is negating—that is, unconsciously thinking of his mother.[188] When the repressed material of the unconscious emerges in the conscious, the patient cannot admit its presence because the very repression prohibits it. Freud suggests that what this person is actually saying is: "It's true that my mother came into my mind as I thought of this person, but I don't feel inclined to let the association count."[189] He also argues that negation brings the repressed image or idea into consciousness in a limited shape; the repressed idea can "make its way into consciousness, on condition that it is *negated*."[190] The object of repression can exist in consciousness only in the form of its negation.

Above all, negation is what supports repression. Freud writes: "A negative judgment is the intellectual substitute for repression," because "[t]o negate something in a judgment is, at bottom, to say: 'This is something which I should prefer to repress.'"[191] In other words, intellectual judgment functions to repress the object of unconsciousness, insofar as the negation prohibits its intact existence in consciousness. Even if the patient understands and admits the functioning of

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society, without falling into the strict dichotomy. Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 151. Eng. 167.

[186] Sigmund Freud (trans. J. Strachey, 1986), p. 235.

[187] Sigmund Freud (trans. J. Strachey, 1986), p. 235.

[188] Sigmund Freud (trans. J. Strachey, 1986), p. 235.

[189] Sigmund Freud (trans. J. Strachey, 1986), p. 235.

[190] Sigmund Freud (trans. J. Strachey, 1986), p. 235.

[191] Sigmund Freud (trans. J. Strachey, 1986), p. 236.

negation, this cannot be a full acceptance of what is repressed, because the patient's acknowledgment does not remove the essential repression.

In *Sèméiotikè: Researches for Semanalysis,* Kristeva understands Freud's negation to imply Hegel's sublation, referring to her reading of Jean Hyppolite.[192] According to Hyppolite's text, as quoted in her writing, Freudian negation is similar to a negation of negation: that is, Hegelian sublation.[193] Freudian negation is a concept that explains the intellectual recognition of repressed objects, but only in their negated form. Negation, as a result, supports repression and sustains consciousness of the self. In other words, this process negates the object, yet without eliminating it, letting it remain in one's consciousness as a negated object, and allowing the self to reinforce the repression repeatedly.[194] The process of negation here follows the logic of double negation suggested by Hegel, negating the other but at the same time preserving it as a negative content in order to develop self-unity.

In *Revolution in Poetic Language,* Kristeva implicitly takes this Freudian negation and this Hegelian sublation of the other as theoretical predecessors of the second register of negativity. She argues that negation, in a Freudian sense, is a "symbolic representation" of expulsion: this means that negation functions similarly to expulsion, but uses the symbolic signifier of negation instead of sensorimotor action.[195]

Although she does not clearly state this, both expulsion and negation are thetic; they constitute the object and make it "as lost, thus setting up the symbolic function."[196] Through expulsion, however, the object is physically lost from the subject and is designated as a sign of absence. Through negation, the object is intellectually negated from consciousness, and is symbolized as negated content that should be repressed. Both are operations of negativity with the thetic function, but negation is different from expulsion, since it appears only after the domination of the

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[192] Julia Kristeva (1969), p. 211.
[193] Jean Hyppolite (2006), "A Spoken Commentary on Freud's "Verneinung" by Jean Hyppolite," *Écrits* (B. Fink, ed.), W. W. Norton & Company, p. 749.
[194] Freud himself mentions that this negation is the sublation, using Hegel's original word Aufhebung in German. Sigmund Freud (1976), *Gesammelte Werke XIV: Werke aus den Jahren 1925-1931 (Vol. 14),* S. Fischer Verlag, p. 12.
[195] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 148. Eng. 135.
[196] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 148. Eng. 135.

symbolic, in a form shaped by the symbolic order. If it is reasonable to exemplify the first register of negativity with expulsion, and the second with negation, then this comparison and contrast show that both are incommensurable with each other but at the same time share the thetic moment.

2.4. Two registers of negativity: Semiotic and thetic

This section will summarize the two registers of negativity detailed throughout Chapter II. It should be noted that every operation of negativity has a thetic function. In other words, operations of negativity are acts of separation that negate the other, thereby contributing to the establishment or maintenance of the symbolic. Under the semiotic, rejection is thetic in a primitive sense because even the simplest bodily expulsion engenders the sign of the other, distinguishing the subject from the other. In the thetic phase, the operation of negativity is also thetic; it represses the semiotic and transfers the subject into the symbolic order. When the subject is subordinated to the symbolic, negation has a thetic function as well, since it defends the death drive returning from the symbolic and preserves the subject's self-unity. In conclusion, the thetic function essentially links every form of negativity, although its negated objects may differ in their qualities.

The two registers of negativity consist of (1) semiotic negativity and (2) thetic negativity (during and after the thetic phase). There is also the third register, (3) artistic rejection, but this section will focus on the first two; the third will be explained in the next chapter. This categorization does not mean that the registers are mutually exclusive, but aims to distinguish between the different functions of negativity by noting the most prominent character of each kind. Semiotic negativity is especially characteristic of the subject's primary stage, which is dominated by the semiotic. However, it also happens to the symbolic subject in the form of repressed bodily rejections. Thetic negativity represents the definitive break from the semiotic in the thetic phase. This register of negativity also reinforces the symbolic order by negating semiotic objects, but at the same time it shows this very order's inability to expel every semiotic object.

Overall, Kristeva's thoughts concerning rejection are greatly influenced by

Hegel's philosophy. Accepting Hegelian negation, she develops an understanding of the process that facilitates every moment of the subject with change, which it can do only through the negation of the other. Hegel and Kristeva may agree that the other is not simply the opposite; the other constitutes the developed unity as a form of negated content, and therefore exists as another nature of the self. Thus the other is within the self, and is not an opposing pole in Kristeva's aesthetics.

Accordingly, the thesis could not be an absolute break from the other, insofar as the other is not eliminated but preserved under repression. The authority of the thesis and the symbolic order is threatened by repressed objects as long as the repression is not absolute. Kristeva's subject is therefore not a fixed entity that establishes itself on the basis of the impenetrable thesis, but is in itself a place where the signifying process unfolds and the movement of negativity is ongoing. In this sense, Kristeva writes, "[t]he subject never *is*. The subject is only the *signifying process* and he appears only as a *signifying practice.*"[197] Therefore, her subject can always be "in process/on trial."[198]

In her aesthetics, artistic practices are significant phenomena that facilitate the signifying process by effectively breaching the symbolic. According to Kristeva, "[t]hough absolutely necessary, the thetic is not exclusive: the semiotic, which also precedes it, constantly tears it open, and this transgression brings about all the various transformations of the signifying practice that are called *creation*."[199] In other words, artistic creation allows a transgression of the semiotic against the symbolic by transforming the form signification takes. This shows the most essential difference between Kristeva's negativity and Hegel's. The next chapter will explore the third register of negativity, which functions as a critical breach of the symbolic: rejection operating in artistic phenomena.

[197] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 188. Eng. 215.
[198] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 37. Eng. 37.
[199] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 62. Eng. 62.

III. Kristeva's negativity in art

1. Rejection reactivated in artistic phenomena

1.1 Mark, representamen, and their co-existence

Kristeva suggests three different forms of representation in *Revolution in Poetic Language*. This section will review the first two, since these may explain the principle of transgression that operates in artistic representation. The first is the "mark,"[200] and the second is the "representamen."[201] Descriptions of these notions are especially nebulous, and are scattered across several chapters of *Revolution in Poetic Language*. However, it is not impossible to sketch their characters, because Kristeva implicitly links each form of representation to the different registers of negativity.

Firstly, the mark indicates the very primary form of sign that is semiotic. It only emerges as a sign after semiotic rejection because this sign is engendered by the distinction of the other from the subject, as we have seen regarding the child's excrement. According to Kristeva, the mark is "a step in the development of the sign since it prefigures the sign's constancy and unity."[202] Accordingly, along with the economy of drives, the mark indicates the stasis of the drive as a result of rejection. This is because the mark appears in the static, post-rejection state at which the charged drive has arrived following the discharge. In this sense, Kristeva argues that the mark "defers rejection" by suspending its activation until the drive's next charge emerges.[203]

Kristeva suggests that the components of the mark are "forms, colors, sounds, organs, words, etc.," and an example of the mark might logically be the babbling of the child.[204] According to Kristeva, such marks represent only the drive, not any logical meaning in a symbolic sense.[205] Thus, the mark should be understood as a representation of the drive following semiotic rejection.

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[200] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 155. Eng. 171.
[201] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 156. Eng. 172.
[202] Julia Kristeva (1974), pp. 155-156. Eng. 172.
[203] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 156. Eng. 172.
[204] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 97. Eng. 102.
[205] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 97. Eng. 102.

Secondly, the representamen symbolically indicates a representation. Kristeva argues that the representamen may represent an object "by image or word."[206] She also identifies the system of the representamen with "the system of the signifier, the sign, and, finally, the understanding."[207] In other words, it is a sign under the symbolic signification system that conveys meaning. Therefore, the representamen is a symbolic form of representation of the object, following the thetic negativity.

Like the mark, the representamen also represents the stasis of the drive because it is founded on the stability of the symbolic—a result of the accumulated rejection that deactivates the dominance of the semiotic drives. Kristeva claims that the symbolization of the object is established only on the stasis of the drive, not on the flexible state of the charges, and that this is applicable to both forms of representative signs.[208]

In the thetic phase, thetic rejection replaces the mark with the representamen. Kristeva explains this process as follows:

> The quantitative accumulation of rejections nevertheless upsets the mark's stability: the mark becomes an unstable engram which ends up being rejected into a *qualitatively* new space, that of the *representamen* or the sign. Rejection destroys the stasis of the mark, breaks up its own positivity and restraint, and, in the face of this "murder," sets up a qualitatively different thetic phase: the sign.[209]

In other words, having accumulated enough semiotic rejection to enter the thetic phase, the subject substitutes the mark with the representamen while replacing the semiotic with the symbolic. This replacement is essential for the subject because the mark represents the semiotic drive itself, and thus it is unable to function in the symbolic sense. The representamen, on the other hand, cannot signify the drives because of its symbolic character, which signifies logical meaning only after the repression of the semiotic.

In Kristeva's aesthetics, to produce an artistic practice is to inscribe the mark

[206] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 97. Eng. 102.
[207] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 157. Eng. 173.
[208] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 155. Eng. 171.
[209] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 155. Eng. 172.

on the representamen. Rejection is important in this process. For Kristeva, rejection is reactivated in art, captures the "signifying material with the repressed" which is embodied in the representamen, and inscribes the mark on it.[210] In other words, this rejection negates the authority of the symbolic order by marking the repressed object under, and within, the symbolic formation. It "dismantles the representamen" "within the very structure" of it, and "produces new symbolizations" that are artistic.[211] This rejection does not destroy the symbolic order, inasmuch as it still maintains the shape of the representamen. As a result, although rejection distorts and disturbs the symbolic, the subject who is producing or confronting a work of art is able to approach and accept the object of the destructive drives without losing itself. **This thesis sees the dismantling function of rejection in art as the third register of negativity, which will be called "artistic negativity." This reactivated rejection as a characteristic of artistic phenomena will be categorized as "artistic rejection."**

Kristeva's aesthetics suggests another term, "mimesis," to signify the function of artistic rejection.[212] Generally, mimesis means art's imitation of the appearance of nature. However, Kristeva claims that mimesis involves imitating "the constitution of the symbolic as *meaning*" rather than nature, while transgressing "grammatical rules."[213] That is, art conveys the heterogeneous and semiotic drive into the symbolic while copying the constitution of the symbolic. Consequently, mimesis can "posit an object" in a symbolic form, but "this 'object' is merely a result of the drive economy of enunciation."[214] Mimesis and rejection (in artistic practice) may, then, be identical.

Although Kristeva thinks various genres of art (such as a "poem, painting, or piece of music," or "theater, [...], dance") can facilitate the semiotic drives within the symbolic structure,[215] she privileges poetic language, especially as embodied in modern literature, which transgresses the grammatical system in form and summons forth repressed objects in content.[216] As she puts it, "modern poetic language goes

[210] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 149. Eng. 163.
[211] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 161. Eng. 179.
[212] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 57. Eng. 57.
[213] Julia Kristeva (1974), pp. 56-57. Eng. 57.
[214] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 57. Eng. 57.
[215] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 49, 77. Eng. 51, 79.
[216] Julia Kristeva (1974), pp. 57-58. Eng. 57.

further than any classical mimesis—whether theatrical or novelistic," because it is able to attack the order of enunciation on which the subject relies.[217]

In *Sèméiotikè: Researches for Semanalysis*, Kristeva outlines the potential of poetic language by claiming that it does not stand against non-poetic discourse.[218] For instance, if there is such a literary expression as "voluptuous furniture [*meubles volupteueux*]," non-poetic discourse may respond to it with the logically sound proposition that "there is no voluptuous furniture because furniture cannot be voluptuous."[219] In this case, poetic language does not logically oppose non-poetic discourse and claim that "it is false that there is no voluptuous furniture"; this is because its form is not an intellectual judgment but an artistic signification, representing something heterogeneous within the structure of judgment. [220] Furthermore, for Kristeva, poetic language suggests a "non-synthetic reunion [*réunion non-synthétique*]" of what is logical and what is incommensurable with this logic.[221] When the two mutually incommensurable moments are reunited, it leads to the destruction of the stability of the signification system; confronted with these phenomena, the subject may be dissolved, since only the language structure constitutes it.[222] As a result, art implies a negativity that "annuls" the subject and is totally different from the negativity that enables judgment, as Freudian negation did.[223] In other words, Kristeva posits a returning negation that acts against synthesis in artistic phenomena, especially in poetic language.

[217] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 58. Eng. 58.
[218] Julia Kristeva (1969), p. 193.
[219] Julia Kristeva (1969), p. 193. This expression Kristeva uses is cited from Charles Pierre Baudelaire's work.
[220] Julia Kristeva (1969), p. 193.
[221] Julia Kristeva (1969), p. 193. The implicit reference of Hegel here will be further explained in the Chapter III.1.3.
[222] Julia Kristeva (1969), p. 213.
[223] Julia Kristeva (1969), p. 212.

1.2. The third register of negativity: Artistic negativity

Artistic rejection rejects the dominance of the symbolic by introducing the mark into the structure of the representamen. In Kristeva's theory, it distorts and resists the stability of the symbolic as a result.

This is different from both Freudian negation and Hegel's negation as sublation; artistic rejection "does not represent an 'intellectual acceptance of the repressed,' an *Aufhebung*, but instead constitutes a post-symbolic (and in this sense anti-symbolic) hallmarking of the material that remained intact during first symbolization."[224] The rejection inherent to art does not intellectually reinforce repression, and also does not aim to reach unity. It rather revitalizes the repressed materials and scatters the symbolic unity, but this is different from returning to the pre-symbolic stage, since it comes only after the establishment of the symbolic, and renews its state with new practices.

Artistic rejection is not a return to unconsciousness. Kristeva is cautious about the dichotomy that allocates the drive, or art, to unconsciousness and the symbolic language system to consciousness. She criticizes Freud and Lacan's theories, claiming that their thoughts leave the unconscious as a domain of what remains outside linguistic apprehension.[225] On the other hand, she seeks to emphasize the dialectics of the semiotic and the symbolic, arguing that the components of language itself include semiotic materiality such as shapes, sounds, and rhythms. Artistic rejection also produces meaning in a unique way that encompasses both the semiotic and the symbolic; it functions in both domains, which are close to unconsciousness and consciousness respectively. Kristeva claims that the subject under this negativity cannot be explained in terms of one of these alone, but has the character of "polymorphism" and is always under the tension that exists between them.[226]

However, insofar as artistic practice does not cast out the symbolic, the symbolic subject is able to defend itself against heterogeneity in practice. In

[224] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 149. Eng. 163.
[225] Julia Kristeva (1969), p. 212.
[226] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 142. Eng. 156.

Kristeva's words, art brings "schizophrenic flow" into language, but is "neither anarchic [...] nor schizophrenic blockage."[227] On the contrary, the subject may escape from death, as the practice relies on the symbolic structure when it brings the destructive drive into the subject. Kristeva does not advocate total anarchy, but emphasizes the dialectic between the two incommensurable moments.

In summary, it is now possible to organize every register of Kristeva's negativity which is proposed in this thesis. These three registers of rejection in Kristeva's aesthetics might be organized as follows:

(1) Semiotic negativity indicates the operations characterized by semiotic functioning—that is, rejection. It may be illustrated by the expulsion of excreta by the defecating child. However, it continues to operate even after its repression, sustaining the subject's organic functions, but not in a predominant state. This rejection negates the unarticulated continuity around the subject, and gives rise to the other for the subject. This process is thetic as long as the rejected other constitutes a primary form of the sign called the mark. The mark signifies the object, the other, and its absence inside the subject. Therefore, this rejection—the bodily act of expulsion—is the very origin of intellectual judgment, as Freud claimed.

(2) Thetic negativity and its operations are characterized by the symbolizing function in and after the thetic phase. It is exemplified by the separation from the mother that is associated with the Lacanian castration complex. This negates the semiotic mother and replaces her with the father's law: the symbolic order. As a result, the subject follows the symbolic order and acquires the symbolic language that can represent logical meaning.

This register of negativity can function as a form of repression; its model example is Freud's negation, in which a linguistic expression negates the presence of the repressed object in the mind. Freudian negation happens because the return of the repressed object involves the death drive invested into it, which drives the living to death; and this is constantly repeated under repetition compulsion. In Kristeva's

[227] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 15. Eng. 17.

aesthetics, this rejection preserves the subject from the returning death drive.

(3) Artistic negativity and its operations are characterized by the reactivation of semiotic rejection within and against the symbolic order. It is found in certain kinds of modern literature, such as Mallarme's, that use poetic language that presents heterogeneity in its form and content. This reactivated rejection negates the security of the symbolic order by distorting its very basis, the structure of the language system. In other words, it inscribes the mark on the representamen. Although representing the drive itself is impossible for the symbolic subject, art can allude to its presence with the mark, the primary form of representation of the semiotic drives.

In conclusion, these three registers of negativity begin with the basic principles of Hegelian negativity but radically break away from Hegel's structure of three dialectical moments. The next section will investigate what differentiates Kristeva's negativity from Hegel's, in order to explain what potential negativity has in Kristeva's aesthetics.

1.3. Kristeva's break from Hegelian dialectics in her theory of art

As discussed earlier, poetic language still maintains the symbolic language even when challenging its structure. One might then wonder whether Kristeva assumes the superiority of the symbolic and the predetermined repression of art. Reviewing Kristeva's criticism of Hegel's philosophy will supply her answer to this question. To recall, she accepts Hegelian negativity to explain the thetic that forms the subject; Hegelian philosophy helped her to conceive of "an *affirmative negativity*, a *productive dissolution*" that constitutes self-unity.[228] However, she radically differentiates her theory from Hegel's by rejecting the absolute totality at the end of this process.

[228] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 105. Eng. 113.

Kristeva's main criticism of Hegel is focused on his teleology, which considers unity a purpose or a goal. According to Kristeva, Hegel "subordinates, indeed erases, the moment of rupture" under teleology.[229] In her interpretation, his philosophy assumes progress towards the absolute totality in which negation no longer emerges. Under Hegel's logic, her semiotic chora might be utterly repressed by this goal of unity. This means that artistic rejection will also fail, since symbolic rejection will consequently incapacitate its potential to challenge the symbolic. In this sense, Kristeva argues that "the idealist dialectic deprives itself of negativity's powerful moment: the scission that exceeds and precedes the advent of thetic understanding."[230] In her view, the Hegelian dialectic is problematic as long as it "closes itself off" from the endlessly returning semiotic order, and also from the "signifying practices in which material drives striate, displace, and sometimes attain the clarity of the Understanding"—namely, the operation of artistic rejection.[231] To put it simply, as Hegel's idealist dialectic insists on conclusive unity, it undermines the power of negativity and prevents the return of the semiotic drives at the end.

Accordingly, Kristeva's aesthetics erases the goal from Hegelian negativity and suggests that negativity is a principle of never-ending renovation of the self, without any goal or tendency towards unity. Insofar as her negativity follows the Freudian logic of drives and repetition compulsion, heterogeneity is preserved in a flexible state that could be inert or reactivated at any time. This is why Hegel's negativity is insufficient to support the power of artistic rejection in Kristeva's theory, although his concept has greatly influenced hers.

Thus, it may be true that Kristeva does not assume the superiority of the symbolic over semiotic and artistic practices, at least in *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Throughout her writing, Kristeva (1) emphasizes the necessity of unity by affirmatively re-reading Hegel's negativity, claiming that the rational subject is only possible under this unity. At the same time, she (2) criticizes Hegelian teleology so that art can be free from utter subordination to the symbolic. In addition, she argues that the symbolic, far from insisting on its previous state, is renovated through

[229] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 105. Eng. 113.
[230] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 107. Eng. 115.
[231] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 107. Eng. 115.

practices; the process changes the subject, who is a different being before and after encountering artistic phenomena. Therefore, Kristeva's aesthetics rejects Hegel's threefold dialectic in a strict sense; it supposes the infinite renovation of the subject through intertwined oscillation between the two incommensurable moments.

How could non-synthetic reunion in art, especially in poetic language, undo Hegelian dialectics in Kristeva's theory? How is its non-synthesizing process different from Hegel's sublation? In Kristeva's theory, art can disclose the ambivalence of two dissimilar moments in Freudian drives—challenging Hegel's self-returning unity of the spirit, as discussed in Chapter II. This duality of the drives gives rise to their heterogeneity, which belongs to neither the interior nor the exterior of the spirit. Art emphasizes the drives' duality by marking them, their objects, and their operation (articulated by the first register of negativity) on the representamen (as the result of the movement of the second negativity).

Art reveals the drive moving towards (1) self-preservation and (2) self-destruction, along with (i) bound and (ii) freely moving states in the drives. Art mimics the signification of the representamen, which is (i) the result of the stasis brought about by the thetic negativity that (1) sustains the subject's symbolic order, but at the same time activates the artistic negativity that is (ii) dominated by the charges of (2) destructive drives. These three registers of negativity represent Kristeva's new dialectic. The first register of negativity follows the charge and stasis of the drives; the second posits the symbolic order. In the third register's operation, they are fused without any synthesizing process, maintaining the duality of the first and second but dissolving the boundary between them so as to distance them from the dichotomy.

In summary, Kristeva's project has involved developing her own negativity out of Hegelian dialectics. She modified Lacan's triad model into her own model of the semiotic and the symbolic, supposing the semiotic drive to be neither lost after symbolization nor absent before the mirror stage. Introducing the mobility and charge–stasis of Freud's drives as dominating in the semiotic, latent in the symbolic, and revivified in the artistic practices, her theory argues that the drives always inscribe heterogeneity into the very root of the subject. In this way, she aims to push the Lacanian subject further; if the Lacanian subject has already been split into itself

and its other, and thus failed to attain identity, Kristeva places the fundamental duality of the drives into the core of the Lacanian subject to render it even more heterogeneous.

Therefore, Kristeva's third register of negativity is a specific moment of negativity with a more radical heterogeneity than Hegel's sublation. Artistic negativity is her way of demonstrating the return of the semiotic drive in a non-synthetic sense, thereby establishing her original notion of negativity while relying on, but also undoing, preceding ideas concerning negativity. This explains how Kristeva's modifications of Freud, Lacan, and Hegel are pivotal to understanding her artistic negativity; she has problematized their theories, in that they are insufficient to explain the radical heterogeneity implied in the seemingly united subject, and then she has aimed to find what they have neglected, suggesting artistic negativity as a breakthrough. The following chapter will specify how artistic negativity operates in particular works of art, and in the subjects who appreciate or create them.

1.4. Artistic negativity in Lautréamont's works of art

In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva examines Comte de Lautréamont's literary works, *The Songs of Maldoror* (*Les chants de Maldoror,* 1869) and *Poems* (*Poésies*, 1870), which exemplify how artistic negativity "represen[ts] the mechanism of rejection itself."[232] Her analysis highlights two main aspects of Lautréamont's works: (1) the operations of artistic negativity in each work's form and content, which may condition the aesthetic experience of both artist and reader, and (2) the inconsistent position of the narrator and a dialectical link between two works, leading to the deconstruction of the artist–subject. This section will first introduce the general features of the works and then move to Kristeva's interpretation of these two features.

In 1869 the writer published his first complete work, *The Songs of Maldoror*, under the pseudonym *Lautréamont*; but a year later he printed his final work, *Poems*, under his autonym, *Isidore Ducasse*. Not only the names of the author differ, but

[232] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 168. Eng. 188.

also the works' orientations. On the one hand, *The Songs of Maldoror* emphasizes scenes of violence and madness within its contents and immethodical style. On the other hand, *Poems* is written in a more temperate manner by a seemingly rational subject, allegedly distancing himself from any irrationality.

The Songs of Maldoror represents the violent and vicious deeds of the protagonist, Maldoror, who is neither living nor dead but an evil being. Kristeva introduces "laughter" to emphasize the operation of artistic negativity in such works: "Practice, as we have defined it, posits prohibitions, the ego, 'meaning,' etc., and makes them dialectical, and laughter is the operation that attests to this mechanism."[233] In other words, laughter in *The Songs of Maldoror* may especially be the place where artistic negativity revokes and inscribes the semiotic marks on the symbolic representamen. How is the laughter in such artistic practices different from non-artistic laughter, then, and how does it apply to reading Lautréamont?

Lautréamont's laughter, for Kristeva, does not indicate the "psychological decompression" of the subject that relieves its increasing tension and sustains its stability—though this might function as the second register of negativity, which maintains the subject's symbolic law.[234] Instead, laughter in *The Songs of Maldoror* marks "the aggressive, violent, and liberating drive" in the symbolic order. For instance, Maldoror, who is unable to laugh, violently tears the flesh of his cheek with a razor and opens up a wound, longing to produce laughter as others do. Maldoror finds himself not laughing like others at all, even after tearing his flesh out: "I looked in a mirror at this mouth disfigured by an act of my own will. It was a mistake! The blood flowing from the two wounds prevented me from discerning whether the laugh really was the same as others'. But after comparing them for a few moments I saw clearly that my laugh did not resemble that of human beings, i.e. I was not laughing at all."[235]

Kristeva argues that the subject does not laugh when a contradiction between the semiotic and the symbolic arises through artistic negativity, since "when this

[233] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 194. Eng. 222.
[234] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 195. Eng. 223.
[235] Lautréamont (trans. Paul Knight, 1978), *Maldoror and Poems,* Penguine Classics, p. 32.

contradiction takes place within a subject, it can hardly be said to make him laugh."[236] What she indicates here is that, if the symbolic sense of laughter has a positive function that soothes the subject, Lautréamont's laughter refuses this positivizing operation—refusing to be a symbolizing "laughter," and thereby not making the subject laugh—and brings the subject into the scene of negativity. A scene of flowing blood and violent laughter serves to describe this feature of the laughter (which is not laughter at all), since it reactivates the destructive drives in the subject who confronts this scene. The subject will be radically scattered by the reactivated operation of drives within the symbolic structure of meaning. Kristeva describes this scattered subject as "not the one that observes and knows"—that is, not as the self-identified rational subject that eases its impulses through laughter, but as "the theater of contradiction" where "nothing is funny."[237]

The Songs of Maldoror displays an "explosion of laughter" by presenting logically impossible incidents and a scene of expenditure in which the character goes on a binge, lifting symbolic prohibitions.[238] For example, Lautréamont describes a man who "sees an ass eating a fig or a fig eating an ass (these two circumstances do not often occur, unless it be in poetry)," and writes that he "abandon[s] the path of virtue and start[s] laughing like a cock!"[239] In another scene, God is lying on the road, "[h]orribly drunk," bleeding because he "knocked his face against a post," "with his clothes all torn" and "weak as an earthworm," and animals who are passing by him sneer at his appearance.[240] Such ridiculous scenes reject the authority of solemn reason, and in these scenes we can see how the semiotic drives and their irrationality, implied in the laughter (which is not laughter in the symbolic sense), can become humorous in art when they invade the structure of meaning. As Kristeva puts it, "the instigator" of such laughter, an artist, should produce the "new binding" of the drives' charge "so that the addressee may laugh."[241] In other words, the artist creates a new way to bind the charges of the drives through poetic language, so that the reader can

[236] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 196. Eng. 224.
[237] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 196. Eng. 224.
[238] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 195. Eng. 223.
[239] Lautréamont (trans. Paul Knight, 1978), p. 152.
[240] Lautréamont (trans. Paul Knight, 1978), p. 134.
[241] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 196. Eng. 224.

appreciate the humor in the scene's irrationality. Without this "new" binding, the subject as a reader will be unable to grasp or make sense of the explosion of drives that suspends his symbolic function.

Therefore, as Kristeva puts it, "Lautréamont makes laughter the *symptom of rupture* and of the heterogeneous contradiction within signifying practice."[242] This is how artistic negativity works in such artistic practices: *The Songs of Maldoror*, especially in its narrative and its literary expressions, exemplifies how the mechanism of negativity that divides the subject is reactivated through laughter. In this process, artistic negativity rejoins the returning first register of negativity (semiotic negativity, articulated by drive-based operations in scenes of laughter) and the product of the second register (thetic negativity, as the signification system) without synthesis.

The later work written by *Isidore Ducasse*, the prose poem in *Poems*, ostensibly abolishes such violence and irrationality, employing relatively refined forms and the sole narrator's point of view from the beginning:

> I shall write my thoughts methodically, according to a clear plan. If they are exact, each one will be the consequence of the others. This is the only true order. It indicates my object despite the untidiness of my handwriting. I would be debasing my subject, if I did not treat it methodically.
>
> I reject evil. Man is perfect. Our soul never fell from a state of grace. Progress exists. Good is irreducible. Anti-christs, accusing angels, eternal torment, religions, are the product of doubt.[243]

Accordingly, rejecting evil and accepting "the only true order" that points towards progress, *Poems* upholds reason and law, which were the main opponents in *The Songs of Maldoror*. *Poems*' appraisal of the symbolic law seems to contrast with the earlier work, presenting statements that verge on maxims rather than poetry.

However, even when it is trying to maintain rationality in its content, *Poems* exhibits the lyrical rhythm characteristic of poetic language. For instance, the

[242] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 195. Eng. 223.
[243] Lautréamont (trans. Paul Knight, 1978), p. 268.

narrator generates the rhythm by repetitively naming the great French poets in history, as he debases the authority of each: "Poetry must be made by everyone. Not by one. Poor Hugo! Poor Racine! Poor Coppée! Poor Corneille! Poor Boileau! Poor Scarron! Tics, tics, and tics."[244]

He also disparages any objects of poetry which do not serve reason by densely listing them one by one, generating repetitive rhythms: "reason whistled at with impunity, the smells of wet chicken, the sicklinesses, the frogs, squids, sharks, desert simooms, all that is somnambulist, cross-eyed, nocturnal, soporific, night roving, viscous, talking-seal, equivocal, consumptive, spasmodic, aphrodisiac, anemic, obscure, hermaphrodite, bastard, albino, pederastic, phenomena of the aquaria and bearded-lady, the hours drunk with silent discouragement, fantasies, monsters, demoralizing syllogisms," and so on.[245] However, while the narrating subject's rationality was asserted in the beginning, such a long list of vulgar objects and their rhythmic enumerations seems to intimidate it; although the narrator is blaming them for being unreasonable, his manner of expression does more to inflate their irrationality than to restrain it. Kristeva argues that, in *Poems*, Ducasse posits "the unary subject" as a narrator and explores the semiotic drives and their objects "through this unity."[246] Therefore, the unity of the subject "guarantees 'poetry's' dimension in practice," rather than maintaining its logic.[247] Following her arguments, then, the narrator appraises the thetic subject only to be invaded by the drive-based objects and rhythms, inevitably losing his self-identity as the symbolic subject. In summary, *Poems* represents how artistic negativity operates ambivalently: Firstly, it takes as a prerequisite the operation of thetic negativity to construct a form of representamen (by presenting a narrator aiming to reach the only true order). Secondly, it dissolves the product of this thetic negativity by reactivating semiotic negativity within the representamen (as the allegedly methodical narrator grows obsessed with rhythmical repetitions of the objects that do not serve reason). **As a**

[244] Lautréamont (trans. Paul Knight, 1978), p. 279.
[245] Lautréamont (trans. Paul Knight, 1978), p. 256.
[246] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 190. Eng. 218.
[247] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 192. Eng. 219.

result, artistic negativity, revived in poetic language, revolts against the traditional myth of the self-united subject.

We will move on to the second aspect of Kristeva's interpretation here, and will see how works of art dismantle the identity of the subject as an artist (which this thesis calls the artist–subject). *The Songs of Maldoror* refuses to employ any consistent narrative logic; the narrator constantly switches his point of view between the first and third person. At the beginning, for instance, the narrator watches Maldoror and describes his demonic character in the third person. "Whenever he kissed a little pink-faced child, he felt like tearing open its cheeks with a razor, and he would have done so very often, had not Justice, with its long train of punishments, prevented him. He was no liar, admitted the truth and said that he was cruel."[248] Sometimes, however, the narrator forsakes the status of an objective observer and becomes Maldoror himself: "Seeing these spectacles, I wanted to laugh like the others but I found that strange imitation impossible. I took a knife with a sharp steel cutting edge on its blade and I slit my flesh where the lips join."[249] *The Songs of Maldoror* thus presents an inconsistent narrative logic as the narrating subject switches states.

Furthermore, Kristeva focuses on the dialectical link between Lautréamont's two works because they are in a heterogeneous relationship that represents the mechanism of artistic negativity. On this point, Kristeva implicitly re-evokes the notion of "intertextuality" that she introduced in her earlier essays in 1966 to mean that "in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one other."[250] Influenced by the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, the term means that every writing has a sort of "subjectivity" which puts it in "communication" with other writings, so that each writing refers and responds to another in a dialogical relationship. This subjectivity of the writing is not identified with a "person–subject of writing" who has the authority of the author, but rather

[248] Lautréamont (trans. Paul Knight, 1978), p. 31.
[249] Lautréamont (trans. Paul Knight, 1978), p. 32.
[250] Julia Kristeva (1969), *Σημειωτικὴ: Recherches pour une Sémanalyse*, Tel Quel, p. 52. Eng. 36. Some chapters of this book have been translated in English. For those chapters, I followed the translation in Julia Kristeva (trans. Leon Roudiez, 1980), *Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art,* Columbia University Press.

with the "ambivalence of writing" as it constantly pluralizes its meaning through intercommunication with the other writings.[251]

Having this notion in mind, Kristeva reads Lautréamont's two works as constituting a dialogue in which both are entangled with each other. As Kristeva puts it, "In the split but indivisible unity they form, *Maldoror* and *Poems* both complement and contest each other." [252] Kristeva sees a vestige of Hegelian philosophy in Lautréamont's works, as the first breaks logic and the second restores it. As Kristeva puts it, they "show that the second, 'mastering' modality is a lining of the first, 'poetic' modality."[253] The development of Lautréamont's writings thus may seem to be a Hegelian sublation, returning to the reason that masters the heterogeneous materiality (*Poems*), and negating what is posed and mastered as the other, such as bodily rhythms, voices, and semiotic violence (*The Songs of Maldoror*).

However, for Kristeva, this dual structure of the two works presents more artistic negativity than it does "totalization."[254] Implicitly, she assumes that the artist–subject, Lautréamont and Ducasse, is split by *poetic* and *mastering* modalities in each of *The Songs of Maldoror* and *Poems*, as she stresses the difference in styles, with *The Songs of Maldoror* on the "vocal register" and *Poems* on the "logical register."[255] What we can see in this analysis is that the two works consist of "a divided language" of the artist–subject—a language that holds both the primary vocal register of the semiotic and the logical register of the symbolic.[256]

Kristeva finds that the pseudonym, Lautréamont, "introduces the negativity or the putting-to-death" of the subject by offering up a violent and hallucinatory narrative and discarding the symbolic law of logic.[257] Notably, this "subject" is not only confined to Lautréamont's reader, but also may be the artist, positioning himself sometimes as a narrator and sometimes as Maldoror himself. What, then, if the artist distanced himself from the narratorial position? We may say it is not necessary that

[251] Julia Kristeva (1969), p. 88. Eng. 68.
[252] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 192. Eng. 219.
[253] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 140. Eng. 153.
[254] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 193. Eng. 220.
[255] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 142. Eng. 155.
[256] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 142. Eng. 155.
[257] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 193. Eng. 220.

the artist should identify himself with the narrator in this sense, as long as it is the artist is who bears and binds this imaginary experience of irrationality and hallucination with poetic language.

Poems, published a year after *The Songs of Maldoror,* comes after the death of this subject and "posits the rupture or boundary" that the earlier work has generated against the symbolic order. Nevertheless, this position is still not negation, because the subject in a traditional sense could only be "absent," as his self-identity is murdered from the beginning.[258] In other words, *Poems*' narrator could not function as a stable subject because there is only a dead, absent subject since *The Songs of Maldoror*.

Kristeva's notion of intertextuality comes into play in this description: she interconnects two texts and finds that their meanings are becoming pluralized by each other. As a result, for Kristeva, their poetic and mastering modalities create radical heterogeneity regarding their coexistence: "Finally and above all, the unity of *Maldoror* and *Poems* articulates a new experience-in-practice for 'poetry'—one that flees psychosis and aims to invest, within social discourse, the truth of the subject thus put to test."[259] Most importantly, this new experience of art is only possible when artistic negativity can mediate the two heterogeneous moments without synthesizing them. Kristeva's theory does not see this artistic negativity as confined to each single work of art, but pluralizes the meaning of each work by reading multiple works of art under intertextuality. Presumably, this is also a question of the subject as an artist. In this doubling of two works, the artist "retains this [symbolic] boundary as a means of access to enunciation and denotation," but also "transgresses" the boundary of the symbolic to create the "process where he is a subject-to-death," following the return of the death drives and inevitably denying his own self-identity.[260] Also made twofold by his pseudonym and autonym, Lautréamont or Ducasse renders himself as a polymorphous subject in which neither the symbolic nor the semiotic has a monopoly.

[258] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 193. Eng. 221.
[259] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 192. Eng. 219.
[260] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 193. Eng. 221.

Accordingly, the dualism between the two works represents the specific operation of artistic negativity within their combination, and also within the artist–subject. If these two works constitute a totality, it will be "always a heterogeneous totality."[261]

In summary, this section first showed how each work has a moment of artistic negativity in itself. It then showed how the interrelationship between *The Songs of Maldoror* and *Poems*, respectively representing semiotic and symbolic features, represents the artistic negativity that holds the semiotic and the symbolic moments at the same time; this also suggests the polymorphism of the artist–subject who is split between two moments. Therefore, this chapter has illustrated how artistic negativity can operate in the form and content of a single work of art, in the interconnections between multiple artistic practices, in the subject who may confront those practices, and in the artist–subject who creates them. The next chapter will explore how the notion of negativity has influenced that of the abject and abjection in Kristeva's later work.

2. From rejection to abjection

2.1. Two registers of abjection

This chapter reviews the notion of the abject and abjection to demonstrate that negativity has remained a pivotal notion in Kristeva's aesthetics even after *Revolution in Poetic Language.* Previous sections noted that negativity (or rejection) can cross the border distinguishing two moments of the symbolic and the semiotic, life and death, consciousness and unconsciousness. Kristeva maintained this thought of crossing borders in 1980, when she published *Powers of Horror* and introduced the terms *abject* and *abjection*. Nevertheless, in contrast with *Revolution in Poetic Language*, which allocated many pages to rejection and negativity, *Powers of Horror* mentions neither. At the first glance, it might seem that Kristeva has abandoned the ideas she developed in 1974. This may be why previous studies on the abject and

[261] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 192. Eng. 219.

abjection have tended to neglect or to omit the notion of negativity. However, abjection has three registers that differ in their objects and effects, and it logically follows what Kristeva declared as a "new dialectic" of negativity in *Revolution in Poetic Language.* Furthermore, *Powers of Horror* relies on her previously established theories to a significant degree. Firstly, it maintains the structure of the semiotic and the symbolic that was defined in *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Secondly, Kristeva preserves her fundamental thought that the subject is always fluid and mobile, changing itself in the process. These two assumptions in *Powers of Horror* logically rely on the notion of negativity in Kristeva's earlier works, so reviewing the implications of the abject and abjection with regard to those of negativity indicates that negativity offers a new way to understand Kristeva's later project.

The first register of abjection indicates how "repelling" and "rejecting" function in the subject as an urge to cast something out from the subject itself.[262] Kristeva explains the process of abjection as follows: "[Y]ou see something rotting and you want to vomit—it is an extremely strong feeling that is at once somatic and symbolic, which is above all a revolt against an external menace from which one wants to distance oneself, but of which one has the impression that it may menace us from the inside."[263] In this example, the object released from the subject was once inside it; however, the subject has formed the impression that it was threatening itself from the inside, and expelled the object. In a basic sense, this function of abjection involves a bodily movement of expulsion. What is expulsed is an object which was once inside the subject, and thus the movement creates a distinction between the subject and the other.

For Kristeva, this primal operation is already symbolic, not in a strict sense but in the sense that every human subject is placed under a familial and social structure from birth, even while being dominated by the operation of the drives. Kristeva assumes that there is a "possession previous to my advent, a being-there of the symbolic that a father might or might not embody," and therefore "[s]ignifiance is

[262] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 20. Eng. 13.
[263] Julia Kristeva (ed. Ross M. Guberman, 1996), p. 118.

indeed inherent in the human body."[264] Here she intends to show that human beings are born to be inseparable from the structure of meaning.

The abject is an expulsed object in this primal process. According to Kristeva, it is "not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules."[265] That is, the abject is not confined to bodily waste but includes whatever is incommensurable with the symbolic order, and therefore may disturb it. Kristeva also describes the abject as "[t]he in-between, the ambiguous, the composite," because it is not delimited by the borders that sustain the system and its order.[266] To describe this property of being abject, Kristeva notes the loathing of "skin on the surface of milk" that appears when the milk is warm.[267] In this anecdote, the child spasmodically feels a "sight-clouding dizziness" and "nausea" when encountering the milk skin.[268] The abjection emerges because the child wants to reject the very object with which he needs to identify, as his parents have urged him to drink it and take it inside himself. The child is disgusted by the object even though the milk skin is not rotten, and it does not taste or smell bad. This skin is the abject insofar as it blurs the boundary between inside and outside, between solid matter and liquid.[269] According to Kristeva, this abjection is "within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish *myself*" as the subject, in that "I" "give birth to" the other that was once "myself," and create the distinction between the I and the other.[270]

This property of distinguishing the I and the other leads us to the second register of abjection. According to Kristeva, the definitive abjection that constructs the "autonomous" subject is that of severing "the instinctual dyad of the mother and the child."[271] In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva also refers to Lacan's Oedipus complex and to "what is termed knowledge of castration":[272] when "the symbolic light that a third

[264] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 18. Eng. 10.
[265] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 12. Eng. 4.
[266] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 12. Eng. 4.
[267] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 10. Eng. 2.
[268] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 10. Eng. 3.
[269] Winfried Menninghaus (trans. Howard Eiland & Joel Golb, 2003), p. 374.
[270] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 11. Eng. 3.
[271] Julia Kristeva (ed. Ross M. Guberman, 1996), p. 118.
[272] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 13. Eng. 5.

party, eventually the father, can contribute" to the subject's symbolic function appears, the mother turns "into an abject."[273] That is, the subject abjects the mother and follows the father to become an autonomous self. According to Kristeva, examples of what is repressed in this process are "rhythm, drive, the feminine, etc."[274] Consequently, this point of abjection shows how the subject substitutes drive-based satisfaction under the mother–child dyad with the father's symbolic system of society and language.

This second register of abjection also explains how the I sustains itself when the semiotic chora and its objects return to the symbolic subject in the form of the abject: "shattering violence of a convulsion that, to be sure, is inscribed in a symbolic system, but in which, without either wanting or being able to become integrated in order to answer it, it reacts, it abreacts. It abjects."[275] Let us investigate this description further. First of all, through the abjection of the mother, the operations of the drives are inscribed in language; Kristeva writes that "the mother–child dyad" has "always been immersed [*baigne*] in language."[276] However, the repressed is not thoroughly integrated into the symbolic order; it rejects the integration, and reacts to the symbolic by appearing as an abject. Kristeva employs the example of encountering a corpse to explain this reaction: "[t]he corpse (or cadaver: cadere, to fall), that which has irremediably come a cropper, is cesspool, and death; it upsets even more violently the one who confronts it as fragile and fallacious chance."[277] To put it simply, the corpse disgusts someone confronted with it, and thereby so violently upsets him that he reacts by expulsing part of his bodily matter. In this case, as the extreme form of the abject, the corpse expels the border that defines the inside and outside of the subject, upsetting its stability: "[t]he border [*limite*] has become an object," which as the other is expelled due to the violent presence of the corpse.[278] Without the border that defines the subject as an autonomous self, the subject is threatened and loses its self-united identity. Displaying the return of the repressed

[273] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 20. Eng. 13.
[274] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 212. Eng. 180.
[275] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 11. Eng. 3.
[276] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 77. Eng. 62.
[277] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 11. Eng. 3.
[278] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 11. Eng. 4.

into the symbolic subject, this phenomenon may illustrate the return of the death drive under the repetition compulsion.

This return is abjected again by the subject. When confronted with the corpse, as Kristeva puts it, "[m]y body extricates itself," and at this moment "[s]uch wastes drop so that I might live" until "my" own death—in short, the I vomits.[279] This defends the I from the threat, namely, the utter division of itself, since this act of abjection demonstrates "what I permanently thrust aside in order to live."[280] The extreme experience of abjection distances the subject from the place dominated by death, and protects it from the repeatedly returning death drive—that is, thetic negativity or negation in *Revolution in Poetic Language*.

Accordingly, abjection has two main implications. Firstly, to divide the subject and generate the division of the I and the other. Secondly, to establish the subject by abjecting the mother and following the symbolic order, while sustaining the subject's symbolic order by abjecting the return of the abject itself. The next section will review how abjection functions in artistic practices, and how its mode of operation is differentiated from the previous two registers'.

2.2. The third register of abjection in art

In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva emphasizes the destructive function of abjection more than the supportive one of the subject. Especially in artistic phenomena, "[t]he abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or a law; but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts; uses them, takes advantage of them, the better to deny them."[281] In other words, abjection and its object neither renounce nor serve the symbolic order but corrupt it in artistic phenomena. An example of this kind of abjection is "[c]ontemporary literature," such as Joyce, Artaud, and Mallarme's; their works of literature consist of language, but language perverted by the artist in

[279] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 11. Eng. 3.
[280] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 11. Eng. 3.
[281] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 23. Eng. 15.

both “style and content.”[282] For Kristeva, art “maintains a distance” from abjection as long as it takes advantage of the symbolic structure, but at the same time art “confronts” it, and implies “an ability to imagine the abject, that is, to see oneself in its place and to thrust it aside only by means of the displacements of verbal play.”[283]

Kristeva refers to sublimation to explain the principle of abjection in art. Originally, sublimation was a Freudian notion; it is an operation transferring the object of a desire, repressed and prohibited in civilized society, into a socially permitted form.[284] It offers a detour toward the desired object and helps one to obtain pleasure indirectly. Menninghaus comments that through sublimation human beings can defer the disgust that the repressed objects provoke, and then enjoy those objects in a roundabout way.[285] In this sense, sublimation links the sexual drives to cultural creation.

Through sublimation, in Kristeva’s aesthetics, the subject can control the abject without being destroyed by its power. Kristeva writes that sublimation “is nothing else than the possibility of naming the pre-nominal, the pre-objectal, which are in fact only a trans-nominal, a trans-objectal. [...] Through sublimation, I keep it under control.”[286] Sublimation, then, is an act of naming the unnamable abject so that the subject can apprehend it in a linguistic form, within the symbolic order constituting the subject. In other words, sublimation tames the abject and transforms it into what the subject can tolerate. As an example of this sublimation of the abject in art, Kristeva quotes one of the final scenes of Louis-Ferdinand Céline’s *Death on Credit*:

> He sticks his finger into the wound... He plunges both hands into the meat... he digs into all the holes... He tears away the soft edges... He pokes around... He gets stuck... His wrist is caught in the bones... Crack!... He tugs... He struggles like in a trap... Some kind of pouch bursts... The juice pours out... it gushes all over the place... all full of brains and blood... splashing....[287]

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[282] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 23. Eng. 16.
[283] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 23. Eng. 16.
[284] 프로이트 (성해영 역, 2014), 『문명 속의 불만』, 서울대학교출판부, pp. 25-26.
[285] Winfried Menninghaus (trans. Howard Eliand, Joel Golb, 2003), p. 221.
[286] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 19. Eng. 11.
[287] As cited in Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 175, Eng. 150.

This work of literature consists of short, fragmented sentences with numerous ellipses and exclamation marks, and also presents scenes of outright violence and death. Kristeva claims that Céline's writing displays "an ingrained love for death, ecstasy before the corpse, the other that I am and will never reach."[288] That is, the subject can enjoy in the form of art the pleasure that death brings, controlling its power through this art to an extent that the subject can understand and endure.[289] Insofar as the death drive explicitly comes into play in such a scene, even if the subject can tame it through sublimation, the "identity" of the subject "is turned into something undecidable."[290] That is, abjection discards the identity of the symbolic subject and undoes its determinacy, dissolving the boundaries between the subject and its other. In conclusion, the third and last register of abjection is that of breaching the symbolic order through artistic practices. Through artistic sublimation, the creator of art can inscribe the symbolic drives on the symbolic structure. This functions as a reactivation of the first register of abjection within the symbolic which the second established—and both of these registers have a specific and ambivalent character which is found in the third register.

In conclusion, this chapter has outlined the influence of negativity on Kristeva's later notions of the abject and abjection by outlining their three registers. This chapter cautiously suggests that the abject and abjection retain the basic premises established by the principle of negativity: the subject is always fluid and mobile, moving between two heterogeneous axes, and joining them through artistic practices. Every part of this movement is driven by a fundamental power to negate the status quo, which is inherent in the charging and binding of bodily drives.

Kristeva not only changes her writing style in this transition from negativity to the abject, but also focuses more on artistic operations, and renders the negated object in a specific and ambiguous state with the term *abject*, which was not used in her previous works. Why, then, did Kristeva make this shift in her styles, viewpoints, and technical terms? To review, Kristeva outlined specific negativity in poetic

[288] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 175, Eng. 150.
[289] This specific type of pleasure is termed "jouissance" in Kristeva's writings. Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 16, Eng. 8.
[290] Julia Kristeva (1980), p. 175, Eng. 150.

language with more strictly linguistic concepts in the 1960s (*Sèméiotikè: Researches for Semanalysis*), and organized her thoughts concerning negativity in reference to philosophical and psychoanalytic traditions while conceptualizing the semiotic and the symbolic in the 1970s (*Revolution in Poetic Language*). Later, she emphasized the destructive power of negativity but relied far less on traditional concepts, often using literary expressions within a first-person narrative. Kristeva has said when interviewed that this transition to the abject is not merely about stylistic modification, but is attained by switching the "position of interpretation."[291] That is, if the former publication presented language that conveys knowledge and interpretation, the latter may be "an attempt to displace" its analytical language, as her own response to her earlier approach.[292] Through this transition, Kristeva arguably positions her works within a dialogic process that oscillates between different positions; Kelly Oliver also finds a dialectical movement here.[293]

It is interesting to see how this change in her position overlaps with her interpretation of Lautréamont and Ducasse's texts, covered in Chapter III, 1.4. As the artist split himself into two modalities, with one emphasizing the vocal register and the other the logical, so too did Kristeva in her two major publications. After positing a theory that attempts to apprehend the structure of artistic practices (in *Revolution in Poetic Language*), she resisted the possibility of totalization that such theories have by switching the positions of narrator and interpretation (in *Powers of Horror*). We might see a lurking negativity in this interrelationship, in that the works' two heterogeneous modalities are compensating for and at the same time conflicting with each other. It is likely that Kristeva herself, as a writer on negativity, practices the "movement of negativity" that she presents in the core of her aesthetics.

[291] Juila Kristeva (ed. Ross M. Guberman, 1996), p. 33.
[292] Juila Kristeva (ed. Ross M. Guberman, 1996), p. 33.
[293] Kelly Oliver (1993), *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the double-bind*. Vol. 761. Georgetown University Press, p. 11.

Conclusion

To conclude, we should look back at what the *revolution in poetic language* means. In the introduction of that book, Kristeva argues that art can be a "practice that could be compared to political revolution: the one brings about in the subject what the other introduces into society."[294] It suggests that artistic practices, especially those involving the poetic language that Kristeva privileges, are able to reorganize the subject as a political revolution does the social order. How, then, can we read art as the equivalent of a political revolution for the subject, with the implications of negativity? How might an understanding of negativity help us to apprehend the revolutionary value in art that Kristeva argues is there?

The very first page of *Revolution in Poetic Language* starts with criticism of methodologies that seek to investigate the unchanging truth and establish their own rational discourses. On this page, Kristeva writes: "Our philosophies of language, embodiments of the Idea, are nothing more than the thoughts of archivists, archaeologists, and necrophiliacs."[295] In other words, Kristeva thinks such attempts at apprehension fetishize, mummify, and try to possess the truth through the frame of totalizing reason. From ancient philosophies to modern, objective science, discourses "as agents of totality, in positions of control" have oppressed the dynamic features of the body that allegedly confront our reason, identity, and unchanging truth.[296]

Civilized social apparatuses based on such discourses bind the biological drives and their mobility; in other words, "biological urges are socially controlled, directed, and organized" by the social structure and its products.[297] For instance, the modern advent of the wage-labor system has drastically changed the patterns of humans' behavior by regulating their biorhythms and restricting their modes of bodily performance within an administrative system. However, have such bindings indeed been successful? The history of psychoanalysis has exemplified their failure with the

[294] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 14. Eng. 17.
[295] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 11. Eng. 13.
[296] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 12. Eng. 14.
[297] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 14. Eng. 17.

invasion of unconscious objects into the mind—especially in psychopathy. In this context, as the subject is rooted in the drive-based operations that oscillate between charge and stasis, Kristeva believes that attempts to position heterogeneous, corporeal mobility within the stable social structure always inscribe something on it that exceeds that very structure. As she puts it, this positioning produces "an excess with regard to social apparatuses."[298]

In Kristeva's theory, artistic practices may exercise their political potential against these backgrounds. Art is a sort of sociolinguistic apparatus as it conveys meaning through signification, but is allowed to stand apart from the social order since it is not obliged to follow logic and reason. In this sense, for Kristeva, art best exemplifies the excess of biological urges in social structures. It discloses the limitations of any philosophy of reason, objective science, and sociolinguistic apparatuses, testifying that the subject is always split between the oppressive structure and the object of oppression.

Negativity distances Kristeva's theory from the binary thinking that presupposes the mind–body and repressing–repressed dichotomies. First of all, semiotic negativity indicates that bodily articulations, ruptures, and the ambivalent nature of the drives have dominated the subject before its acquisition of language. On the other hand, negativity is a motivation to construct the discourse and social devices which language represents. Thetic negativity posits the bodily drives and their heterogeneity so that the subject can master the system of meaning, which is prepared by semiotic negativity earlier. Finally, artistic practices imitate the form of the discourse which thetic negativity produces, and expose the excess that exists as a trace of semiotic negativity in the sociolinguistic structure. This thesis has called this conflictual negativity "artistic negativity." Artistic negativity enables the coexistence of the semiotic and the symbolic without their unification, producing a scene of collision and conflict between two heterogeneous moments rather than symbiosis. It verifies that the subject could not be situated in either moment, and therefore the unchanging truth sought in the thoughts of "necrophiliacs" could never be absolute. Consequently, artistic practices in Kristeva's aesthetics perform in the

[298] Julia Kristeva (1974), p. 14. Eng. 17.

manner of a political revolution which criticizes the authority of the dominant order and produces a new one for the subject who enjoys or creates the works of art. Insofar as Kristeva's artistic negativity is never completely subjugated to absolute identity, as in Hegel's philosophy, this operation of negativity can constantly reactivate the "revolution in poetic language." Artistic negativity may have political implications, in that it challenges the predominant structure of society and language, introducing the infinite potential of change to the subject.

To foreground its aesthetic value, Chapters I–III analyzed the implications of the notion of negativity. Chapter I reviewed Freud and Lacan's psychoanalytic concepts, and explained how Kristeva's key concepts in *Revolution in Poetic Language* appropriate them. This book tried to recover the Freudian drive and to modify Lacan's subject model by suggesting the *semiotic* and the *chora*, which are based on the principle of the drives but prepare the ground for the introduction of the symbolic. In Kristeva's view, in this semiotic stage negativity generates physical separations and articulations, exemplified by bodily excretion. Accordingly, Chapter I demonstrated this fundamental basis in Kristeva's aesthetics, and explained the need to investigate the notion of negativity.

Chapter II explored Kristeva's notion of negativity by inspecting its influences: Hegel, Freud, and Lacan's theories. Accepting Hegelian negativity, Kristeva claims that difference and negation are essential in order to establish self-unity and language. She also argues that the subject can constantly change itself and reject the static state by following the principle of negativity. Chapter II then detailed the two registers of negativity in Kristeva's aesthetics. The first is semiotic negativity, based on Freud's notion of expulsion, and the second is thetic negativity, which functions similarly to Hegelian sublation, Freudian negation, and Lacan's process of castration. These two registers may be differentiated by their affinity to semiotic organization or the symbolizing function, but they also have a similarity in that both conduct the thetic function.

Chapter III reviewed how the third register of negativity can reactivate the semiotic drives in symbolic forms. This reactivation may also exercise its resistive power against the symbolic, especially through one specific form of art—poetic language. This chapter explained that poetic language uses, but reforms, the

symbolic order by marking the drives in the representamen. Examples that illustrate this operation of negativity are Lautréamont's two literary works, *The Songs of Maldoror* and *Poems*. By deconstructing the logical language system in their form and content, these works show how artistic negativity functions in the subject who enjoys or creates art, especially through poetic language. Chapter III also suggested that the notion of negativity, as a pivotal ground of Kristeva's aesthetics, has influenced Kristeva's later notions of the abject and abjection.

To summarize the terms discussed in this thesis, "negativity" is an organizing principle of the process in which differences are generated, rooted in Hegel's philosophy. "Rejection" means a mode of operation, or movement, of negativity, and appears in Kristeva's reinterpretation of Hegel under the influence of Freud's notion that rejection signifies the bodily act of expulsing. Kristeva's later terms, "abject" and "abjection," indicate the repelling and rejecting function, implicitly affected by the earlier theorization of negativity. Accordingly, this thesis has shown how the notion of negativity is pivotal to understanding Kristeva's main ideas, which explain the value of artistic practices in challenging traditional thoughts that privilege reason and their social products.

Reflections on negativity may also suggest responses to criticisms of Kristeva's aesthetics. Some readers may claim that the semiotic lacks the potency to challenge the symbolic order. For example, Judith Butler underestimates the semiotic, as it seems to be subordinated by, and to reinforce, the symbolic order. This is because Butler reads the reactivation of the drives in Kristeva's theory as nothing more than temporary turmoil which will ultimately be repressed by the symbolic.[299] However, this thesis argues that this kind of criticism undervalues the role of a process based on negativity in Kristeva's aesthetics. As this thesis has shown, Kristeva accepts Hegelian negativity but rejects his teleology; she does not think the subject in process aims to reach a self-united state in the symbolic. She thinks that negativity can endlessly renovate the subject, mediating between the symbolic and the semiotic. While disputing any thought of progression towards unity, she also refuses to think of the conscious and the unconscious, the symbolic and the semiotic, under a simple

[299] Judith Butler (1990), *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge. p. 109.

dichotomy. Introducing the notion of negativity, Kristeva constantly emphasizes that negativity can dissolve the fixed structure through a movement that negates the status quo, and that such a movement is especially powerful in poetic language.

In conclusion, this thesis has sought to illuminate the significance of negativity in Kristeva's aesthetics, reflecting on its implications and the different registers that appear within the concept throughout her major publications. Without its conception of a negativity that motivates the subject to move between the semiotic and the symbolic, Kristeva's main premise that the subject is always in a process would be rather simplified. Also, if the specificity of artistic negativity were neglected, the way in which artistic practices mediate between two heterogeneous moments could be rendered mystifying, or reduced either to a simple amalgamation of the two or to the victory of one over the other. Therefore, this thesis' work of theoretically organizing the notion of negativity potentially offers a new and comprehensive interpretation of the value of artistic practices in Kristeva's aesthetics.

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국문 초록

본고는 줄리아 크리스테바(Julia Kristeva, 1941-)의 미학에서 초기 저작을 중심으로 부정성 개념을 고찰한다. 헤겔(G. W. F. Hegel, 1770-1831) 철학에 근간을 두는 부정성은 본래 변증법적 운동 과정에서 차이를 형성하고 나아가 보존하는 추상적 힘이다. 크리스테바는 헤겔의 부정성을 일부 받아들여, 서로 대립하는 계기들을 지양해 이성적 주체를 구축하는 원칙 혹은 동력이 부정성이라고 주장한다. 그러나 크리스테바는 특히 예술에서 작용하는 부정성이 헤겔의 목적론적이고 관념론적인 종합으로 수렴하지 않는다고 보고 비판적인 부정성 개념을 정립한다. 지그문트 프로이트(Sigmund Freud)와 자크 라캉(Jacques Lacan) 정신분석학에 영향을 받아, 크리스테바는 부정성 원리가 예술에서 드러날 때 예술이 전통 철학에서 우위를 점해온 이성과 자율적 주체의 권위를 해체할 수 있으리라고 주장한다. 크리스테바가 주장하는 이 층위의 부정성은 신체내의 정신분석학적 충동을 재활성화하고, 주체를 이루는 언어와 사회 구조가 자기통일적인 것이 아니라 이질적인 충동을 내포하는 분열된 상태임을 드러내보일 수 있으며, 크리스테바에게 그 잠재력은 근대 아방가르드 문학 장르에서 가장 강력하게 활성화된다.

크리스테바의 부정성 개념을 고찰하기 위해 본고는 주로 『시적 언어의 혁명』(*Révolution du langage poétique: L'avant-garde à la fin du XIXe siècle: Lautréamont et Mallarmé*, 1974)을 살펴보며, 크리스테바가 헤겔의 부정성을 정신분석학적 관점에서 재개념화한 내용을 검토한다. 본고는 특히 크리스테바의 부정성에 복합적으로 함축된 세 가지 층위를 구별하여 논한다. 각각의 층위들은 크리스테바 미학에서 주체와 주체의 기반인 사회언어적 구조가 (1) 신체적 기능 수행을 통해 예비되고, (2) 사회화를 통해 구축 및 안정화되고, (3) 특히 예술을 거쳐 해체될 수 있음을 보여준다. 특히 세 번째 층위의 부정성은 예술에서 드러날 때 의식적인 의미체계를 유지하면서도 무의식 속에 억압된 신체적 충동을 활성화한다는 양가적 특성을 가지는데, 이와 같이 복합적 층위들을 개념화하는 접근은 예술에서의 부정성이 다른 층위의 부정성과 특수하게 차별되는 지점을 해명하기 위해 필요하다.

결론적으로, 예술을 통해 작용할 때 크리스테바의 부정성은 고정적이고 자기통일적인 듯 보이는 주체와 사회언어적 구조에 저항적일 수 있으며, 이는 예술에서의 부정성이 그러한 구조에 이질적이라고 여겨지는 신체적 충동을 지양하지 않으면서 특수하게 매개

할 수 있기 때문이다. 부정성의 함의를 다층적으로 논하지 않을 때 크리스테바의 예술론은 예술에서 나타나는 무의식적 요소들을 신비화하거나, 이성과 비이성, 의식과 무의식의 단순한 결합 혹은 어느 한쪽의 승리를 주장하는 것으로 읽힐 여지가 있다. 따라서 본고는 부정성을 크리스테바 미학에서 핵심적인 개념으로 고찰하는 것이 크리스테바가 주장하는 예술의 가치를 새롭게 이해할 수 있는 방안임을 주장한다.

주요어: 줄리아 크리스테바, 헤겔, 부정성, 기호계, 코라, 프로이트, 라캉, 비체, 비체화, 애브젝션, 애브젝시옹, 시적 언어, 로트레아몽
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