"Ah, you want me to say things like 'I was born in El Biar on the outskirts of Algiers in a petit-bourgeois family of assimilated Jews—but...'. Is that really necessary? I can't do it. You will have to help me..." (Derrida Points 119-120)

Any and every exposition of the loosely termed, widely employed and ruthlessly written about term 'postmodernism' which by a very common consensus exhibits a "philosophical scepticism, a hermeneutics of suspicion which has challenged the Enlightenment legacy's progressivism" (Fairlamb 1) in giving up the view that rational Man could escape time and history by discovering and articulating universal truths cannot afford to dispense with an ever-swelling chain of names including Nietzsche, Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, Lacan, Bataille, Lyotard, Braudillard and Eco. But as it is widely known these thinkers hardly put forward linear concepts in any discourse, a monolithic project of thought or prescribe a panacea. Yet the overall sensibility of a paradigm shift is undeniable and unmistakable. Most of them come to a point of convergence and compromise in picturing postmodernism, chronologically as well as
thematically, as Euro-centric but perceivable or even tangible to every people. It mobilizes the sociocultural dynamics of the shrinking world, objectivizes a number of hitherto unquestioned premises, effects radical alterations at ontological and epistemological levels, and transmutes teleology by hypotheses fraught with uncertainty and incompleteness, often expressed in a deuniversalised dic-
tion.

The contemporary cognitive complexities, the acute sense of unbelonging and the unprecedented trends of revivalism are concomitant with "the crisis of modernity which postmodernism thematizes and seeks to exorcise" (Ekpo 121). These tendencies graphically chart the whittling away of the Modern Myth which once held out the promise of a vantage and infalliable structuring point of view in defining and identifying an unsentimental truth. Now, whether it be "incredulity toward metanarratives, . . . the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the universal institution which in the past relied on it" (Lyotard Postmodern Condition XXIV) to be studied "to achieve a legitimate perspective on a chronological succession" (The Inhuman 24) or a state of 'hyperreality' that "transcends representation because it is entirely in simulation" (Baudrillard 186) where we are hurled away beyond a point of no return, the prevailing
ethos is patent. Those who often argue that modernity's obsolence will engender fatuous relativism and nihilism in the social realm are also alive to the sea changes taking place at diverse levels and dimensions. Thus the perception of postmodernism as a manifestation ('cultural logic') of the consumer capitalism which "constitutes . . . the purest form of capital yet to have emerged, a prodigious expansion of capital into hitherto uncommodified areas" (Jameson Postmodernism or 35-6) like the third world agriculture and global media, and cankering the latter most notably in the form of entertainment industry in which the circuits and networks of some putative global computer hook-up are narratively mobilized by labyrinthine conspiracies of autonomous but deadly interlocking and competing information agencies in a complexity often beyond the capacity of the normal reading mind.

Though history and for that matter culture is no longer considered a deterministic totalizable system capable of orchestrating discourse and reception structured by one master narrative, the twin problematiques occupy a prominent place in literary studies. Unlike the professed structuralist-poststructuralist ethos which tended to view literary writings as a linguistic game happily detached from the social, the contemporary literary/critical stud-
ies concern themselves with the conflicting heterogeneity of cultural production, identify ideological allegiances which inform the work and attempt to localize it in a concrete socioeconomic environment by treating it as "...the product of a negotiation between a creator or a class of creators equipped with a complex, communally shared rhetoric of conventions and practices of society" (Greenblatt 158). The net result derived from the gamut of such theoretical perspectives and explanations that revolve around the axiom of history is one of utter pessimism and helplessness and not without contradictions. While the preachers and practitioners of New Historicism reach the broad consensus that no discourse reveals truth nor can escape or transcend the practices it criticizes, Cultural Materialists adopt a slightly different view. However both schools share the consciousness, sensibility and inescapability of linguistic representation and agree that there can be no 'neutrality' in the means of representation because those means are themselves determinants of the represented (Collins 38). The view of history as restrictive, not emancipatory, has prompted many to approach even infinitesimal social phenomena with care, to theorize the same to contextualize them in a historical continuum like Pierre Bourdieu who argues that habitus (structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures or principles which
generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them is a product of history and produces more history (108-9), an idea close to the Lacanian musings on the complex but universal process of subjectification.

The acute awareness of the historical in discursive formations has also motivated theorists to approach and analyze phenomena from as many perspectives as possible, to draw ever fresh inferences and to make history "a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past" (Carr 30), a telling example being Sushil Shrivastava's paper which reads the extensive voyages undertaken by the European powers in the 13th and 14th centuries as a strategic bid to discover the Christians believed to have been living in the East and to befriend them in the chronic battles against Islam (516-594).

The radical shift from the Modernist Myth to the cognitive insecurity coupled with epistemological scepticism has had salutary impacts on those discourses preoccupied with the marginalised in terms of race, religion and/or gender. As Denis Ekpo holds, "... the cracks and wounds
that postmodenism has inflicted on western rationality and power can be fully exploited to cause a radical rethinking of the ideology of the Africanism especially, 'as it affects our conception of relationship with the West' (123). Equally vehement and convincing is Kervin Lee Klien’s description of how modern studies have toppled Hegel’s conception of indigenous Africans and Americans as "peoples without history" and have shed light to the hitherto unexplored realms of human predicament (npag).

At least peripherally Lacan is in the ahistorical camp unlike his contemporary Michael Foucault who turned to history with an eye to territories like the evolution of attitudes towards madness, the history of proto-modern medicine, the conceptual underground of biology, linguistics and economics and strove to descriptively locate the conceptual underpinnings of some key practices in modern culture, placing them in historical perspective. As mentioned earlier Lacan ranks foremost among those whose theories have paved the path for the strands of thought which have culminated into a the composite chaos of postmodernism. Henry W. Sullivan opines Lacan "stands as founding theoretician of a post-Modern Age, much as Augustine laid out the City of God blueprint for the Middle Ages, or as Descartes mapped out the preoccupation of the Modern Age" (36). The
most telling contribution of the whole Lacanian scheme lies in bringing about a new picture about the subject, the agency of discourse. According to Nicholas J. Fox:

In questioning rationalist 'explanations' in social theory, postmodern writing has addressed the unconscious and, in particular, the desire which motivates agency. Psychoanalysis has--particularly under the influence of Jacques Lacan--understood desire as the effort by which a subject tries to achieve or regain that which has been lost: the object of desire (67).

Equally noteworthy is the impact that Lacanian theories have had on the field of cultural studies. Elaborating the impact of Lacan on cultural studies Anthony Elliot recounts that Lacan's argument that the subject finds an imaginary identity through an image granted by another represents a major advance on approaches which uncritically assume that the ego or the 'I' is at the center of psychological functioning. In stressing that the 'I' is an alienating function, a misrecognition that masks the split and fractured nature of unconscious desire, social theorists influenced by Lacan locate a sense of otherness at the heart of the self -- a theme which runs deep in contemporary thought:
The radical edge of such an approach is that it runs counter to much received wisdom, specifically the assumption that experience is unproblematic and that meaning is transparent. By highlighting that all self-knowledge is fractured and fragile—with the individual subject caught between imaginary traps of narcissistic mirroring and symbolic dislocations of language—structuralist and poststructuralist social theory are discontinuous with each other (6).

Arthur Kroker and David Cook argue late capitalism in its last, artistic phase (the phase of promotional culture) does not work to defend the modernist terrain of fixed perspective, or function to exclude difference. The fascination of capitalism today is that it works the terrain of Lacan’s sliding of the signifier; it thrives in the language of sexual difference, of every kind of différence, and it does so in order to provoke some real element of psychological fascination, of attention, with a system which as the emblematic sign of the Anti-Real, must function in the language of recuperation, of the recyclage, of every dynamic tendency, whether potentially authentic or always only nostalgic:

Indeed, three strategies are now at work for
putting Lacan's sliding signifier in play as the language of contemporary capitalist culture: the old avant-garde strategy of working to tease out the shock of the real (unlikely contexts as the semiotics of contemporary advertising): the (neo) avant-garde strategy of creating a simulacra of virtual myths which function in the language of new and extra-human perspective...: and the '80s parody strategy of exchanging of gender signs. The absorption and then playing back to its audience of the reversible and mutable language of sexual difference is the language of postmodern capitalism (20).

Despite the apparent and undeniable influence Lacan wields on the current theoretical atmosphere, he has been much frowned upon, especially on his seemingly obfuscating and impossible language. However, as Natoli observes, it is from the failure of present discourses to grapple with the complexities of his work and density of his style, as well as from a resistance to making sense of his valorization to lack as a Real presence in being and representation that much criticism is born (34). His language is very much in tune with the bitter realization that metanarratives and language are no longer credible. According to Weber his use
of algebraic representations as well as his witty and playful discursive language games constitute serious attempts at keeping the signifying chain from congealing into the hypostatized meaning of that essentially denominative, conceptual, constantive discourse we call the language of theory (64).

Moreover Lacan differs from any post-structuralist who sees in the noumenal only ambiguity, opacity or the undecidable. Though the noumenal is undecidable in part Lacan's prime interest is in the enigmatic or undecoded part that speaks or writes itself on the body, sometimes as a symptom, and which can always be studied as an object, itself heterogenous (Natoli 47-8).

Being a movement largely outside the canonical streams of psychology, psychoanalysis has always been fraught with intricate theoretical tangles and deep explorations at the structural and discourse levels. As Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer opine, though psychoanalysis is the intellectual parent of archetypalism, psychoanalytic criticism precedes both archetypalism in the first generation of Freidians beginning in the 1920s (who based their work on the later Freud of ego psychology) and more recent movement of the semiotic return to Freud associated with Lacan (98). It is the triple alliance between Althssserian Marxism,
Lacanian psychoanalysis and Saussurian linguistics which spawns discourse analysis.

Given the impact that psychoanalysis has had on social discourse, little wonder that its founder Sigmund Freud "by the power of his writings and by the breadth and audacity of his speculations, revolutionized the thought, the lives and imagination of an age" Wolhem (IX) and that the Freudian model of psychoanalysis is highly dynamic in its outlook, and descriptively exposes the complex and confusing evolution of personality or the construction of subject. Despite the apparent prominence of sexuality like the Freudian postulate that as the building blocks of an organic society all the humans exploit various defences to cope with the insistent demands of the id in all three stages of growth viz. oral, anal and phallic and its related facets in psychoanalytic theory, it would be erroneous to assume that sexuality is the only constituting factor in the construction of the subject. As Wolheim observes, though Freud heavily emphasized the element of sexuality in human nature, he utterly rejected pansexualism, which he regarded as a travesty of his theory; and on many occasions he explicitly and energetically denied the equation of all instoctual life with sexuality (107).
It is to find and fix the recurring structural psychic images which can throw light to the mazy ways in which the present is defined, designed and determined by the past as detected by the subject's sexual history that psychoanalysis endeavours. The motive behind the operation of laying bare intentional aspect of language and its concentration on the relationship between sexuality and social role through the exposition of language is nothing different. To borrow the words of Elizabeth Wright:

Psychoanalysis explores what happens when primordial desire gets directed into social goals. Through language, desire becomes subject to rules, and yet this language cannot define the body's experience accurately. . . . The energies of this desire become directed outside conscious awareness, attaching themselves to particular ideas and images which represent unconscious wishes (Theory 1)

Since sexuality is the staple of intention, the unconscious aspect of utterance merits much more attention and investigation than the conscious aspects. The unconscious, contrary to the common sense conclusion, is not chaotic as far its operations are concerned. There is a method in its madness. Freud's theory of unconscious motivation implies
a rigid psychological determination in that he pictures man's behaviours as irrational but strictly determined in a highly rational manner. The goal of psychoanalysis is to replace defence mechanisms which heavily distort truth with those which give less distortion. As a corollary of these views, the literary text is a form of powerful interaction in a matrix formed by sexually informed and inspired components. Such (then) bewildering musings sufficed to carve an ever-swelling niche for Freud in the annals of human thoughts. As Trilling comments:

Freud as a person stands before us with an exceptional distinctness and significance, and it is possible to say that there is no great figure of modern times who, sees a developing mind and temperament, is of such singular interest (11).

The contemporary criticism of Freud, generally, belongs to the postmodern celebration of discontinuity and heterogeneity as this criticism calls into question Freud's making the unity of the "I", the goal of a task rather than attacking Freud for dividing consciousness and thus permitting a reification of immorality. The common stance is that while Freud should be applauded for recognizing that our cogito cannot function as a foundation for our being in the world, he should be rejected insofar as he still longs
for an integrated self or a transcendental ground. The
place occupied by Freud in the postmodern is, thus strained
and stranded since he recognizes these aspects of our lives
without celebrating them.

Although psychoanalysis as a theory of history in no
way presupposes continuity in development (on the con-
trary, it underlines traumatic breaks in development), it
does attempt to make meaning out of memory and rejects the
Nietzschean forgetting and playful reception so dear to
many contemporary French critics and their American fol-
lowers. Freud's work remains, if it is to retain the power
of its insight, a system of interpretation and a theory of
history. This means that it can search for the meanings of
a particular sign (symptom, dream, action) by finding the
dynamic elements of that sign's past which have generated
its appearance. The theory of infantile sexuality com-
pletes his work as a theory of history, since it provides
a guide for the viewing of a person's past, a grid through
which we can understand the ways certain activities in his
past have an extraordinary effect on his later development
(Roth 58-72).

The process of appropriating Freud to match the re-
quirements of the present day involves a good number of
dangers and cognitive lapses. Freud's early papers, drafts,
and letters are more often than not considered unimportant and immaterial. It may be an unavoidable historical fate that Freud’s ideas often suffer partial or complete distortion. The history of psychoanalysis, with its splinter groups of neo-Freudians who, with their new discoveries, ignorantly restate parts of Freud’s ideas and throw out other essential parts, would lend support to this possibility. Paradoxically, recent additional knowledge of the problems Freud faced in his early years of work may decrease the study of this period, since it invites a stereotyped and codified view:

The tendency has been to dismiss the early papers as a false start, based on Freud’s “need to neurologize”; the detail and complexity of the thoughts can be ignored by viewing them as of historical interest only and by referring to them only with catch phrases such as the seduction theory, toxological theory, strangled affects and so on (Stewart 4-5).

If Sigmund Freud succeeded in altering the focus of diagnosis of psychic disorders from the biological organism to the unconscious which was considered a hazy and mazy proverbial repository of unfulfilled desires, chaotic dreams and primordial instincts Lacan’s project was to see the
same unconscious as a product of language which in turn was an unmotivated system of arbitrary and differentiating symbols as in the Saussurean scheme. This shift in perspective inevitably ushered in some discrete streaks of thoughts in the schools, so to say, of Freud and Lacan. This does not, however, mean that he was simply rejecting the classical psychoanalytic model of Freud out of hand. On the contrary Lacan qualified his project as a "return to Freud". In the words of Richard Harland:

... Lacan's return to Freud is essentially a return to the spirit of the earlier works. Indeed, one of the best ways to understand Lacanian psychoanalysis is to hark back to Freud's original understanding of the unconscious as revealed (during the period of his collaboration with Breur) in the phenomena of hypnotism in mind, we shall no longer find it quite so strange to the Lacanian proclamation that the Unconscious is neither primordial nor instinctual: what it knows about the elementary is no more than the elements of the signifier (34-5).

It can safely be stated that it was Lacan who made Freud properly readable for the first time in France and that his attention to facts of language as they appear in
Freud's thinking, and to the ways in which structural linguistics may be used to reorganize the psychoanalytic account of the unconscious, have made numerous practical and theoretical repercussions within the French centres of the movement. Lacan generalized and deepened the anti-individualistic implications of Freudian psychoanalysis. With the somewhat subterranean influence of Lacan, psychoanalysis made a comeback, giving rise to a neo-Freudian rebirth that seems to be quite germane to the concerns of several critics.

For Lacan the exposure of family premises is merely part of a continuous process of psychical-model building in which ideas, gathered from a variety of sources and constantly combined, play a vital role in drawing attention to the central importance of linguistic mediation in the human subject and in the analytic dialogue; Lacan in this way has reformulated the goals of psychoanalysis both as a therapeutic method and as a moral discourse by holding that analysis can have for its goal only the advent of a true speech and the realization by the subject of his history in his relation to a future. It is through Lacan that the Freudian current has flowed once and for all into structuralism or the structuralist current flowed into Freudianism. This in one sense is the natural completion of Freud-
ian schema. As Joseph Bristow comments:

By locating desire within the field of signification, Lacan’s work at last disengaged psychoanalysis from its scientific heritage. In many respects, Lacan’s work completes one of the main tasks begun by Freud: to dissociate eroticism from biological mechanisms (7).

For Lacan his main task is that of reading Freud well and getting him right. The ‘return to Freud’ that he proclaims as his personal mission and slogan follows two distinct paths. The first and more straightforward operation is that of disinterested Freud’s ideas from the litter of banalising glosses and explanations that later writers have heaped upon him. Consequently in Lacan’s writings psychoanalysis is repeatedly made to turn back upon itself and reexamine its concepts, rituals and institutions from the vantage-point offered by its own discoveries in their original unsystematised state. The second aim is to correct certain parts of the Freudian corpus by reference to others. The discovery that Lacan places at the centre of Freud’s achievement and uses as his own essential conceptual tool in his correcting of Freud from within is that of the unconscious—the unconscious that appears as an independent system in the second of Freud’s major models of the psychical apparatus:
Freud, while acknowledging the power of his 'external associations', sees them as making their fullest sense only when measured against the 'internal associations' that they disguise or replace: dream-images require the conjectural 'latent dream thoughts' in order to become legible: the signified, even as it slips from the view, invites pursuit. For Lacan this interpretative oscillation between signifier and signified can easily divert attention from the former and into a fluid region of wish-fulfilment phantasy: the relations between signifiers are a neglected resource and provide more than a sufficiency of information for the analyst (Bowie 219-220).

In place of the firm distinction between conscious and unconscious meaning present everywhere in the Freudian corpus, Lacan's theory tends to see the entities as inseparable. In the Freudian view the unconscious has at its core a set of instinctual impulses that are able to coexist without mutual influence or contradiction; it knows no negation, no doubt, no degrees of certainty; it is the realm of the primary process, in which psychical energy is freely transmissible between ideas by means of displacement and condensation; it is timeless; it is concerned not
with external reality but with achievement of pleasure and the corresponding avoidance of impleasure. According to Lacan the unconscious structured like a language. His work thus introduced or discovered a semiotic Freud, one in which the work of psychoanalysis, including literary criticism and the critique of culture it suggests, "can be understood in the analogous terms of the structures of language and meaning" (Johnson 115). Lacan melded the study of psychoanalysis and structuralist linguistics. Lacan's work in this area is a sequence of two-way mappings (of the unconscious upon language and language upon the unconscious) performed in such sustained defiance of his reader's wish for firm landmarks -- questions like whether the analogy between psychoanalysis and linguistics is correct are never to be definitively answered. It is language that creates the unconscious and linguistic mediation extends far beyond the analytic dialogue. He argues that the human subject, as he acquires speech, inserts himself into a preexisting symbolic order and thereby submits his desire to the systematic pressures of this order: in adopting language he allows his free instinctual energies to be operated upon and organized. It is the peculiar privilege of man, the language-user, to remain oblivious, while making things with words, of the extent to which words have made, and continues to make him.
It can be argued that in Lacan's re-reading the mechanistic aspects of Freud's doctrine drop away, the Freudian reality principle comes under question, the object of the science becomes psychical rather than objective reality and the subject matter of psychology is limited to facts about desire (Jackson 98). Whereas for Freud the supreme extra-scientific model for a dynamic psychology was to be found in the tragic drama of Europe, for Lacan the model most often used, and seemingly most evaluated by the repeated tributes paid to it, is that of the literary text itself, considered to be inexhaustably ambiguous and plural.

Lacan's comparison of language and the unconscious as entire systems, and his account of their many possible reciprocities, are supported by detailed perceptions into the work on the elementary structural components of each. He draws in particular upon Saussure's binominal definition of the linguistic sign--signifier and signified in arbitrary association-- and on the metaphor metonymic poles of verbal organization proposed by Roman Jakobson.

As a matter of fact Freud too had stressed the importance of language very often. (Lacan holds that linguistics was not developed then; otherwise he would have made use of it). Freud not only distinguished between 'word-presenta-
tions' and 'thing-presentations' but designated the unconscious as the specialized field of action for thing-presentations severed from their word-counterparts. Lacan not only gives priority to word-presentations in his definitions of the unconscious, but on occasion presents his own definitions as having dispossessed and supplanted Freud's.

The ego as a tension-point in Freud's id-ego-superego topography is respected by Lacan as a necessary component of a properly dialectical model of the human subject. But the ego envisaged as an end in itself, as a theatrical residence of selfhood needing continually to be refortified against hostile incursions from the id and the superego, is treated with scorn: for Lacan this stabilized and tranquilized ego plays dumbly into the hands of 'soul-managers' and the social engineers. Lacan's accounts of the physical apparatus at work have at their centre the notion not of ego but of subject. The subject does not disappear in Lacan's hands, as a once fashionable practice had it, but has its manifold trajectories are incessantly plotted and replotted by him.

For Lacan, Freud's revolution was intangible but radical like his own. As he exposes the forces of repression operating within psychoanalytic systems and institutions, and allows the repressed to return in his own writing, he
sets before us an extraordinarily original view of what thinking might be. He is a reader of Freud but his fidelity to Freud is of a different kind. Freud provides him with a guarantee that all thinking is 'thinking other'; there is no stability, no stopping place, no supreme system. The speaking unconscious is a model for the intellectual life.

In Freudian method a literary character is treated as if it were a living human being. In the method of Lacan literature is seen as a symptom of the writer. In his _Ecrits_ Lacan sets out to reinterpret Freud in terms of structuralist theories of discourse. The classical psychoanalytic critic sees the relationship between author and the text as analogous between the dreamer and his text. The aim is to reveal the psychology of the author in terms of his unconscious infantile wishes, the emphasis being on the role played by the drives in accordance with Freud's dynamic model of the psyche in which the pleasure principle conflicts with the reality principle.

According to Elizabeth Wright central to Lacan's return to Freud is his move from Freud's concept of the wish as subjective, private, regressive, to the concept of desire as intersubjective, public, future-directed. The wish in Freud's theory is directed towards the reactivation of a memory-image associated with a past satisfaction or frus-
tration, in which the mother's role is decisive. Lacan avoids this concentration on regression by means of a theory grounded in structural linguistics ("Psychoanalytic Criticism" 770). The unconscious bears the marks of the signifiers imposed upon it. In Lacan's view there is a systematic claim that the unconscious is more than the source of primal instincts linked at random to ideas and images. That is the conscious and unconscious are asymmetrically co-present: the inner structure maps the outer conceptualizings. Thus, as Barbara Johnson puts it:

...Freud, and Lacan after him, depict the unconscious in a passage through Greek myth inextricably bound up with the Western family and the ideological investment inherent to Western culture. For Freud and Lacan it follows that the unconscious is not a site of production, a machine capable of various modes of work, but is itself the 'essence of representation' and the 'essence of representation' to be a familial representation (115).

Strictly speaking, unconscious (and even involuntary motivation) is a boundary of sorts, but by no means--as Freud and Lacan have demonstrated--a theatre closed to the rational investigation of language. This mapping of
unconscious configurations is above all governed by linguistic experience. The text, thus, no longer harbours regressive wishes but engages with current desires encompassing both past and future experience. Gaylyn Studlar is of the view that although Lacan avoids the biologicalism of Freud by emphasizing the role of language in the formation of subjectivity and the symbolic significance of the phallus, his influential theory still rests on the anatomical prop of the penis and woman still is inevitably symbolized as castrated and inferior within patriarchy(32). It is the same stream of thought in the Lacanian work that makes Gayahtri Chakravorthy Spivak comment that:

There is an ideological phallocentrism in Freud that works to some of his most radical breakthroughs. Derrida has traced this phallocentrism in Lacan who has written in the name of the ‘truth of Freud’ (173).

Lacan shares with Derrida the philosophic inheritance of Heidegger’s challenge to the tradition of Western metaphysics. Derrida, like Lacan, discusses ‘de-centering’ throughout his work. As for Derrida, meaning for Lacan can only occur in a specific textual location and in a relation of difference from all other textual locations. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, it is the mechanisms of desire rather than
the principles of *différance* that prevent the final fixing of meaning. For him signification is not a process of infinite free play, as it is for Derrida, in which all meaning is temporary and relative. For Derrida, meaning is nowhere punctually present in language; it is always subject to a kind of semantic slippage or deferral that prevents the sign from ever coinciding with itself in a moment of perfect grasp. Language is structured but decentred without closure. The text's plurality does not depend on the ambiguity of its contents but rather on the stereographic plurality of the signifiers that weave it. For Lacan, meaning and the symbolic order as a whole is fixed in relation to a primary, transcendental signifier which Lacan calls the phallus, the signifier of sexual difference, which guarantees the patriarchal structure of the symbolic order (Weedon 56). Lacan sees fiction as a clue to truth; Derrida sees truth as being constituted by fiction.

It is by taking the model of language conceived by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure that Lacan tried to avoid the Freudian concentration on regression. The Saussurian notion of language as a system of signs determined by the difference between arbitrary and unmotivated sounds becomes in the hands of Lacan a system designed and defined by desire. Kelly Oliver observes:
Needs, associated with the maternal body, are not left behind once the child can make demands and acquire language. Lacan's notion that language leaves us lacking satisfaction or that it is a necessary but poor substitute for the maternal body, needs, or drives, assumes that drives and needs are antithetical to language (or in the Lacanian parlance, that the real is cut off from the symbolic). But what if drives or needs make their way into language? In this case the maternal realm that Freud and Lacan identify as a hindrance to the properly social realm not only gives birth to the social but also is necessary for the continual operation of the social. We need to be social. And drives are what motivate language. Culture grows originally out of the body (182-3)

Saussure considered the sign as split into a signifier and a signified or a word-sound, recognized by being hard as different from others within an expected range, and a concept, singled out from an originally undifferentiated continuum of thought respectively. The link between them is entirely arbitrary though once bonded in use the combination is secure. In spite of the apparently revolutionary
Saussurian demarcation between meaning (signification) that represents an idea and value, which is an intralinguistic relation, it is meaning that plays the pivotal role. So in this model too language is conceived in terms of and perspectivised through the word as what is commonly used to define the word is the meaning it held to signify.

Lacan begins his critique by throwing doubt upon the security of this combination between the signifier and the signified. He gives an example where what appears to be the same signified, namely a door, can be marked with two different signifiers, 'Ladies' or 'Gentlemen'. According to Lacan ('Insistence'). What radiates behind the bar of the signifier is the light of a hole. Not the light that shines through the holes, but that of the hole as such. For with what Lacan calls the precipitation of the signifier, with which it leaves its mark upon the signified, the light of the object goes out, or at best becomes a half-light, a chiaroscuro difference. We can see objects only because we can see holes; that is, the interstices, through which they relate to one another and delineate themselves. Such interstices are not just intervals, not just spaces between objects and words, but also cracks and fractures within them. The railings of the rails opens to allow the raillery of ridiculous word-plays to interrupt semantic serious-
ness. Lacan takes as his point of departure the Saussurean concept of the signifier. The $S$ of the Signifier is no longer on the bottom, but on the top. The reverse, which is how Saussure represented the sign, is itself a symptom of the ambivalence of his semiotics, torn, as it were, between the notion of radical difference as the principal mechanism in allowing signs to signify, and the fear that this would render a systematic classification of signs ultimately impossible. The consequent reduction of the differential notion of 'value' to 'the totality of the sign', now determined to be the basic 'reality' of language could only result in the privileging of the signified over the signifier, of meaning over articulation in Saussure's approach to linguistic process ('Insistence' 82-7).

He inverts the Saussurean sign by twisting and dislocating the relationship of signifier to signified. The Saussurean symmetry, ultimately based on the priority of the signified, is displaced: the line used by Saussure to separate the two dimensions of the sign from each other, did so only in order then to unite them all the more definitively. This line is now turned into a bar—an obstacle or barrier. In contrast to the Saussurean bar which separates two internally coherent spheres and thus allows us to conceive of a movement between and within them
putting their respective identities into question, the Lacanian bar traces the impossible trajectory of the signifier, precipitated into the realm of the signified, which only takes shape as a result. What is brought into relief here is not merely the separation between signifier and signified, but instead what is implicitly at work in Saussure but also explicitly disavowed: a certain structural primacy of the signifier over the signified, the latter considered dependent on the former. The primacy of the signifier implies in turn that language is no longer understood as representation, but instead as differential articulation. It is by referring to other signifieds, that is by means of the signifier, that the signified first becomes self-identical, that is, a signified. Its identity thus must be conceived of as an effect of the signifier, insofar as the signifier embodies the process of signification in terms of the play of differential relations. The signifier conceived as a movement of difference thereby becomes co-extensive with language itself, insofar as the latter is no longer understood as a function of representation, but instead as articulation. What is criticized here is not only the metaphysical language as representations, but also the ontological premises upon which this conception of language is based, above all, the priority of the referent, held to be self-identical above and beyond the differential
relations of language.

This line of argument brings out what critics within linguistics had already pointed to, namely that Saussure ignores the problem of reference, the process whereby parts of the world come to be referred to as things or persons. Illusion can enter the sign-system because the identification of the signified depends upon human judgements, which can, notoriously and justifiably, differ. The Saussurean security is here removed: a hidden gap opens up between signifier and signified, the bar no longer a bond, but a division. Where Saussure sees the sign as a bonding of signifier (sound image) and signified (concept), Lacan sees each signifier as invested with unconscious desire. In his formula the signifier at hand fulfills its metonymic function only by referring to another latent signifier; which determines the end of one chain only by pointing toward the beginning of another. And yet at the same time, that further beginning must be resisted, excluded, suspended or deferred, if anything is to take place at all. The signified is consequently always excluded or barred by the bar. A gap opens between the inner private experience of bodily need and the outer public interpretation of it. Neither the subject nor others recognize this gap. Lacan's theory of the subject stresses this gap coming into being
with the unconscious by the imposition of signifiers upon need. Through language, need is addressed to the Other in the form of a demand for absolute love which the other has not got to give. What is left over is unassuaged desire, desire for recognition of the other's desire. The discourse of psychoanalysis is here taken as a model for any kind of speech or writing; there is no fixed meaning, either latent or manifest, to which Lacan's notorious style bears witness.

Catherine Belsey observes that according to the poststructuralist theory and particularly according to Lacan's rereading of Freud in the light of Saussure, the subject is what speaks or rather signifies, and it signifies always and only from the place of the Other. The imperatives of the organism that we also are return to us alienated, from outside from the language that precedes us and makes us subjects. Subjectivity, identity, is learnt; it is an effect and not an origin; it depends on the signifier. In daily life it is possible to repress this recognition to the degree that we seem to master the language that constitutes us. Inasmuch as language appears transparent, an instrument that we use, the subject is able to imagine itself given in nature an essence, the origin of its own desires, and in possession of the objects of its
knowledge, repudiating which is to say disavowing, the precariousness which results from its linguistic composition. But to encounter language at the limits of mastery, to confront the signifier as difficult, errant or opaque is to risk coming to face with the Other, the material of one's own identity, confronting in the process the insubstantial character of subjectivity itself. The Other is the non-full, non-present, nonexistent source of meaning and truth, the ungrounded guarantee of the knowledges we seem to possess, and it is constitutive for the subjects we are. No wonder the encounter is experienced as disturbing, awe-inspiring and beyond pleasure (133-4).

Thus it is clear that Lacan's use of structural linguistics is no simple application of an otherwise unproblematized model, although this is the impression that often left by the polemical pathos that accompanies his recourse to Saussure and which is directed against the state of the psychoanalytic theory that dominated the International Association at the time. Lacan's inversion of the Saussurean formula, the emphasis thereby placed on the signifier, develops the internal contradictions of structural linguistics beyond the limits of linguistics as such. Nevertheless, Lacan's adaptation of the Saussurean theory of the signifier by no means entirely frees itself from the
aporia of that theory.

Like Derrida Lacan also gives much importance to writing. Lacan localizes the signifier in what he calls the letter. In fact even in 1956 (that is, even before Derrida's historic paper 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences' 1966', a clear anticipation of the problematization of the power of phonocentrism can be seen in his writings. In drawing attention to Freud's characterization of the dream as a rebus and as a system of inscription, Lacan emphasizes that the dream's plasticity must be understood as part of a hieroglyphics as that fact could perhaps light on the problems involved in certain modes of pictorography which, simply because they have been abandoned in writing as imperfect, are not therefore to be regarded as mere evolutionary stages. Lacan in this way clearly distances himself from the teleological tendencies of phonocentrism, in which the latter reveals its complicity with Western ethnocentrism. This is most clearly the case when dealing with the relationship between letter and spirit as though the letter kills the spirit cannot live without the letter.

Lacan's view that differential articulation in the form of the signifier is not a transcendental principle and that the signifier must be localized namely in the letter
do not co-exist easily with a tendency to conceive of language as a closed system actualized in speech. For him the signifiers are clearly inscribed in reality. It is no less fortuitous that Lacan makes no explicit mention of this; for, on the one hand, he is concerned with the principle by which the signifier is radically separated from its materialization: the letter is determined from the very beginning as an effect signifiant - as a signifying effect or as an effect of the signifier (Bowie 48-50). In his model the letter is an effect of the signifier, its material vehicle and its necessary localization. Yet on the other hand the medium of this vehicle is concrete discourse.

Jakobson's elaboration of Saussurean theory provides Lacan with a decisive precedent in relating linguistic operations to Freud's description of unconscious mechanisms in *Interpretation of Dreams*. However Lacan does not merely apply Jakobson's model unchanged: it is subjected to extensive interpretation and transformation, and indeed, the latter are not without implications for the theories of Jakobson himself. The distinction between metaphor and metonymy as Jakobson develops it, tends to relapse into a pre-Saussurean conception of language, insofar as linguistic functions are construed in terms of notions--similar-
ity and contiguity--that are determined semantically, rather than syntactically (that is, in terms of differential relations). It is therefore with much significance that Jakobson introduces his discussion of metaphor and metonymy by distinguishing between the general meaning of a sign, governed by the function of substitution, and its contextual meaning based on combination. This distinction, however, implies a decontextualised universal meaning, and that it is only the latter which is differentially constituted through the differential relations of signifiers. In short, the Jakobsian distinction between metaphor and metonymy subordinates the notion of linguistic difference to a logic of binary opposition based upon the priority of identity over difference.

In his celebrated study of two types of aphasia, Jakobson identifies two axes of language, the axis of selection, or metaphor, and the axis of combination, or metonymy. As we speak we choose words from the vertical axis of similarity and combine them with others along the horizontal axis of contiguity. Jakobson then extends these axes to larger linguistic entities, such as literary works, and suggests that in different types of literature, and in different literary movements, either metaphor or metonymy may predominate: romanticism and symbolism are primarily metaphorical, while realism in metonymical
Lacan's use of Jakobson is commanded by the strategical imperative of distinguishing the authority of a precedent from that of a mode!. Thus although at first Lacan appears to accept Jakobson's version of Saussure's linear view of the sign, there is an implicit critique of the linearization of context in his notion of the 'signifying chain':

There is, in effect, no signifying chain that does not have, as if attached to the punctuation of each of its units, a whole articulation of relevant contexts suspended 'vertically', as it were, from that point (Ecrits 154)

The fact that the vertical dimension of language is, in this account, suspended to the punctuation of each of its units, indicates that the paradigmatic or metaphorical axis is construed in terms of syntax rather than of semantics. The associative aspect of language can no longer be considered in terms of the multiplication of meaning; rather, the category of meaning itself is inscribed in the movement of contextual relations out of which the signifier emerges. The sturdy Saussurean image of the tree decomposes into the different meanings of the signifier 'tree'[arbre], which may also be read as an anagram of the Saussurean barre: such decomposition problematizes the unity of the word as the
basic building block of language. The linguistic significance of a word can just as easily be a function of its graphic, phonic or typographic features as of its different meanings.

The radicalization of the signifier as the constitutive element of language by implication throws into question the distinction between metaphor and metonymy too. What is being problematised by Lacan through the redefinition of metonymy is the notion of totality. Lacan’s example taken from traditional rhetoric, thirty sails for a flotilla, is not only ‘combination’, but a substitution as well: not simply a ‘word’ for ‘word’ but rather ‘one word for another’, which is the definition Lacan gives for metaphor. Metonymy for him is the connection between signifier and signifier that permits the elision by which the signifier installs the lack of being in the object relation while metaphor is the substitution of signifier for signifier which produces an effect of signification that is poetic or creative. Every operation of the signifier consists of both substitution and concatenation, each depending upon the other, since the signifier is determined only through its relationship to its surroundings, and more precisely, through exchanges that define linguistic ‘value’ as a function of substitution. In the Lacanian model meta-
phorical operation "is nothing other than the precipita-
tion of the signifier that produces the signified and at
the same time bars it as long as it does not cease to be a
signifier. Metaphor thus produces an effect of meaning, but
in the double meaning of the French sense: sense and direc-
tion. If metonymy can be said to describe the movement,
metaphor provides the sense of direction. But to have a
sense of direction is not necessarily to arrive at one's
destination". Thus metonymy becomes the properly signify-
ing function. The chain of signification is constituted of
signifiers and is linked to one another by their different-
tial function. Metaphor, according to Lacan, thus is not
based on similarity or equivalence but it breaks out be-
tween two signifiers, one of which has taken the place of
the other in the signify:.ng chain, the occulted signifier
remaining present through its (metonymic) connexion with
the rest of the chain. Lacan outlines the opposition
between metaphor and metonymy in both language and uncon-
scious. While metaphor produces meaning, the fullness of
being, metonymy produces: a slippage of signifiers, the
unfillable lack called desire. According to Lacan, desire
is precisely that which cannot be satisfied, linked to the
recognition of the inevitably absent phallus. Like Lacanian
desire, the metonymical energy that helps motivate narra-
tive is an eternal desire for that which by definition
cannot reach: for desire itself. The replaced absent signifier is driven under the bar yet remains present through its syntagmatic relationship to the rest of the chain. Thus, if metonymy marks the proper function of the signifier—that is, the formation of the signifying chain—the function of metaphor is no less indispensable, insofar as no signifying chain can exist without simultaneously depending upon the signified.

Lacan's use of algebraic representations as well as his witty and playful discursive language games constitute serious attempts at keeping the signifying chain from congealing into the hypostatized meaning of that essentially denominative, conceptual, constantive discourse we call the language of theory. By calling attention to the formal process through which meanings are generated and articulated, the errant and unpredictable back and forth of dis-cursivity is associated with a surplus of significance that no proposition or concept can fully comprehend. As we have seen, Lacan calls this movement a result of metonymy and metaphor. The actual function of the signifier is embodied in metonymy, insofar as the signifier can only be determined as such by being related differentially to other signifiers, that is by means of the contiguity of a discontinuous concatenation, which in turn is part of a
network of such chains. The constitution and reproduction of this network, as a concatenation of intrinsically, constitutes the operation of metonymy. Metonymy thus could be said to actualize the differential articulation of the signifier. The distinctive particularity of such an occurrence is that its particularization is always at issue, implicitly at least, since the metonymic movement depends upon something else, upon another missing signifier.

In the Lacanian model, thus, both metonymy and metaphor are functions of a uniform movement of the signifier, which, on the one hand, can only function in and through its concatenation, and on the other, is always dependent upon what is not part of the chain, the signifier to which it refers. Nevertheless, if the two aspects are necessary and independent, they do not have the same status: the signifier only becomes a signifier by means of a concatenation, and this would seem to suggest a priority of metonymy over metaphor. The effect of meaning (that is, of a determinate signified) presupposes the functioning of the signifier in a chain. This stream of thought enables one to examine Lacan's theory of desire as essentially metonymic and his definition of the symptom as metaphoric.

Unlike Roman Jakobson who tends to derive the linguis-
tic priority of the spoken word over all forms of inscrip-
tion, Lacan stresses the letter -- a graphic sign, albeit
a phonetic one--as the necessary materialization and lo-
calization of the signifier. As in Freud Lacan thus at-
tributes to inscription the function of articulation, a
fact that considerably relativizes the great emphasis on
the parole. The foregrounding of the importance of writing
and its intimate relation to the signifier leads Lacan to
problematic certain other linguistic concepts he adopts
from the Saussurean heritage of structural linguistics:
above all those of speech and discourse, although such
problems tend to be implied, rather than explicitly stated.
These concepts are no longer (as in traditional metaphysi-
cal theories of language) conceived as forms of verbal
exchange, as expressions of an identical subject, or as
designations of things. It is not the linearity of speaking
that is actualized in discourse, but instead the multi-di-
mensionality of the signifying chain formed by the twin
operations of metonymy and metaphor. But Lacan does not
merely apply these concepts, he plies them, giving them a
new twist in the process. By redefining them as a movement
of signifiers, the contextuality of metonymy and the simi-
larly of metaphor become a function of differential op-
position and cease to depend upon the signified. The only
contiguity that metonymy can therefore count on, is that of
the signifying chain itself. Consequently, the only similarity presupposed by metaphorical substitution is the purely formal similarity among signifiers.

Naturally, to construe the significance of Lacan's writings primarily in terms of the meanings his words convey, however sensitive one may to their connotations, is to practice reading in a manner that inevitably presupposes the priority of the signified over the signifier, even (and often especially) where one explicitly proclaims the contrary thesis.

Freud opined that unconscious desires result from repression, linking his theories with concepts such as incest violence and castration. Lacan endeavoured to show that castration, the anxiety surrounding which Freud had exploited in stipulating the manner in which the sexes negotiate the respective gender positions, is an effect of language with little or no relationship to real physical disfiguration. That is, since an already constituted language speaks through the human subject—"language and its structure exist prior to the moment at which each individual at a certain point in his mental development makes his entry into it"—(Lacan, 'Insistence' 82)—truth is located in the discourse of a radical other in relationship to which the subject must find its place". The unconscious
subject speaks:

a truth of which the conscious subject remains unaware because it fails to recognize or properly interpret its signifiers. The phallus represents the totality of integrated being, a fictional state presumed to exist before recourse to language created a split in the subject that consequently rendered him or her incapable of actualizing desire (Di Piero 54).

In psychoanalysis, according to Lacan, language transforms the contingency of accidental events that simply 'happen' to someone into necessary causes by articulating events in a discursive frame on the 'stage' of narrative. In this way, language and discourse confer upon experience the consistency of reason. But more than this—in order to do this—discourse also subjects the speaking subject to its own impersonal logic and laws. In other words, the talking cure achieves its reasoned understanding of experience by revealing the subject of experience emerging in time and language. It shows that discourse posits the subject (rather than expressing a preexisting subject) in the same way syntax creates the conditions for the emergence of the subject of a sentence and in this sense, posits the grammatical subject.
Lacan's vision of a text based on his contention that the unconscious is structured like a language shows the problematic view of the text in psychoanalysis semiotically conceived. Language is the place where the personal and the cultural intersect, where there is a constant displacement of meaning. One of the difficulties of psychoanalytic reader theory has been the problem of assigning an unconscious to the text: for Lacan transference is a process that goes on in language but because the unconscious is that residue or excess that cannot be defined, there will always be gaps that neither the author nor the reader will finally be able to fill in.

Lacan used the term 'foreclosure' in order to pinpoint the difference between neurosis and psychosis. Whereas neurosis derives from repression, from the transfer of symbolic value and meaning from a repressed memory, displacing it into a symptom, psychosis (such as paranoia or schizophrenia) derives from a fundamental failure to symbolize which leaves a yawning gap in the fabric of language and memory. While it is dangerous to draw analogies between individual and social pathology, it seems plain that Soviet culture suffers from a general disturbance of the collective memory, from agonizing cultural gaps and voids. Both Western modernism and Russian Stalinism were projects that
demanded s denial of the past, a constant movement towards an ideal future. But the past cannot be denied. Like the repressed it always returns, and when it is foreclosed (as Lacan noted) it returns in the form of madness.

For Lacan, as for Freud, it is never a mere accident when language and intention diverge; such divergence derives from the signifying structure of language. As a signifying medium, language is the articulation of non-identity and this is what allows the unconscious to be described as the discourse of the Other (Weber 5). For Lacan Saussure's writings are crucial as the theater in which the structure of language and its relation to the subject are staged as questions.

As Jacques-Allain Miller summarises, what we learn through those who analyze language as a tool for reference is precisely that it is not such a good machine for reference. Language produces reference to nonentities. If you do not have any direct connection between words and reality, it is because words are dependent on sentences: that is, on articulation with other words (25-6)

Lacan views language not as a code since a code is computed by the fixed correlation of signs to the reality they signify. In a language, on the contrary, the various
signs—the signifiers—take on their value from their relation to one another. That is the meaning of symbolic order. The symbolic order is effectively a self-contained dimension and is not grounded on correspondence, but on circularity. That is, a sign is defined through other signs. Naturally when Lacan proposes a definition of the signifier, it is a circular definition he gives: a signifier represents for another signifier. That is not a true definition, because in the definition itself you have the word to define.

Nothingness enters reality through language. That is reference is the void. But this void is created by language. In other words, we replace the correspondence theory of language by a creation theory of language, the first creation being a lack and in this sense it is a lack of all things. According to Sullivan the 'missing link' of evolution lies not in biology but in language. Human language is a combination of sign systems, primate vocalization and hominid speech plus, and most importantly, the desiring, representational element that is the true mark of humanness. Physical anthropoid evolution came to end when language and superior technology took over. That is, language and tools do the work of adaptation to new conditions. Indeed, many organs -- the vermiform appendix, the tonsils,
central wrist bone or os centrale, the cutaneous reaction that causes goose flesh or even nipples in the male -- are vestigal structures that are now meaningless, since further adaptation has taken place outside the body. Language and technology mark the point where material conditions cease to impinge on anatomy, and the hominization of the planet begins (46).

Persons can speak only because language is always already a substitute that refers to something else, the desire that gives rise to speech. One definition of psychosis, for Lacan, is the lack of the lack that gives rise to desire. Desire is the desire for being, not for knowing. Gender fictions are at the base of the illusion that one has or is a being. In psychosis, gender positions are not nailed down. The psychotic suffers from not knowing what or who he or she is at the levels of being and jouissance. Language and human culture arise out of the identification with the symbolic order on the basis of which the phallic signifier structures identity. So identity is earned as a gendered set of fictions which bear the truth of one's desire whose polymorphous perverse jouissance is carved up by the effects of language and taboos written on the body.

Despite its status as the most frequently and fiercely reviled upon concepts of Lacan primarily because of its
seemingly uncritical acceptance and perpetuation of an oppressive patriarchal order, the phallus is neither a penis nor has no physical existence. It is the signifier intended to designate as a whole the effects of the signified, in that the signifier conditions them by its presence as a signifier. That the phallus is a pure signifier—one, that is, with no signified, except in the domain of the imaginary totality from which language has split the subject—is crucial because as a presence it signifies both a primal loss and a totality that is always elsewhere. In other words, the phallus designates a plentitude that the subject lacks and that is consequently elsewhere: the lack it demarcates in the subject heralds the Oedipal drama structured around the father's interdiction of pleasure (Law) and the resultant entry into language as the only means available for expressing desire and consequently establishing an identity or a self. The play of presence and absence constitutes the subject as alienated from itself, since the symbolic order to which recourse after the separation that castration and Oedipal drama institute is structured around primal repression or renunciation of its most elemental desires.

Lacan's interpretation of the Freudian concept of the phallus centres on a view of its symbolic function as the
creator and sustainer of a difference based on a power that is itself illusory. The term 'symbolic' is fully in understanding the Lacanian notion of the phallus. The phallus not being the penis, the biological emblem of the male, but a representation of the penis in which it is portrayed as the originator and possessor of a power which in fact is formed outside the self, exists in patriarchal discourse. The phallus enters at the point of the castration complex, to subjugate both boys and girls, but also to hold out to the former the hope that accession to its power may become possible, that it is identical with the penis he essentially possesses. But the castration complex also solidifies an awareness of lack for both girls (an awareness of an absence which results in penis envy) and boys (discovery of the impossibility of Oedipal union with the mother).

All sexuality is created in this lack, leaving male and female as partial beings and articulating a dimension of desire on which the phallus is placed. Since sexuality as division is incomplete, the phallus comes to represent that which stands outside it, which is whole and which can repair the damage produced by castration and instituted by the Law of the Father. So, the imagined phallus of the Father is introduced as the third term to break up the mother-child axis and to provoke desire and sexual differ-
entiation. In doing this it structures human relationships and acts as the dead letter of the law, the material force which subjugates and marginalises women, but which is also not simply in the hands (or penis) of any living male. The phallus thus represents the transfiguration of a trivial anatomical difference into a matrix of power, of which it stands as emblem.

This description of the role of the phallus reveals something about its nature. In one sense, it is absolutely material—the dominance of the patriarchal order and the Law of the Father. But in another sense, it is also totally illusory. For one thing it is Imaginary in the Lacanian sense, the site of an imagined unity where nothing really exists:

... the point about phallus is that it represents the human lot that desire is always unattainable, is in fact defined that way, as which has been lost and never can be found. In the Symbolic order, this recognition goes further than in the Imaginary, where it is still possible to fantasize wholeness in the position of the Other—an object which is outside the self, but full and complete (Frosh 198-9).
The phallus operates as the pure representation of absence because it represents nothing, and hence, coincides, qua representation with what it represents, without having the slightest trace or residue. In this sense the phallus is the perfect simulacrum: one that can claim to be utterly self-identical in the pure ideality of representation. The phallus then would be pure sign, a distinctive feature of the male body. Or more precisely, it is not the phallus that reappears but instead that which it initially seems to represent, before it reveals itself in the claim to be the non-being of the material penis, before, that is, it takes off upon the path of pure representation.

The phallus now appears in a second phase Lacan calls privation. Rather than appearing as the mark of the transcendental being of the mother, it now appears as that which she neither is nor has: as the exclusive property of the father and simultaneously as that which the mother, in her negativity, can neither be nor have, but only desire. In the first phase, coinciding with the mirror stage, the child tries to be the phallus in order to satisfy the desire of the mother; to confirm her completeness, on the one hand, and to partake in it, on the other. Now, however, the child sees itself excluded by the father from identifying
narcissistically with the phallus as absolute being and with the mother as presence. Moreover, the child only feels the force of this exclusion when it learns that even the father cannot possess the phallus, but only speak in its name. Thus, while the father may be the locus of a prohibition, this prohibition also applies to the 'law-giver' himself, turning him into a symbolic father or into what Lacan calls the name-of-the father, and which might also be rendered as the naming of the father (subjective and objective, genitive and genitor). Only with the naming of this name, does the phallus become for the subject the signifier of its desire, that is, of its relationship to the symbolic, and the symptom of its split articulation in and through the signifier.

Thus, the phallus, in the course of its movement, otherwise known as castration, describes the operation that transforms the signified demanded (and the signified of the demand) into the signifier of desire: that is, it transforms it into what it always will have been insofar as the subject is structured in and through the signifier. It is through castration that the phallus is constituted as a signifier. Castration therefore is nothing other than an effect upon the subject caused by the falling out or striking down of the signifier. This function of the phallus
thus derives from the structure of language conceived as a movement of signifier, a movement to which the subject is inevitably sub-ducted. This subjection not only splits the subject, but also supports and suspends it in the incessant reiteration of an irremediable division: not between subject and object, but between enunciated and enunciation, signified and signifier. It is in this sense that the individual subject is dependent upon the symbolic.

On the one hand the phallus performs the function of the signifier in general, as it falls out with the signified: on the other hand, it is a specific, determinate signifier, not a transcendental one. It is from this perspective that one can begin to understand the particular importance Freud attributed to castration vis-a-vis other experiences of separation, such as the loss of the nipple or the production of faeces. What sets the phallus apart is a particular fixation on a signified, which, to be sure, is the case for every particular or determinate signifier. This means that the imaginary function of the phallus, or of anything else, for that matter, can never be wholly surpassed by its symbolic function. For the imaginary bars the way, not just in the sense of blocking the way, but also in that of staking it out, demarcating it and fixing its trajectory. Without such an imaginary bar, the phallus
would be nothing but a pure signifier, and we would be unable to speak of it or name it in any other way. It would thereby dissolve into a diaphany so pure that the symbolic function itself would disappear. For the symbolic to function, the signifier can never be pure or self-identical but instead must always be slightly out of sync, slightly deranged, slightly imaginary. This is the imaginary moment of the phallus: its totalization and materialization as the representative of the male member; and since it is imaginary, it can never fulfill its symbolic function. Some other imagining determination is always possible, indeed, inevitable.

The primordial mother, lost to memory, always remains (for both sexes) as the real of effects relieved in relation to part objects which become partial drives. Thus, all subsequent relatings of males to females rely on an unrelation. Consequently although the phallic signifier has no literal signified—not even the anatomical one—it is, nonetheless, the first countable symbol of the effect of difference as a signifier referring only to itself, the signifier that delineates difference from sameness, order from chaos, law from nature.

The language of contemporary psychoanalysis, especially as influenced by Lacan, attempts at critique in that
it attempts as much to perform effects of power in itself -- effects on and within the reader--as it attempts to describe meaning. Just as the relations of patient and therapist are not simply interaction or transactions but the psychoanalytic drama of transference and projection, so the psychoanalytic use of language is also a working through unconscious resistance as well as a designation of meaning. Psychoanalytic critique offers a language whose force is as performative as it is constative, as much a theatricalisation as a statement of truth.

The notorious difficulty of Lacan's style like elliptical constructions and density of metaphor is clearly meant as a reminder that language is not to be reduced to some pristine, intelligible structure of sense. The style goes along with a rooted resistance to theory, if by the word 'theory' we understand the rationalist (Cartesian) commitment to clear and distinct ideas. It is expressly the purpose of Lacan's writing to show how ubiquitous are the effects of desire in language, and how easily they work to subvert any confident distinction between rational and irrational process of thought. A Lacanian reading would insist on the signifying surplus in language that escapes the exactions of a theory grounded in rational consensus. Lacan's prose aspires perpetually to the condition of speech.
His aims, as already hinted, are to allow the energies of the unconscious to become palpable in the wayward rhythm of his sentences, to discourage the reader from building premature theoretical constructions upon the text and to compel him to collaborate fully in the inventive work of language. His prose is an elaborate mechanism for multiplying and highlighting the connections between signifiers. Word-play abounds, and is given a great deal of intellectual work to do.

In Lacan's view the person who speaks and is satisfied with what he says is not simply misguided but is absolutely wrong. Every statement that does not provoke change and strangeness within itself is wrong. Truth that seeks to remove itself from the contradictory process of language becomes falsehood there and then.

The primacy of language over subjectivity is confirmed by Lacanian psychoanalysis which argues that the child learns to see itself as distinct from the rest of the world by regarding its own mirror image but becomes a full subject only when it enters the world of language. Lacan has described how the moment when a child recognizes its own image in the mirror is crucial for the constitution of the ego. The physically immature infant has no sense of self because it is not aware of its being as an integrated
individual; it conceives of itself only as fragments and pieces--an arm here, a head there and the like. These disjointed parts of the body provide the infant with the sense of a fragmented, nonintegral body. After the age of six months human children first become aware of their own image in a mirror. Other animals react differently to their image in a mirror; cats for instance seem unable to recognize the image as their own while chimpanzees seem to recognize the image as their own but then lose interest in it. Only human children are fascinated with the image precisely when they recognize it as their own. The mirror phase occurs at a time when children's physical ambitions outstrip their motor capacity, with the result that their recognition of themselves is joyous in that they imagine their mirror image to be more complete, more perfect than they experience in their own body. In the words of Lacan:

The *mirror stage* is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation -- and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic--and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating iden-
tity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development (Erctits 4).

The child imagines itself through its reflection as a unitary being. What the mirror stage represents for a subject that cannot yet control its body is an image of totality. The unity of the ego will follow from an identification with this reflection of the body as a full Gestalt. What counts here is a sense of wholeness. In other words the image they recognize as their own is also an image of themselves as they aspire to be. For the image of the physical body as seen in a mirror, as seen from outside and from a distance, is an image of a unified and coherent self clearly separated off from the rest of the world. Human children, because of some human prematurity of birth or primordial discord long to overcome their own disunity and incoherence by identifying with this image. Like Narcissus, they fall in love with themselves as seen from outside and from a distance as seen in the gaze of the Other. The perceived image offers a semblance of wholeness that contrasts sharply with what the child has experienced in its own body: lack of motoric control, deficiency and dependency. The mirror stage in this way provides the infant with an image of the future and the subject identifies with
what it will become only through the other situated in the matrix of language:

For the function of language is not to inform but to evoke. What I seek in speech is the response of the other. What constitutes me as a subject is my question. In order to be recognized by the other, I utter what was only in view of what will be. In order to find him, I call him by a name that he must assume or refuse in order to reply to me.

I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it like an object. What is realized in my history is not the past definite of what was, since it is no more, or even the present perfect of what has been in what I am, but the future anterior of what I shall have been for what I am in the process of becoming. If I now place myself in front of the other to question him, there is no cybernetic computer imaginable that can make a reaction out of what the response will be (Ecrits 86)

For Lacan there is no pre-given psyche and it is the mirror that the child perceives her/himself that creates a false sense of integrity and the false self evolves into a
full description of the ego. In a broader sense the mirror can be considered the gaze or response of the other with whom the child interact. The mirror-phase emergence of individual subjectivity is associated with pleasurable identificatory looking. Recognition is thus overlaid with misrecognition. The image recognised is conceived as the reflected body of the self. But its misrecognition as a superior object projects this body outside itself as an ideal ego, the alienated subject which, reintrojected as an ego ideal, prepares the way of identification with others in the future. The mirror phase represents a permanent tendency of the individual: the tendency that leads him throughout life to seek and foster the imaginary wholeness of an ideal ego. This mirror moment predates language for the child.

The ego, first glimpsed at the mirror stage, is thus the reified product of successive imaginary identifications and is cherished as the stable or would be stable seat of personal identity, the subject is no thing at all and can be grasped only as a set of tensions, mutations or dialectical upheavals within a continuous, intentional and future-directed process. Since the ego is initially constituted through the child's identification with an image whose otherness is precisely overlooked in the observation
of similarity:

The process whereby body parts become accessible to experience prefigures the identifications depicted in Lacan's notion of the mirror stage in which the ego is initially formed through identification with an externalized ideal of wholeness which belies the inchoate flux of sensation actually experienced by the infant (Lorraine 247).

As a protracted period in an infant's life during which its own specific subjectivity emerges as a series of relationships, the mirror stage is crucial to Lacanian psychoanalysis and to the concept of the ex-centric subject. Thus the image the infant receives comes to it as a Gestalt, that is, as an integral image exterior to it, it is incapable of constituting or imposing on the infant a unity that contrasts with the fragmentary image of self that it has. The mirror stage establishes a differential relationship—and not an identity—between the subject and its physical and psychic reality.

Fanon reworks the Lacanian schema of the mirror stage regarded as the critical stage in the formation of the subject. According to Lacan, as we have seen, when the infant first contemplates itself in a mirror, it sees
reflection smoother, more co-ordinated and stable than itself. The subject constructs itself in the imitation of as well as opposition to this image. Fanon holds that when one has grasped the mechanism described by Lacan, one can have no doubt that the real Other for the white man is and will continue to be the black man. And conversely. Only for the white man the Other is perceived on the level of the body image, absolutely as the motif -- that is, the unidentifiable, the unassimilable. For the black man historical and economic realities come into the picture.

Niall Lucy cogently argues that Realism is the literary equivalent of the mirror stage of human subjectivity through which we enter into the symbolic order. We perceive an image of ourselves and consequently develop a sense of subject/object, self/other relations. We recognize our mirror self as being different from our true self though it is only on the basis seeing ourselves in a mirror that we gain an understanding of the real self. Our sense of a real self relies on our sense of a symbolic self or a sense of the self as the other. That is our true self is nonorigininary. Hence 'truth' depends on 'fiction', which is a proposition that is often attributed to postmodernism as a kind of slogan and used to question its political commitment. Before entering into selfhood we inhabit the imaginary order
of pre-linguistic, nondualistic and undifferentiated subject/object relations, since as infants we do not distinguish between notions of the self and others. In entering the symbolic order we pass into a world of prohibitions and restraints organized through and as language, reason and society, all of which are dominated by patriarchal law. On this model it is possible to see the imaginary and symbolic orders as collecting terms for sets of associated oppositions along the following lines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imaginary</th>
<th>Symbolic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infant</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory</td>
<td>Sensible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intuitive</td>
<td>Rational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Oedipal</td>
<td>Oedipal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic</td>
<td>Dualistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior</td>
<td>Post</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of a system of values and classifications, the Lacanian imaginary/symbolic opposition is organized around the following binary pairs:

- poetry    prose
- lyric     epic
- romance   narrative
- metafiction realism
- aphorism  essay
- parody    irony
- art       theory
- creativity criticism

From this it can be seen that Lacanian style literary criticism is on the side of anti-linear, non-closural, self-conscious literary texts. The privileging of a certain order of literary textuality is consistent with Lacan's transcendental celebration of the macrological order of the imaginary, such that the values of romance literature, for example, can be read off from the list of terms on the left-hand side of the imaginary/symbolic opposition above. Hence romance literature is infantile, feminine, sensory,
intuitive and so forth. This same structure of correspondence enables poetry and aphoristic texts to be associated with pre-Oedipal subjectivity and truth, and collects theory and criticism under the secondary values associated with Oedipal repression and dissemblage or the lack of truth. Lacanian literary criticism is to be seen, in other words, as an analytical system generated by and subordinate to a macrological system of values, interests and judgements of a general order, although this relation is by no means confined to literary criticism inspired by Lacan. As social theory, nevertheless, this general system of values is highly speculative and produces some very odd results: while the feminine is on the side of truth, for example, it is also on the side of the infantile, and it is difficult to see how this association differs from the routine ways in which women and children are often collected as a single class in need of men's protection or from the kind of bigotry that constructs women as physically, emotionally and intellectually inferior to men (24-6).

Just as Freud invented the terms id, ego and superego to comprehend how the 'I' negotiates its place in the world, so too did Lacan costruct his own tripartite scheme: the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real. Using his own distinctive terminology, Lacan's scheme bears a loose re-
semblance to Freud’s already well-established categories.

In Lacanian theory, the Imaginary defines the realm of identificatory misrecognitions inaugurated at the mirror stage when the subject seeks to cohere its self-image. In order to maintain its identity, the subject must undergo the hallucinatory effort to pull its mirrored image together out of disparate parts. The imaginary thus can be defined as that fictive, illusory realm of the mirror-image, of the optical illusion, of the image which can no longer hope to be an accurate and faithful representation of its model, since the latter is fashioned in its image: I am the image of that image, a mirror without an end.

The collection of signifiers that mediate between people and the real world is what Lacan referred to as the Symbolic Order. According to Helene Cixous the Lacanian concept of the Symbolic is:

not exactly your everyday word after all. From the moment one begins to use what can be called a concept, when it is mastered and enters your discourse and gets lost, it becomes an ordinary word: but that isn’t true at all for everybody else. That is mastery’s trap. Being so much a master that you forget you are one (120).
In Lacanian scheme, Symbolic order, according to Frederic Jameson is "the emergence of the subject from the essentially 'analog' or wish-fulfillment thought of the mirror stage, the accession into language, with its digital thinking, its proper names, negatives and above all its "shifters" or empty pronounial slots in which transitory subjects can lodge in succession (Political Unconscious 175). The symbolic thus amounts into a network of cultural habits. The movement of the Oedipal crisis and the repression of desire for the mother is also the movement of the acquisition of language and the entry into the symbolic order. Male sexuality and desire, in the form of the phalus, is the organizing principle of the symbolic order and the source of the type of rational language through which social power is exercised. This is precisely where the Oedipus complex—in so far as we continue to recognize it as covering the whole field of our experience with its signification—may be said, in this connection, to mark the limits that our discipline assigns to subjectivity: namely, what the subject can know of his unconscious participation in the movement of the complex structures of marriage ties, by verifying the symbolic effects in his individual existence of the tangential movement toward incest that has manifested itself ever since the coming of a universal community:
The primordial Law is therefore that which in regulating marriage ties superimposes the kingdom of culture on that of a nature abandoned to the law of mating. The prohibition of incest is merely its subjective pivot, revealed by the modern tendency to reduce to the mother and the sister the objects forbidden to the subject's choice, although full licence outside of these is not yet entirely open (Ecrits 66).

It is the tearing of the false unified identity in the Mirror Stage that produces the positioning of the subject in the Symbolic Order. This process at the same time constructs the unconscious by repression. Castration complex is an enforced recognition of difference and the internalization of a prohibition and a loss: it in turn constructs the unconscious. Joseph Bristow holds that in theorizing how human beings establish specific sexual identifications, Freud and, subsequently, Lacan reveal that the organization of the sexual drives starts the moment we enter the world (8).

The passage to the Symbolic Order from an Imaginary and narcissistic relationship to its own ego, characterized by misrecognition of external objects as constitutive of self, inaugurates the primal loss for which words stand
in as an imperfect restitution. The manner in which one takes one's place in the symbolic order is crucial for the establishment of gender identification as gender identity results from the child's imaginary identification with the supposed possessor of the phallus.

For Lacan the passage from the Imaginary stage to the Symbolic order is marked by the infant's experience of what he calls Name-of-the-Father. The phallus is situated, decisively and incisively, on the border that separates the imaginary from the symbolic. It emerges out of the gap of a perception that apprehends only presence or absence. Within the phantasmic economy of human desire the phallus is, therefore, a simulacrum: it presents similarity instead of the dissimilar, symmetry in place if the dissymmetrical. It is a perception that strives to be identical, but it is not a perpetual identity. What it represents is not the absence of a presence, but a difference impossible to apprehend in terms of presence or absence. What it represents, but only by effacing it, is the differential relation to the sexes. The trace of this effaced difference it then names: 'castration'. This name also designates the 'falling out' of the signifier with -- and as -- the signified:

The phallus reveals its function here. In Freudian
doctrine, the phallus is not a phantasy, if by that we mean an imaginary effect. Nor is it as such an object (part-, internal, good, bad, etc.) in the sense that this term tends to accentuate the reality pertaining in a relation. It is even less the organ, penis or clitoris, that it symbolizes. And it is not without reason that Freud used the reference to the simulacrum that it represented for the Ancients.

For the phallus is a signifier, a signifier whose function, in the intersubjective economy of the analysis, lifts the veil perhaps from the function it performed in the mysteries. For it is the signifier intended to designate as a whole the effects of the signified, in that the signifier conditions them by its presence as a signifier (Ecrits 285)

As a child once lured by its mirror-image (Lacan's Imaginary Order), which promised a wholeness it lacked, so the text lures the reader by the force of its representation. But at the same time the text is also Law (Lacan's Symbolic Order of language), shattering the mirror illusion and dispersing the reader. The lure of the imaginary is a prelude to the capture of the subject in the signifying chain as both the reading subject and the text (the char-
acters) and the reading subject of the text (the empirical reader) are caught in a structure of repetition. The text is a trap for the unwary reader/character who chases his/her image, only to become trapped in the signifying chain. The reader can hence be seen as at the mercy of the text, since she or he will not know what referential effects will be brought into play in the course of reading; but the text is also at the mercy of the reader because of the mediatory effects of his own unconscious.

The concept of the Real is more confusing and enigmatic than the ideas of the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Two apparently divergent general tendencies may be discerned in Lacan’s presentation of this notion. On the one hand the Real is that which is there, already there, and inaccessible to the subject whether this be a physical object or a sexual trauma: when we appear on the scene as subjects certain games have already been played, certain dice thrown. The real is that which always comes back to the same place.

On the other hand the Real is conceived as the primordial chaos upon which language operates. It is the world of words that cheats the world of things. The Real is given its structure by the human power to name. Neither of these conceptions is particularly original: the language of common sense plays a prominent role in the presentation of
each; and their divergence is only apparent. They place a common stress upon the limits upon the linguistic power: the Real is what which is radically extrinsic to the procession of signifiers. The Real may be structured—even created—by the subject for himself, but it cannot be named.

As a result of this view, the Real comes close to meaning 'the ineffable', or 'the impossible' in Lacan's thought. As a term with the triad it has less work to do than the others. But it serves admirably both to introduce problems and asymmetries into what could easily have become a facile dualism between the Symbolic and the Imaginary, and to remind Lacan's would-be omnipotent subject that his symbolic and imaginary constructions take place in a world exceeds him. It is not synonymous with external reality but refers to the residual dimension or the zone that falls outside the domain of signification that constantly resists symbolism and signification and invades the subject when rifts appear in the symbolic. It is where psychic materials remain unsymbolised, through processes such as trauma. In psychosis, for example, the subject collapses into the Real. So the Real, a profoundly threatening order, encompasses both the imaginary and the Symbolic, and it puts immense pressure on both to keep their intersubjective
processes at work. The Real for Lacan is the given field of brute existence over which the Imaginary and Symbolic range in their rival attempts to control. Lacan writes:

The real has to be sought beyond the dream—in what the dream has enveloped, hidden from us, behind the lack of representation of which there is only one representative. This is the real that governs our activities more than any other and it is psychoanalysis that designates it for us (Four Fundamental 60)

One can view the Imaginary and the Symbolic as fields that tensely rise up against each other, creating fiction between opposing agencies that compete for meaning, forever fending off the field of non-meaning marked by the Real. The ambiguity of the Lacanian real in not merely a nonsymbolized kernel that makes a sudden appearance in the symbolic order, in the form of traumatic ‘returns’ and ‘answers’. The real is at the same time contained in the very symbolic form: the real is immediately rendered by this form (Zizek 39).

Roland Barthes offers an interesting analogy to explicate the intricate nature of the Real. He says that the work is concrete, occupying a portion of book-space (in a li-
library, for example): the Text, on the other hand, is a methodological field. This opposition is similar to the Lacanian distinction between 'reality' and 'the real': the one is displayed, the other demonstrated. In the same way, the work can be seen in bookstores, in card catalogues, and on course lists, while the text reveals itself, articulates itself according to or against certain rules. While the work is held in the hand, the text is held in language: it exists only as a discourse (74-5).

Lacan was influenced by Hegel who postulated the core position that self-consciousness cannot emerge without a relation to another desiring subject and this led Lacan to the idea that what was wrong in Freud's thinking is that he was a victim of psycho-physical parallelism and that his theory of mind characterized man as a solipsistic being who could become self-consciousness alone. As Hegel's aim was to set forth a philosophical system so comprehensive that it would encompass the ideas of his predecessors and create a conceptual framework in terms of which both the past and future could be philosophically understood, he conceived the subject matter of philosophy to be reality as a whole. This reality, or the total developmental process of everything that is, he referred to as the Absolute, or Absolute Spirit. Concerning the rational structure of the Abso-
Hegel argued that what is rational is real and what is real is rational. Hegel further claimed that the Absolute must ultimately be regarded as pure Thought, or Spirit, or Mind, in the process of self-development. The logic that governs this developmental process is dialectic.

The dialectical method involves the notion that movement, or process, or progress, is the result of the conflict of opposites. Traditionally, this dimension of Hegel's thought has been analyzed in terms of the categories of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Although Hegel tended to avoid these terms, they are helpful in understanding his concept of the dialectic. The thesis, then, might be an idea or a historical movement. Such an idea or movement contains within itself incompleteness that gives rise to opposition, or an antithesis, a conflicting idea or movement. As a result of the conflict a third point of view arises, a synthesis, which overcomes the conflict by reconciling at a higher level the truth contained in both the thesis and antithesis. This synthesis becomes a new thesis that generates another antithesis, giving rise to a new synthesis, and in such a fashion the process of intellectual or historical development is continually generated. Hegel thought that Absolute Spirit itself (which is to say, the sum total of reality) develops in this dialectical
fashion toward an ultimate end or goal. Lacan was also influenced by Hegel’s relation between consciousness and history and social conditions and Hegel’s view that beliefs do not reveal truths about ourselves. Lacan holds that:

"... Hegel had provided the ultimate theory of the proper function of aggressivity in human ontology, seeming to prophecy the iron law of our time. From the conflict of Master and Slave, he deduced the entire subjective and objective progress of our history, revealing in these crises the syntheses to be found in the highest forms of the status of the person in the West, from the Stoic to the Christian, and even to the future citizen of the Universal State (Ecrits 26)

However, in The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalyst at the end of the paper on alienation Lacan appears to deny this influence of Hegel:

A lack is encountered by the subject in the Other, in the very intimation that the Other makes to him by his discourse. In the intervals of the discourse of the Other, there emerges in the experience of the child something that is radically mappable, namely, He is saying this to me,
but what does he want?

In this interval intersecting the signifiers, which forms part of the very structure of the signifier, is the locus of what, in other registers of my exposition, I have called metonymy. It is there that what we call desire crawls, slips, escapes, like the ferret. The desire of the Other is apprehended by the subject in that which does not work, in the lacks of the discourse of the Other, and all the child's *whys* reveal not so much an avidity for the reason of things, as a testing of the adult, a *Why are you telling me this?* ever-resuscitated from its base, which is the enigma of the adult's desire (*The Four Fundamental 214*)

It is not the thesis that the subject is constituted by that which is external to him whereby Lacan was influenced by Hegel, but in the alienated consciousness of the self, the duality of consciousness and unconsciousness in which Lacan claims Hegel influenced him. The nature of an emerged self-consciousness, with the alienation of the self behind a veil, probably doesn't have so much part to play in the empirical therapeutic situation. In his dialectic of master and slave (like that of analyst and the
analysand) the master is slave to the slave's desire, because he can read that desire through its symptomatic indications and is himself compelled by its astral influence. Hegel argues that we all know that the person who attentively contemplates a thing is absorbed by this thing and forgets himself. He may perhaps talk about the thing but he will never talk about himself; in his discourse the word 'I' will not occur. For this word to appear, something other than purely passive contemplation must be present. And this other thing is, according to Hegel, is Desire. Indeed, when man experiences a desire, when he is hungry, for example, and becomes aware of it he necessarily becomes aware of himself. Desire is always revealed to the individual as his desire, and to express desire he must use the word 'I'.

Desire disquiets him and moves him to action. Action tends to satisfy desire but can do so only by the negation, the destruction or at least the transformation of the desired object. Thus all action is negating. The being that eats, creates and preserves its own reality by overcoming a reality other than its own, by the transformation of an alien reality into its own reality, by the assimilation, the internalization of an external reality. Generally speaking, the 'I' of Desire is an emptiness that receives a real
positive content by a negating action that satisfies Desire in destroying, transforming and assimilating the desired non-I. Desire, being the revelation of an emptiness, the presence of an absence, is something essentially different from the desired thing. Desire is directed towards another Desire, another greedy emptiness, another 'I'. Desire is human only if one desires not the body but the Desire of the other; that is to say, if one wants to be desired or, rather, recognized in one's human value. All Desire is desire for a value. To desire the Desire of another is really to desire recognition.

If there is a multiplicity of desires seeking universal recognition, it is obvious that the action that is born of these desires can--at least in the beginning--be nothing but a life-and-death fight. It is assumed that the fight ends in such a way that both adversaries remain alive. Now, if this is to occur, one must suppose that one of the adversaries, preferring to live rather than die, gives in to the other and submits to him, recognizing him as the Master without being recognised by him. The Master, unable to recognize the other who recognizes him, finds himself in an impasse.

The Master makes the Slave work in order to satisfy his own desires. To satisfy the desires of the Master, the
Slave has to repress his own instincts (for example, in the preparation of food that he will not eat), to negate or 'overcome' himself. The Slave transcends himself by working, that is, he educates himself. In his work he transforms things and transforms himself at the same time. In becoming master Nature by work, the Slave frees himself from Nature, from his own nature, and from the Master. It is because work is an auto-creative act that it can raise him from slavery to freedom. The future and history hence belong not to the warlike Master, but to the working slave. The Slave changes himself by changing the world.

To summarize, according to Hegel it is a fight to the death for the sake of recognition that leads to a relation between a free man who is enslaved to him. Hence man is necessarily either Master or Slave. But the difference between Master and Slave can be overcome in the course of time. Mastery and Slavery, then, are not given or innate characteristics. Man is not born slave or free but creates himself as one or the other through free or voluntary action. In short, the character of the Master/Slave opposition is the motive principle of the historical process. All of history is nothing but the progressive negation of Slavery by the Slave. Finally the thesis of Mastery and the antithesis of Slavery are dialectically overcome.
We all have physical needs to satisfy. The child in the oral phase, for example, wants the mother's breast. It makes an appeal to its mother to have its needs met. This is the transformation from need to demand, but there is also the desire for love, for recognition. Needs, then, are biological. In demand the biological is mediated; a demand is always specific. Desire is what cannot be satisfied by demand. People can continually be making a demand but they need not to be conscious of it. A demand is the means of revealing desire, but it is oblique. Desire is desire for the Other but it has to be interpreted. Lacan says that need is cancelled by demand which re-emerges on the other side of desire. We often want an object that could be given only to us, but there is no such object. A demand is for a response, but that response is never particular enough. We can never be certain that others love us for our unique particularity (Sarup 17-21).

During the thirties, surrealism evolved from a movement of poets into a movement of artists foremost among being Salvador Dali, who rejuvenated surrealist painting with its 'paranoiac-critical' method derived from the work of Lacan who shared the surrealists' taste for scandal and provocation, and viewed provocation as an important element in psychoanalysis itself. André Breton considered
surrealism a means of exploring the non-conscious aspects of our personality, and as a way of harnessing them for the purpose of poetic creation. Theories of psychopathology were pressed into service of poetics. In Lacan's view some surrealist experiments would never have been made had not the experiments been reassured by the Freudian discovery. For example, Ignacio Javier López re-reads the acclaimed movie An Andalusian Dog, which is generally considered a privileged point of reference for the Surrealist rebellion, as one strongly anchored on Freud as far as its fragmented narrative and radical proposal of culture are concerned. The crux of his argument is that sexuality appears in the film as the pretext for the discussion of the threat sexual desire poses for male identity:

In this respect, the film develops ideas that begin to appear in paintings that completed by Dali after his initial contact with Freud's work in the mid-1920s. These paintings display male identity as a fragile form of subsistence unfolding between two alternate forces, desire and fear: the desire for sexual realization and the opposed fear that sexual intercourse will conclude in disease and ultimately in death. The Freudian theories of the persistence of desire were comple-
mented by the aesthetic theories of Surrealism, and the expressive and artistic innovations promoted by this group form the background for the acceptance and subsequent success of the film. Central to the film is the Surrealist belief that art should alter subjective perception by means of an abrupt revelation that would permit the authors to break away from convention and the impositions of civilization, society and culture (35-6).

Experiments with techniques like automatic writing and the simulation of psychopathological disorders in a deliberate attempt to escape poetic conventions began to suggest a formal link between specific disorders and verbal modes of expression. Though it would be an exaggeration to claim that Lacan's most famous dictum--the unconscious is structured like a language--is merely an extension of Breton's poetics, the importance of surrealism can hardly be overstated, and Salvador Dali's theory of paranoiac knowledge was certainly of great relevance to Lacan.

In one sense the whole project of psychoanalysis can be understood as a sustained and complex attempt at epistemological and ontological levels to elaborate a semiotic theory of the human subject as opposed to the Cartesian
assertion of the self-evidence of subjectivity. Similarly the central philosophical problem to which all the post-structuralist thinkers including Lacan contribute is that of the nature of the self, the mind or the knowing subject. The tradition of semiological structuralism represents the mind, or subject, as a set of interlocking codes rather than as a unitary entity. In this view, it is inaccurate to say that I know my own language. When Freud designates all dreams as being egoistic, the ego which he refers is not that of an ultimately unifiable self-consciousness, but rather of a certain dispersion and repetition. Whereas the metaphysical tradition has generally considered the 'I' to be the sign of a reflexive and self-identical subject, it is precisely this self-identity that Lacan calls into question.

According to Husserl, the 'I' acquires its veritable meaning only as an expression of the very same I/ego that is now speaking. Where the continuity of such a relationship can no longer be taken for granted, as in the case in written texts, the meaning of the word 'I' is alienated. In his view if we read the word without knowing who wrote it, we have a word that is, if not meaningless, at least alienated from one of its normal meanings and in a dream, the dreamer is a scribe (rather than an author) and speech
provides the dreamwork only with its raw materials; the subject of the dream 'receives' the dream the way a scribe receives the text to be inscribed and to 'have' a dream is to 'open' oneself to impulses which cannot be controlled consciously or voluntarily. Thus it entails an 'active passivity', the readiness to receive and to retain, but also to follow. What Husserl therefore describes is an anomaly in the functioning of the 'I' is recognised by Freud as that which constitutes the norm. This 'norm', then, entails a certain relation, not to self, but to the other, an alterity that Lacan variously describes as that of the signifier, of enunciation, or of the unconscious; in short subject to the other. At the time one began to learn it, he or she had an incompletely developed self: really, the 'I' that now is, is partly constituted by the language he/she know and think with; and the rest of me is presumably constituted by other codes.

The work of Benveniste and Kristeva too has been important in changing the concepts about the subject. Such a change affects how we consider both literature and history as the representations and recordings of subjectivity in language. Both become unstable processes in meaning-making, no longer final products of past and fixed meaning. In perfect harmony with this sensibility historiographic
metafiction tends to view all the various critically sanctioned modes of talking about subjectivity (character, narrator, writer, textual voice) fail to offer any stable vantage point of view. They are used, inscribed, entrenched, subverted and undermined. These novels are perhaps upsetting to many readers for exactly these reasons.

It was in the 1930s that Lacan began specifically highlighting the complex relationship of the speaking subject -- comparable in various limited ways to the ego as the agency which consciously thinks and speaks to the unconscious processes which govern it. In his work, the structures produce subject positions within the symbolic order which are determined by their relation to the phallus as signifier of difference:

Symbols in fact envelop the life of man in a network so total that they join together, before he comes into the world, those who are going to engender him 'by flesh and blood'; so total that they bring to his birth, along with the gifts of the stars, if not with the gifts of the fairies, the shape of his destiny; so total that they give the words that will make him faithful or renegade, the law of the acts that will follow him
right to the very space where he is not yet and even beyond his death; and so total that through them his end finds its meaning in the last judgement, where the Word absolves his being or condemns it—unless he attain the subjective bringing to realization of being-for-death (Ecrits 68).

Since Benveniste and Lacan it has become a commonplace that every utterance implies a splitting of the subject into too irreconcilable instances: the grammatical subject of the utterance and the instance responsible for the utterance. Thus when the great actor performs, he brackets every dialogue gesture with the implicit quotation marks: “It is never I who am speaking”, he seems to say (Caplan 5).

Nietzsche had undone the sovereign self by criticising causality and substance. He had indicated our ignorance of the minute particulars involved in a single human action. Freud demolished the pervasive sense of the sovereign self by mediating upon those minute particles. The philosophy of Bachelard of science was avowedly non-Cartesian in so far as it rejects any version of the appeal to the cogito as a source of self-grounding, indubitable truth. This argument has been in for numerous well-aimed criticisms.
including the linguistic or psychoanalytically oriented objections which seize upon the rift, the split that opens up within the cogito between the 'I' that functions grammatically as the object of that thought (the 'subject' of the 'enounced'). Thus Descarte's purported transcendental deduction -- along with his derivative argument to the existence of objects, events and other minds,--shows up on this account as a mere linguistic subterfuge, an illicit slide from subjective to objective genitive.

Insofar as language is defined as a system of articulation governed by the play of signifiers, a subject constituted through this play can never be reduced to the reflexive identity and transparency generally associated with the ego. Instead, it must go the way of the 'I' constructed as a shifter, or, we could add, as a drifter, whose only home is the rails of the signifying train (or the metonymic chain). What deranges in this re-inscription of the subject is that its destiny is no longer simply to follow the rails of the signifier, but rather to be derailed. This differential nature of the signifier thereby affects the metonymic movement itself: it does not merely carry the subject somewhere else, but rather locates the subject in a place where it can never arrive. The signifying structure of the subject assumes value only through its
position relative to others, within the chain, but also without. The place of the subject thereby becomes impossible to demarcate fully since it is always there where I am not because I cannot situate myself there. One can even go so far as to say that the subject, in the Lacanian perspective, determines itself in and as this impossibility. The latter, translated into an image, is called fader. The subject only appears insofar as it fades. The emergence of the subject is its fading. Lacan describes this movement in the following manner: I am not, whereever I am the plaything of my thought: I think of what I am, whereever I do not think (Ecrits 166).

As stated earlier, by eighteen months of age, the child masters many of its motor functions and the closing moments of the stage—which incidently Lacan refers to a drama—set in. The end of the mirror stage, which is linked to the onslaught of the Cedipal moment, involves a radical split effected in the child's subjectivity: the split occurs both in the child's sense of unity and oneness with the mother and in its sense of self-unity. The child acknowledges its differentiation from the mother primarily in the latter's desire. That is, the mother had been the custodian of infant's needs, but now her desire is elsewhere. She desires something that is not part of the infant/mother
dyad, and that something is located in the side of the father. The child grasps the fact that it neither is nor has what the mother desires. The possibility of satisfaction in the form of total union or plentitude is abolished with the appearance of this third term--the father--and the mother represents for the child a primal loss or the fundamental impossibility of complete satisfaction. The child consequently experiences a feeling of emptiness and radical disjunction that Lacan calls castration. It will be perpetually disarticulated from the objects of its desire, and the father has what that the mother is presumed to desire will become a privileged signifier that Lacan calls the phallus.

Lacan's theory of the subject stresses the gap (between the inner private bodily need and the outer public interpretation of it) coming into being with the unconscious by the imposition of signifiers upon need. The subject in short is always split, radically inaccessible to itself, and the split is occasioned by the introduction of the third term--the father -- into the child/mother duality. The phallus is the privileged signifier bringing about castration and separation. The cast of characters in the mirror-stage drama has filled out to include child, mother, and father, but there is a final, less specific character
whose function is nevertheless crucial in Lacanian analysis for the individuation of the subject--the Other. As the Lacanian subject critically reframes notions such as experience and selfhood within a context of language rules, concepts such as inscription and unconscious discourse and their systematic elaboration have been the characteristic concerns of the psychoanalytic critique of the subject.

The positioning of the subject in the psychoanalytic critique of the subject is also a positioning of the subject similar to Hegel's positioning of the subject in relation to other subjects. In his dialect of master and slave (like that of analyst and analysand) the master is slave to the slave's desire, because he can read that desire through its symptomatic indications and is himself compelled by its astral influence. Thus in Lacan the ego is no longer a central concept. In its place is the subject, which is the whole mechanism of conscious and unconscious operations, not a personal identity but a construct, in much the way a character is a semiotic construct for Levi-Strauss. The subject in this respect is a way of organizing and understanding the discourse that relates individual people to culture. Lacan specifically thinks of positions in language corresponding to family roles (father, mother, child), which are then conceived on the order of grammati-
cal 'persons', that is, markers for structural positions.

It is precisely the coherence of relational parts that governs the psychoanalytic critique of the subject. The ego is but one position --designed as the speaking subject or the 'I' -- in the subject's discourse and it has no controlling influence on the overall function of the discourse. This paradigm suggests a psychology in which neither the ego nor the subject is taken as naturally meaningful and possessed of an identity.

From the point of view of a political hermeneutic, measured against the requirements of a 'political unconscious', we must conclude that the conception of wish-fulfilment remains locked in a problematique of the individual subject and the individual psycho-biography which is only indirectly useful to us. The Lacanian rewriting of Freud should not be read as a mere variant on that Freudian hermeneutic, but rather a substantial and reflexive shift from the Freudian proposition about the nature of the dynamics of the subject (wish-fulfilment to the interrogation of that problematic itself, foregrounding the category of the subject and studying the process whereby this psychic reality (consciousness) -- as well as its buttressing ideologies and illusions (the feeling of personal identity, the myth of the ego or the self, and so forth) --become
rigorous and self-imposed limitations on Freud's notion of individual wish fulfilment. But the ideology of desire in its most fully realized forms is less an imperative mode than a whole world-view, a genuine metaphysics. At its most resonant, attractive, extreme and grandiose versions it is rich with death and the archaic.

Thus it is clear that far from being a by-product or an epiphenomenon of the signifier, the subject has a relationship of interdependence with it, and to such an extent that whatever may be claimed for the one must needs to be claimed with appropriate modification or skewing for the other. Both are characterized by their power of indefinite structural displacement, and that power necessarily takes priority over all innate or acquired psychological characteristics. The traditional language of psychology has an inveterate tendency to describe the mind as if it were a stable collection of things or forces or faculties, and Lacan's presentation of the subject-in-process may at first seem impossibly flimsy and weightless to those whose expectations of coherence in psychical model-building have been conditioned by language. What is remarkable is that his view of the subject as merely empty, mobile and without a centre should emerge, in its passage from one analytic taste to the next, and through a language in which all
expectations of short-term coherence are insistently dismantled, as at once cogent and precise.

The structure of the signifying chain discloses the subject's possibility to signify something entirely different from what it says. Insofar as this movement of signification is constitutionally anchored in language itself, and does not depend upon the conscious intention of the subject the function of discourse is no longer that of disguising--or, one might add: of expressing--thought. Rather, it is to indicate the place of this subject in the search for truth.

According to Nancy J. Chodorow, in contrast to recent psychoanalytic views, in the Lacanian view there can be no primary genital awareness that is not tied to the awareness and cognizing of gender difference, which, in turn, located and mediated in language. Nor can there be pre-Oedipal knowledge of genital difference, since such knowledge is by definition tied to the Oedipal transition and the castration complex. In contrast to object-relations feminism, there can be no subjectivity apart from schematised sexual identity: gender difference is all there is when it comes to our selfhood or subjectivity and gender difference is experienced and cognized (through our placement in language) in terms of sexuality and genital schematization.
Subjectivity and sexuality are interdependent; neither can develop without the other (187-8)

It has been argued that a Lacanian concept of the subject would invalidate a concern for intention because it would accord the subject no anteriority or priority over its discourse. The Lacanian theory of subject has also tended to close off discussion. For Lacan, language is the key to subjectivity and to the formation of the unconscious. We are 'governed' by language symbolization and only know the unconscious through the interpretation of the unconscious. Often this view has tended to return us exclusively to language's repressive force. It also fosters a deterministic model of subject formation, leaving little room for the progressive potential of nonverbal artistic communication.

As stated above, in the Lacanian model the centre of functioning, the agency of intention and action, is not the ego in the sense of governing system's manager or fixed personal identity, but the unconscious as an everchanging economy with a dialectical operation of external and internal forces. For Lacan the projection of 'I' (or ego) in conscious experience is a limited inscription far from being the executive agency of unconscious functioning. The ego is not a substantial form but one position within a
discourse (defined by the larger system of discourse) for the staging of an utterance, like the position of the 'I' in a long and otherwise complex utterance. One may conceive of Lacan's 'unconscious' much of as one thinks of fluent speakers of a language as 'unconscious' of grammar--not consciously 'intending' grammar -- while in the act of articulating it. In this conception, grammar structures the speaker's messages and creates horizons of possibilities for those messages which determine rather than express the speaker's intentions. Analogously the unconscious is composed of a set of structured and distinct but simultaneously 'bound' systems, rules and application of rules, like language itself. The 'I' or ego, cannot be as in the other model, the ego-as-homunculus struggling directly with superego and reality. The 'I' is a site of positioning and strategic making in discourse:

... the unconscious is always manifested as that which vacillates in a split in the subject, from which emerges a discovery that Freud compares with desire--a desire that will temporarily situate in the denuded metonymy of the discourse in question, where the subject surprises himself in some unexpected way(Four Fundamental 28)
The paradigm is characterized by positions of speech and orders of discourse and, finally, suggests a semiotic Freud because the subject is not a reservoir of meaning and identity. Subject and unconscious discourse are rather relational concepts defined dynamically in their difference from other concepts and activities subject and discourse achieve a pride of place among the constituent elements in Lacanian and post-structuralist thought.

For Lacan the unconscious is constituted by the effects of speech on the subject and it is the dimension in which the subject is determined in the development of the effects of speech and consequently "the unconscious is structured like a language" (Four Fundamental 149). Though the unconscious is structured like a language, the structuration is not in such a form as to yield up its logic to a 'structuralist' theory securely possessed of its own legitimating method. It may appear sometimes that Lacan is proposing a systematic scheme of tripological equivalents for Freud's less sophisticated language of unconscious functions. Thus he argues that the Freudian displacement and condensation can be rendered precisely in terms of the distinction which Jakobson draws between metonymy and metaphor as the ultimate structuring principles of language. But this is not to claim that any theory of language could hope
to master the field of unconscious desire or its rhetorical effects. In his references to the figures and tropes of classical rhetoric, Lacan adheres to a mode of speculative comparison much favoured by Freud. The relationship between dreams and hieroglyphic script for Freud is analogous to that between the mechanisms of the unconscious and rhetoric for Lacan. Lacan and Freud draw a comparison between the unconscious and Figures of Speech. But there is something interesting in it. Unconscious is considered to be something chaotic and primordial, that is, not systematized or structured. But figures of speech are highly refined and polished. So this comparison seems to be farfetched and out of place. But as Malcom Bowie says:

The enduring appeal that comparisons like these hold for both Lacan and Freud stems from their combined universalizing and particularizing capacities: they serve to enforce a general truth about the unconscious: that it has, or in Lacan's view, is structure--but at the same time allow the informal observer to focus sharply on the manner in which namable individuals suffer (121).

According to Lacan, the Unconscious is the proper site for the subject, a repository of truth. The 'I' should take up residence there not as a coercive occupying force but as
one who willingly casts aside falsehood and returns home: the prodigal 'I' becomes subject to the precise extent that it travels back to the unconscious and adopted its plural structures. The unconscious is defined and informed by desire:

I maintain that it is at the level of analysis... that the nodal point by which the pulsation of the unconscious is linked to sexual reality must be revealed. This nodal point is called desire, and the theoretical elaboration that I have pursued in recent years will show you through each stage of clinical experience, how desire is situated in dependence on demand—which, by being articulated in signifiers, leaves a metonymic remainder that runs under it, an element that is not indeterminate, which is a condition both, absolute and unapprehensible, an element necessarily lacking, unsatisfied, impossible, misconstructed (méconnu), an element that is called desire (Four Fundamental 154).

Lacan's theory of the unconscious necessitates a certain kind of literary performance. If the unconscious is like poetry in its overdetermined and polyphonic struc-
tures, then the writer who chooses to treat the unconscious, and wishes to obey its laws in his writing, must become more like a poet the closer he gets to the quick of his subject. The overlapping and knotting together of signifiers within the written chain will show the reader what the unconscious is by exacting rather than describing it. Lacan here provides us with yet another pair of interdependent definitions. Poetry and unconscious are mutually supporting: if you want to understand $a$, first understand $b$; if you want to understand $B$, first understand $a$. Yet on this occasion the entire conceptual construction is not free-floating but firmly planted in Lacan's glamorous and conceited prose: this is the place where theories take on corporal form and where Lacan's twin definitions prove themselves as writing.

In the Lacanian model, the unconscious is a topography of the cave of Plato: $a'$ as a shadow on the wall, $a$ is the ego identified by its ability to see, $A$ as the scenario writer ruling over the sequences of objects passing behind the little wall, and $S$ as the scenographer setting up the organization of representation in the cave as a retreat from presence. In this Lacan is the last great French philosopher: that the Other would give rise to representation through discourse is the masterful utterance upon
which philosophy continues to promote itself (Lyotard, *Toward the Postmodern* 79).

Lacan is of the view that both author and reader are controlled by the strategies of language. In his reading of Poe’s ‘The Purloined Letter’, Lacan offers an allegory of the displacement of the signifier: the characters in the text are determined by the position of the master signifier which for Lacan is the phallus. His reading of the story is not a literary interpretation but a study of discourse in the light of psychoanalytic theory. Lacan reveals a structure of desire which assigns a set of characters their places in a predetermined power system. Lacan analyses the story as a parable that describes psychoanalysis as the study of subjectivity as patterned by ‘truths’, as he says, that are independent of ‘reality’. He comments:

If what Freud discovered and rediscovers within a perpetually increasing sense of shock has a meaning, it is that the displacement of the signifier determines the subjects in their acts, in their destiny, in their refusals, in their blindness, in their end and in their fate, their intimate gifts and social acquisitions notwithstanding, without regard for character of sex, and that
might be considered the stuff of psychology, kit and caboodle, will follow the path of the signifier

('Seminar' 287).

In the seminar Lacan describes subject positions in relation to seeing— to the glance—which are filled by different characters at different moments in the story. The first is a glance that sees nothing: the king and the police. The second, a glance which sees that the first sees nothing and deludes itself as to the secrecy of what it hides: the Queen, then the minister. The third sees that the first two glances leave what should be hidden exposed to whomever would seize it: the minister and finally Dupin:

In order to grasp in its unity the intersubjective complex thus described, we would willingly seek a model in the technique legendary attributed to the ostrich attempting to shield itself from danger: for that technique might ultimately be qualified as political, divided as it here is among three partners: the second believing itself invisible because the first has its head stuck in the ground, and all the while letting the third calmly pluck its rear: . . . . What interests us
today in the manner in which the subjects relay each other in their displacement during the intersubjective repetition. We shall see that their displacement is determined by the place which a pure signifier--the purloined letter--comes to occupy in their trio. And that is what will confirm for us its status as repetition automatism" (275-6).

What is most exposed is the signifier itself: the material object which, bearing meaning, seems to disappear into transparency. The reading is presented as a ramifying fable of the analytic process and of the constitutive functioning of the signifier. In this reading the purloined letter is a pure migratory signifier. As it passes from point to point within a complex web of intersubjective perceptions (Poe speaks of the 'robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber), it attracts different meanings to itself, mediates different kinds of power relationship and determines subjects in what they do and are:

For the signifier is a unit in its very uniqueness, being by nature symbol only of an absence. Which is why we cannot say of the purloined let-
ter that like other objects, it must be or not be in a particular place but that unlike them it will be and not be where it is, wherever it goes.

(282).

The signifier (letter) becomes an immobile signified in the process: the mobility of the signifier is what Poe's story 'means' what it is about. That is through the (re)reading of the story Lacan endeavours to highlight the deluding nature of language, the sliding of the signified under the signifier. But to reach this conclusion or to establish this fact, he needs a stable meaning. That is, most paradoxically, a definite and stable reading becomes an agency to exemplify the slipping and miraging nature of language. That is a paradox: an immanent contradiction. But this phenomenon is inevitable. This feature equally applicable to all the writers including Lacan. If one looks at the fine structure of his writing, and the insistent play of ambiguity that permeates it, it becomes plain that even the basic psychoanalytic paradigms and the habit of psychoanalytic explanation itself, may be called into question from within. It is precisely this, before our eyes yet not 'seen'-- of which we remain unconscious--to which Lacan draws attention. In terms of critique the signifier replaces the 'hidden' causes of conscious and unconscious
within a horizon of possible actions and determination beyond the ken of the subject. In this analysis, 'reason' is one possible action among the many activities of a subject with no particularly privileged position in the heterogeneous life of historically and culturally determined needs, demands and desires. As Shoshana Felman opines:

Lacan's approach no longer falls into the category of what has been called 'applied psychoanalysis', since the concept of application implies a relation of exteriority between the applied science and the field it is supposed, unilaterally, to inform. Since, in Lacan’s analysis, Poe's text serves to reinterpret Freud just as Freud's text serves to interpret Poe; since psychoanalytic theory and the literary text mutually inform -- and displace--each other; since the very position of the interpreter--of the analyst--turns out to be not outside but inside the text, there is no longer a clear-cut opposition or a well-defined border between literature and psychoanalysis: psychoanalysis can be intraliterary just as much literature is intrapsychoanalytic. The methodological stake in no longer that of application of psychoanaly-
sis to literature but, rather, of their interimplication in each other” (319).

In Lacanian theory the subject is never separate from the social world but is thoroughly permeated by it and liable to the distortions inculcated by the predominant ideology. Lacan holds that the subject is a dynamic and even problematic agency, as a cultural construction that is inherently undecidable in the sense that it is continually being reformulated by unconscious operations. The subject is, in fact, structured in and by ideology, in the sense of the set of 'as if' formulations through which people comprehend their relationships with the world. These ideological relations are institutionalized in culture and manifested in linguistic practice; as such, they enter into the very centre of human consciousness. This idea, that subjective experience can never be a full counter with the Real, but is always an Imaginary relationship with a world that is socially organized is an immensely productive one, and has had substantial effects on Marxists (for instance the work of Althusser), and on feminists. Patricia Waugh writes:

I want to suggest, somewhat tentatively, that despite differences in the theoretical construction of modernity and postmodernity, common to
them both is the inheritance of a particular ideal of subjectivity defined in terms of transgression and pure rationality. Postmodernism can be seen as a response to the perceived failure of this ideal. This notion of subjectivity, whether expressed through Descartes' rational 'I' and refined into Kant's categorical imperatives, or through Nietzsche's Übermensch or Lacan's phallocentric symbolic order, has not only excluded women but has made their exclusion on the grounds of emotionality, failure of abstract intellect, or whatever, the basis of its own identity (191-2).

Althusser adopted Lacan's psycholinguistic axiom that the individual subject is constituted by entry into language and that it is language with its pre-existing order that speaks us, to suggest how we enter capitalism through the cradle and crèche. So for Marx, ideology had been an illusion and a lie; for Althusser it is something much more than a false system of ideas, manufactured in capitalistic society to confuse the proletariat in its perception of its own class and interests. For Althusser it is the very material of daily life. He was interested in the channels in which subjects and their deepest selves are interpel-
lated, positioned and shaped by what lies outside them. Althusser's use of Freud and Lacan makes the unconscious central to the workings of ideology.

There is an affinity between Althusser's theory of ideological recruitment or interpellation and Lacan's psychoanalytic understanding of the subject's Oedipal passage from the Imaginary to the Symbolic realm. The imaginary form, the representation that appeals to the narcissistic sense of the narrator and the reader, conditions and structures narrative representation. Lacan's attempts to remove the illusion that the signifier answers to the function of representing the signified ends up in the historicization of the subject which sees the subject not as a harmony of faculties working towards a self-identical end but as the strife of warring parts at odd with one another focus on the split subject—the wars among need, demand and desire. The subject is thus decentred:

Events are engendered in a primary historization. In other words, history is already producing itself on the stage where it will be played out, once it has been written down, both within the subject and outside him (Ecrits 52)
There exists a symbiotic relation between the study of modern culture and the dialectical nature of psychological criticism -- its attempt to bring a sophisticated critique to cultural study by relating a theory of mind to literary aesthetics, particularly in narrative structure, to a general system of cultural signification, and to the social and cultural context of texts. This potential for connection with various dimensions of culture is responsible, more than anything else, for the strong continuing interest in the psychoanalytic understanding of texts throughout the last century. In the work of the French Freudians and others on the Continent and in the United States, the extension of psychoanalysis into the discourse on language, female sexuality and political power has positioned Freudian thought in the late twentieth century both as a part of modernist culture in the early twentieth century and also as an energetic force for psychological and cultural critique in contemporary discourse.

According to Lacan since the father intervenes at a crucial moment in the mirror stage and breaks the Imaginary and dual relationship between child and mother (whose desire is consequently perceived to extend outside the pair they form), his intervention can be perceived as a prohibition stemming from a cultural law. It should be noted
that Lacan's theory of gender identification derives not from a biological essentialism but from a cultural injunction. Lacan stressed not the ascendancy of the visual and the present often ascribed to Freud's account of feminine sexuality, castration and the possession of a penis, but the manner in which signifiers connoting gender identity preexist the subject's assumption of a role. His emphasis on the culturally ascribed aspect of gender identification consequently relegates it not to an Imaginary essence but to the Symbolic order itself.

Lacan frequently points out that a given structure itself sends a message. In particular, the human sexual difference is for Lacan an impasse or irreducible real which resists satisfactory symbolization. The effort of culture is to try to express this difference anyway, and the successive efforts to express it might, in one sense, be considered the history of culture. Lacan taught that sexual difference gives rise to gender ideologies which appear in multi-variations of a cultural taboo against an identificatory fusional relation between mother and infant, most particularly between mother and son. This does not mean that the female infants are closer to psychosis, merely that they are enjoined by language and imago to identify with similarity rather than difference. Thus, the
incest taboo is not so much a biological 'no', as it is a strong cultural injunction to boys to identify away from the maternal and the feminine, to substitute the name of a mother. If no 'incest' taboo qua Freudian Oedipal complex is in play, what is at stake, then? Lacan points out to the exceptional anxiety involved in taking on a masculine identification. Indeed the figure of the male qua male might be called the cultural life which maintains that sexual identity can be personified by making difference itself a position. Lacan gives a name to this effect that does not exist as an entity or effect, an effect he calls the law of the phallic signifier, a law whose effects apply to female as well as male.

Mikko Tuhkanen observes in an American context that we can turn to Lacan's understanding of mimicry and paranoid knowledge to conceptualize the possibilities in blackface representations and performance. The Lacanian notion of paranoia enables us to negotiate the ambivalence--the openings as well as the dangers -- of these strategies. While paranoia is usually understood as a pathology, Lacan splits the concept into two by suggesting that, apart from (and in conjunction with) pathological paranoia, we must consider paranoid identifications as a constitutive feature of intersubjectivity. This malleable line between the two
paranoid constructions delineates also the ambivalent and unpredictable dynamics of blackface minstrelsy. We should note that Lacan's distinction between the two forms of paranoia hinges on notions that echo concepts familiar from the history of African-American philosophy and cultural theory. That is, what demarcates the two forms of paranoia is a certain distance that the subject has from itself. This distance is often achieved through laughter. According to Tuhkanen, the historical functioning of the blackface can be conceptualized through the mirror stage. The concept of mimicry in Lacan refers to the kind of multiple mimesis that we find in white and black blackface minstrelsy. Mimicry designates the moment when the human infant (mis)recognizes itself in the mirror and comes to experience its body through image as totality. Here, mimicry also becomes a fundamental alienation that is crucial for the functioning of the human subject. Because of this double valence--identification/alienation or identification as alienation--mimicry never refers to anything like the subject's assimilation or adaptation to its surroundings. The human subject remains in an irreducible discord with his/her environment. Crucial for the functioning of human mimicry is the irreducible human characteristic of paranoia. Not only is paranoia an exclusively human form of behaviour, but, more precisely, the human subject, for
Lacan, is inescapably paranoid (19-21).

Lacanian ideas have been employed in a wide variety of cultural discussions as if they hold all the progressive prospects of psychoanalysis. In addition to neglecting the complexity of analytic thought, which stresses across a wider area than is encompassed by any one theory, this procedure misleadingly presents the discipline as coherent when in fact it contains numerous contradictions, some of them potentially high productive. What Lacanianism does provide is a radical opposition to any adaptionist politics, a celebration of the subversive possibilities of psychoanalysis and, more concretely an account of the way the individual becomes formed in the structure of language and culture. Despite some lines of agreement with Klein’s work Lacanianism is basically different from, and at odds with, all other forms of psychoanalysis in its relentless insistence on the impossibility of any human structure that is not bound up in, and constructed as part of, culture. This insistence has led some of the most interesting new developments in the social application of psychoanalysis, particularly by feminists, even if they sometimes end up opposed to Lacan.

Lacan’s distinction between pleasure and jouissance is taken over and given a particularly aesthetic resonance
in Roland Barther's *The Pleasure of the Text*. Barthes suggests, like Lacan, that there are in fact two kinds of pleasure and two kinds of text to go with them, the text of pleasure and the text of bliss. Plainly, the text of pleasure is rooted in the conservative, homeostatic pleasure principle as defined by Lacan, for it is the text that contents, fills and grants euphoria. The text of bliss is the text that discomforts and unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories and brings to a crisis his relation with language. Like Lacan's *jouissance*, Barthes's text of bliss is a paradoxical, a nonteleological extremity and an extremity of nonfinality.

Lacan's recourse to literature follows in the line of his recourse to linguistics. But the analytic operation itself is not a linguistic one, for it attests to language's hold on the symptom, the symptom as it presents itself in analysis. In psychoanalysis, language operates on the symptom, and the question at hand is to know how the literary use of language can be said to be a symptom. All creation supposes that the Symbolic has brought forth a lack in the real, where by definition nothing can lack.

Lacan is of the view that transference is the acting-out of the reality of the unconscious and, previously,
I.A. Richards had noted that transference was a form of metaphor: one thing or person is treated as though it were another. Thus the writing of the story itself, the transition of mental phenomena into a drama, might be viewed as a psychoanalytic mechanism. This view would take nothing away from the story, if it were acknowledged that the reality presented by the story cannot, if the story is a good one, be better supplied, or finally supplied, by psychoanalysis with a master-story.

Many critics have pointed out that terms describing the dream work (that is the process by which the thoughts and wishes lying behind the dream are transformed into the dream the patient relates, or the manifest content of the dream) are analogous to literary techniques. Displacement, or the shifting of emotional accent, condensation, or the conflation of several thoughts or characteristics, decomposition, or the breaking up of a single thought or character, and over-determination, or the multiple causes and references of a single image, are familiar literary features. In fact, condensation and displacement are versions of metaphor and metonymy, the latter preceding by (hidden) association of contiguous ideas, and the former uniting ideas on the basis of resemblance, whereas decomposition would result in synecdoche. Indeed, it was the distinctly
linguistic features of the mechanisms of the dream work, which is posited as residing in the unconscious, that led Lacan to conclude that the unconscious is structured like a language.

Literature, for the romantics, is the name of what must always remain open to the unexpected, since it is always only retrospectively that its principles of rule-formation may be discovered. Such a conception of literature in terms of literary absolute collapses the literary/critical divide, turning literature into literary theory. Hence the absolute of literature is the unpresentable, or what must always remain out of reach of any critical approach to an object whose self-theorizing nature preempts all approaches to it. In this way literature becomes the figure of figuration itself, the primal condition of revolutionary force and positive destabilization. Over time it lends itself as a model for Freud's unconscious, Lacan's language, Levi-Strauss's oricolege, Barthes's text and so on to arrive finally as the postmodern condition where we find ourselves today in the presence of absent rules for exchanging even the most minimally stable senses, let alone large-scale truths and values.

For Lacan, as in the case of Saussure, language is a system that generates meaning negatively and through rela-
tions rather than positively. Little wonder he harks back to the ancient Indian aesthetic tenet of dhvani. According to Anandavardhan just as the sounds of utterances reveal the integral linguistic sign, a good poem with its sound and literal sense reveals, over and above its literal sense, a charming sense which has great aesthetic value. This suggested sense is the most important element in poetry; in fact it is the soul of poetry. In all good poetry prominence is found to be given to this element. According to Lacan the analyst can play on the power of the symbol by evoking it in a carefully calculated fashion in the semantic resonances of his remarks. This is the way for a return to the use of symbolic effects in a renewed technique of interpretation in analysis. It is in this context Lacan makes use of the ancient Indian concept of dhvani. He says that this technique “stresses the property of speech by which it communicates what it does not actually say” (Ecrits 82). The tradition illustrates this by a tale which induce us to penetrate the Truth which it conceals. A young girl is waiting for her lover on the bank of a stream when she sees a Brahmin coming along towards him. She runs to him and exclaims in the warmest and most amiable tones: “How lucky it is that you came today! The dog which used to frighten you by its barking will not be along this river bank again, for it has just been devoured by a lion which is often seen
around here*. According to Lacan the absence of the lion can have as much of an effect as his spring would have were he present, for the lion only springs once:

The primary character of symbols in fact brings them close to those numbers out of which all others are compounded, and if they therefore underlie all the sentences of language, we shall be able to restore to the Word its full value of evocation by a discreet search for their interferences, using as our guide a metaphor whose symbolic displacement will neutralize the second senses of the terms which it associates (Four Fundamentatl 59)

Equally noteworthy is the relation between Lacanian musings on language and the Buddhist doctrine of apoha. It is by radically opposing Bhartrhari's presentation of the lila of word as culminating in essence that the theory of apoha unfolds itself. It opposes universal ideas and places importance on particular entities. The theory argues that there are only unstable ideas derived from particular entities. All linguistic manifestations including names and abstract ideas are arbitrary, relative and above all illusory. By virtue of its arbitrary nature a word acquires
meaning negatively. An innately deficient system like language does and cannot touch reality which is absolute.