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The Genealogical Autobiography: Writing History in Time and the Body

by

Peter Crane, B.A.

A thesis submitted to

the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

in partial fulfilment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of English Language and Literature

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

December 1, 1993

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"The Genealogical Autobiography: Writing History in Time and The Body"

submitted by Peter Crane, B.A.

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ben Jones", positioned above a horizontal line.

Ben Jones

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Chair, Department of English

**Carleton University
January 8, 1994**

Abstract

The Genealogical Autobiography: Writing History in Time and the Body

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum* are genealogical autobiographies. The narrators of these autobiographies purport to write a version of the history of India and Germany that affirms a concept of time that includes the transitory nature of the subject and the body. An investigation of Friedrich Nietzsche's thought of eternal return and the Overman introduces the person who can confront and celebrate history within time, without craving for its termination. This is the matter of chapter I. Overcoming a resentment towards time and the body is continued in Julia Kristeva's psychoanalysis. This becomes our concern in chapter II. Kristeva contends that the maternal rhythms of the body are part of the signifying process. Rushdie and Grass exemplify the possibilities of writing a dynamic history by joining performance and writing, hence the body and time, within an intense historical document.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Ben Jones for his constant support and intensity. I would also like to give a special note of thanks to the late Frank Zappa for his wonderful music.

Dedication

To Chrissie, for her *jouissance* and love.

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Preface

In the summer of 1985 a friend of mine recommended Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children*. I was living in southern Ontario and working in a factory that manufactured electrical cords for car block-heaters (which seemed strange at the time because it was a summer of several heat waves). My job was to run a huge machine that formed six female silicone plugs per cycle. I had to attach three wires (positive, negative, and ground) to the form-pegs of each of the six heads, and then I would let the head of the machine drop onto the top of the form to extrude silicone into the form. After the silicone had set I would open the machine and remove the heads, and then I would repeat the operation. One cycle took about one minute. For a couple of weeks during that summer of heat waves these cycles became a part *Midnight's Children*, because as I faced a monstrous machine my imagination was enveloped in the world of chutney and Saleem Sinai.

Midnight's Children made me hungry. The smells of chutney-cooking that wafted from the pages made me hungry to learn about other places in the world, but even more than that, it made me wonder about how one could tell their story. History had been, for me, the memorization of events or a highly romanticized world that Russian Tzars and the mysterious Rasputin inhabited. Rushdie, however, presented me with Saleem, an unreliable grotesque figure who lamented the veracity of his own history, and who kept repeating himself. The thoughts of history and fiction stayed in my mind all that summer and continued for two years. During this time I left the silicone head extruder and moved on to an even bigger extruder that formed the silicone seal that is on the inside of ovens. I moved from the world

of cycles to the world of uni-directional motion--the machine extruded one long tube through an oven and past a knife that dropped these seals into a box, where a worker put them on a skid after two-hundred and fifty cuts. The machine never stopped--it was running when I arrived at work and it was running when I left.

In the summer of 1988 I arrived in Toronto to study English at York University where I could begin an interdisciplinary study of English literature, because the study of literature would mean I would also have to know about history, psychology, philosophy, art, music, and so on. I had learned a lot from Saleem. I needed a summer job and I found work at a concrete company that builds the cement walls that you see surrounding highways to keep the noise out of residential areas. My new job was cyclical. I used a hydraulic lift to transport newly formed concrete sections from a huge cement extruder across the floor of the factory to a movable shelf that carried the forms into a drying kiln. During this time I saw a copy of the *Tin Drum* in a book store, and remembered that the movie had been banned in Ontario, so I bought it. It happened again--the summer heat waves arrived, and as I moved concrete slabs, Oskar's drumbeats filled my head with the history of Germany, art, Rasputin, and cooking. Again I was presented with a grotesque, unreliable narrator who lamented the veracity of his own history, and who kept repeating himself. At first Oskar made me angry with Rushdie because I thought Rushdie had simply copied Grass. But with each repetition of concrete slab and story, I wondered what was happening between these two texts that continued to intrigue me. By the end of the summer my anger at Rushdie had dissipated and the novels settled into their own separate versions of history. Now I could go to university to mix my own version of history and literature. And Rushdie was only a few months away

from facing a ban much more severe than the Ontario ban of *The Tin Drum*.

The narrators of these two autobiographies are what kept me interested in these two books. What kind of person is able to keep on writing about their past when they are falling apart, and how is it that they are able to convey to me, and my own cycles, a fictional world that also tells a powerful history? The university offered me the possibilities of Nietzsche's Zarathustra, Foucault's interpretation of the body as a text, and several ongoing theories of the subject (Freud, Voloshinov, Bakhtin, Lacan, and Kristeva) that enabled me to delve into the possibilities of Oskar and Saleem's constitutions in a deeper way. Theory, for me, has always had to dance with Oskar and Saleem. My investigation of literature and theory always becomes a new text that amalgamates, confronts, and rejects in order to come up with a new way of looking at these two special people who keep the text of my life and studies alive as I return to drumming and chutney.

In his introduction to Günter Grass's book *On Writing and Politics 1967-1983*, Salman Rushdie describes what he learned from the collection of Oskar's drumbeats in *The Tin Drum*:

Go for broke. Always try and do too much. Dispense with safety nets. Take a deep breath before you begin talking. Aim for the stars. Keep grinning. Be ruthless. Argue with the world. And never forget that writing is as close as we get to keeping a hold on the thousand and one things--childhood, certainties, cities, doubts, dreams, instants, phrases, parents, loves--that go on slipping, like sand, through our fingers. I have tried to learn the lessons of the midget drummer. (x)

Oskar Matzerath, the midget drummer, performs and writes a version of history that confronts a world that is falling apart and seems to be slipping away into the sands of time. The Kashubian language and peoples are dispersed into various populations in Eastern Europe and their history is dispersed with them. Oskar's past returns to him because he drums his genealogy in a way that connects a thousand and one events of his past to his present through his bodily feelings. Thirteen years after having read Oskar's story in *The Tin Drum*, Rushdie presents us with his own version of the genealogical autobiographer in Saleem Sinai, the narrator of *Midnight's Children*. Saleem preserves his past in chutneys that spice his present and encourage him to write in order to keep the different aspects of India alive. He cooks and writes against the constant threat of history's possible homogenization of India.

Midnight's Children and *The Tin Drum* are fictions that tell us something about the complexity of history. At the same time, they play their part as an historical record. Oskar convinced Rushdie that language, however tenuous and fragile, is the medium that connects a person to the past. There are a thousand and one events that went into and came out of the unification of India in 1947 and the movement of Germany into World War Two. Saleem and Oskar's goal is to make their dynamic and undefinable history felt in a powerful way. They desire to write about their pasts without annihilating aspects of history in order to unify and contain their histories and the histories of the people that they share the world with.

My aim in this project is twofold. The first part of my thesis is an investigation of time as it relates to Nietzsche's concept of the eternal return of the same and the person who wants to report on the passage of time. This interpretation of time brings the body back into the writing of history, it connects the physical world with memory. Most importantly, it

presents the person who can face the most disturbing aspect of history: its repetition of the worst and the best. My investigation examines two people who continue to write and connect with their past and future in performance even though they are threatened with their own (and their society's) dissolution. Oskar and Saleem face the return of history, and in doing so they overcome their resentment toward time. They are able to live in time as they write and exist in the world while undoing apocalyptic and utopian discourses that attempt to bring about an end to time.

The second half of my thesis is a deeper investigation into the possibilities of writing. If performing history is important in recovering the body and time, we have to look at what happens to language when the body is included in the process of meaning-making. Julia Kristeva helps us uncover the workings of a subject that is always being reformulated when writing and performance are combined to tell a story. Kristeva's notions of the semiotic and the symbolic orders, the body and language, describes Oskar and Saleem's desire to write a genealogical autobiography in a way that keeps language alive. The desire to write also informs us about the body's role in understanding language and language's relation to the world. The manner of defining the self as a subject who is always part of a process informs the defining of a nation and its history in a way that always confronts a static view of history. This is to say that imaginative fiction intercepts profound historical meanings because, in its uncontrollable way, it never closes itself off from the rhythms of the world--the genealogical autobiography's language is alive.

I

Eternal Return: A Rendition

*And you run and you run to catch up with
the sun, but it's sinking
And racing around to come up behind you again
The sun is the same in a relative way,
But you're older
Shorter of breath and one day closer to death*

Roger Waters

*But it isn't enough
To just go on singing. Orpheus realized this
And didn't mind so much about his reward being in heaven
After the Bacchantes had torn him apart, driven
Half out of their minds by his music, what it was doing to them.
Some say it was for his treatment of Eurydice.
But probably the music had more to do with it, and
The way music passes, emblematic
Of life and how you cannot isolate a note of it
And say it is good or bad. You must
Wait till it's over. "The end crowns all,"
Meaning that the "tableau"
Is wrong. For although memories, of such a season, for example,
Melt into a single snapshot, one cannot guard, treasure
That stalled moment. It too is flowing, fleeting;
It is a picture of flowing, scenery, though living, mortal,
Over which an abstract action is laid out in blunt,
Harsh strokes. And to ask more than this
Is to become the tossing reeds of that slow,
Powerful stream, the trailing grasses
Playfully tugged at, but to participate in the action
No more than this.*

John Ashbery from "Syringa"

1. Thinking Recurrence

Recurrence has many textual possibilities that function in the narrative process in different ways, often for the purpose of emphasizing a singular event or a repeated action in order to form a decisive textual memory, a way of clarifying textual events and characters within a congruous process. It can, however, be used to subvert the narrative, and the different narratives that the main narrative employs, through a continual re-analysis of an event or events. Friedrich Nietzsche's thought of the eternal recurrence of the same (*die ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen*) is an especially important interpretation of recurrence because its implications reveal an elaborate repetition of events, and a re-interpretation or re-confrontation of these events and their recurrence in the life of an individual, community, or country. In a genealogical autobiography, such as Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum*, the narrator writes the repetitive history of his or her body as it relates to, and exists within, the repetitive history of the world. In the context of "repetitive history," there are three types of recurrence which I will look at: repetitions in the history of the world, repetitions in the life of the autobiographer, and repetitions in the written text of the autobiography (the report of the previous two types of repetition).

Narrative recurrence in Saleem Sinai and Oskar Matzerath's autobiographies confronts and copes with the possibility of an endlessly changing past that is also irreversibly complete and a future that has already happened. This paradoxical and enigmatic statement proposes to establish a capacity for the writing subject to rewrite sacred and profane memories endlessly as a phenomenon of becoming rather than as a fixed and singular certainty, even though the

recurrence of the same history is described in metaphysical terminology as *eternal*. In these metafiction, the interrelation of memory and time operates in a dynamic signifying process that is self-aware. The narrators decipher their marked and persistently metamorphosing bodies through performance and writing as a way of confronting a personal history and their existence in the history of the world. In Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra's teachings describe the Overman (*der Übermensch*), the dramatic character who is beyond (has overcome) man as he has previously existed, as the person who can confront and affirm an eternally recurring history. An exploration of Nietzsche's eternal recurrence and the Overman uncovers a puissant notion of history that provides insight into the subject who purports to confront and write history.

Nietzsche's notion of the Overman is not separate from his thought of eternal recurrence because feeling the thought of eternal recurrence is the experience that can transform the human into the Overman. Keeping this transformative power in mind, I will put the Overman aside for the moment in order to investigate the *bare* mechanics of the thought of eternal recurrence, which appears to be conspicuously uncomplicated. In the chapter "On the Vision and the Riddle" (*TSZ* III, 2), Zarathustra shatters the oppressive power of the dwarf by showing him the gateway he calls "Moment." The dwarf is the part of himself that endeavours to goad him into the abyss of dark thoughts with excessive feelings of dread that negate the possibility of becoming and impede his ascension toward higher thoughts, preventing his affirmation of a complete eternal recurrence. The dwarf is the spirit of gravity. Moment is a sharp point *in time*, so acute that the measurement of *time* is zero. It is experienced as an eternity. It is *forever now* for the person who experiences it,

but it exists within time. Moment is not a static banishment of time, but an instant that is preceded and followed by an eternity. It is the present in which the contradictory aspects of time, the illimitable past and future, collide. Zarathustra elaborates the gateway of Moment as though he is pointing to visual illustration:

[t]wo paths meet here; no one has yet followed either to its end. This long lane stretches back for an eternity. And the long lane out there, that is another eternity. They contradict each other, these paths; they offend each other face to face; and it is here at this gateway that they come together. (157-8)

The importance of this collision of contradictory aspects of time lies in a distinction between the past and the future within a measurement of time that is infinite, without a beginning or an end. Time is infinite, running backward and forward simultaneously, and Moment is an eternal present where past and future clash and abide.

This paradigm seems to contradict the possibility of recurrence. If both time and Moment are forever, then one can either step outside of time (of past and future) and abide in the now for an eternity and nothing will happen again in the future, or one can look into the past or the future forever always finding an unfolding beyond any given moment, denying the possibility for something to happen again. Time is infinite on the eternal roads that meet at the contradictory gateway of Moment. However, what allows the possibility for recurrence, or precisely what necessitates recurrence, is the finiteness of material (or space) within the infiniteness of time:

[f]rom this gateway, Moment, a long, eternal lane leads *backward*:

behind us lies an eternity. Must not whatever *can* walk have walked on this plane before? Must not whatever *can* happen have happened, have been done, have passed by before? And if everything has been there before--what do you think, dwarf, of this moment? Must not this gateway too have been there before? And are not all things knotted together so firmly that this moment draws after it *all* that is to come? Therefore--itself too? For whatever *can* walk--in this long lane out *there* too, it *must* walk once more. (158)

Zarathustra contends that if time is infinite and matter is finite, then every possibility of organizing matter will be exhausted within a specific period of time. Therefore, all possible organizations of matter must eventually be repeated in infinite time, and that repetition itself must be repeated--over and over. The eternity of Moment must also have recourse to time because it, too, must be again and have been repeated somewhere on the road of eternity, meaning that to reside in the present of Moment is both a mystery and a paradox that relates to the condition of the subject who experiences or envisions Moment. Before returning to the subject who experiences Moment, there is a need to explain why Moment and eternal recurrence have a value *beyond* any interpretation based on the view that time simply passes away.

It is possible to think that the thought of the eternal recurrence of the same seems inconsequential, because whether it happens once or an infinite number of times it still occurs within a single linear progression where the eventness-of-the-event has meaning only within that particular series of events. Milan Kundera thinks the thought of recurrence, and its

cogency, in the first chapter of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. He contends that an event is transformed if it recurs. For example, the recurrence of a war between two 14th-century African tribes "will become a solid mass, permanently protuberant, its inanity irreparable" (4). Kundera's presentation of recurrence also brings a forceful weight to the French Revolution: "there is an infinite difference between a Robespierre who occurs only once in history and a Robespierre who eternally returns, chopping off French heads" (4). The condition that brings the meaning of the event beyond the singular eventness-of-the-event is that the event is not permitted to pass by, to become transient: as a "solid mass" it exists eternally as a recurring full presence. If the horrors of the 20th-century are transitory, where apocalyptic ends annihilate the terrible so they never return, Kundera asserts that they cannot be judged and condemned, because "in the sunset of dissolution, everything is illuminated by the aura of nostalgia, even the guillotine" (4). Even if an event is dissolved in discourse and turned into a sentimental partial memory of pure *good* or *evil*, it will still return in its fullness. Society's desire will be to deny future embodiments of the *evil* and project toward the *good* or *better*, rather than confront the past and future in its wholeness (its heights and abysses). Society fears the repetition of a so-called *evil* history, and given the violent weight of the past, this may not be surprising. It is through this very fear, however, that the fullness of history is turned into something else--nostalgia. If history is transformed by its recursive-ness into events that will not simply dissolve into the discourse of a nostalgic past, say of *Time/Life* pictures of Mounthatten or Hitler, or even traditional "Big Man" academic analyses that describe an historical event as an anomaly,¹ the responsibility of the interpretation and reinterpretation of history will be perpetually accruing significance that is always changing.

Each moment of history, including each moment of interpreting history, can, and will, come again--will have a full meaning as a presence that will need interpretation and re-interpretation with each recurrence

Zarathustra describes eternal recurrence as his "most abysmal thought" (216), and the person who can confront this thought is the Overman. He/she is not defeated by the cynicism of the spirit of gravity and is able to convert the "solid mass" of a recurring history into weightlessness, without dissolving it into absence. In his 1953 public lecture, "Who is Nietzsche's Zarathustra?," Martin Heidegger traces Zarathustra's aspiration for humans to move away from their resentment of time to the affirmation of time in love. Heidegger indicates that Zarathustra uncovers, in the chapter "On the Tarantulas," the phenomenon of "revenge." It is revenge that inhibits the prospect of man's transcendence: "for *that man he delivered from revenge*, that is the bridge to the highest hope, and a rainbow after long storms" (99). The oppressive power of the metaphysical notion of revenge over the human condition is described in the chapter "On Redemption" (*TSZ* II, 20) where Zarathustra states, "[t]he spirit of revenge, my friends, has so far been the subject of man's best reflection; and where there was suffering, one always wanted punishment too" (140). Heidegger, reinforcing Nietzsche's view, places revenge and metaphysics together: "[i]n whatever way man represents beings as such [in the spirit of revenge], he does so with a view to Being. By means of this view he advances always beyond beings--out beyond them and over to Being" (221). Such Being of beings is metaphysical, established in thought, and so the best thoughts that humans have had about their Being has been rooted in revenge. Heidegger states that we can "provisionally say that revenge is persecution that defies and degrades" (222), and it is

willed.² What we must note for our purposes is that the phenomenon that the will defies and degrades in revenge is time and its transiency.

In the discussion of the chapter "On Redemption," Heidegger uncovers the will's aversion to time in Zarathustra's speech to his disciples: "[t]his, yes, this alone is revenge itself: the will's ill will toward time and its 'it was'" (223, qtd in Krell's translation of "Who is Nietzsche's Zarathustra?").³ Time and its "it was" incorporates the totality of time: the past, present, and future. Heidegger interprets Zarathustra's speech about revenge as "the will's ill will toward time and that means toward passing away, transiency" (224). Ill will is an anxiety that is instigated by the metaphysical construction of the Being of beings, and the will's ill will is directed at objects in the world that arrive only to pass away into the "it was," the transient. Being that has an aversion to transiency, in its sickness, will "will its own passing, and in so doing wills that everything in the world be worthy of passing away. Ill will toward time degrades all that passes away" (224-5). This aversion motivates one to view all that is transient--for example, every bit of material in the universe--as not having *actual* Being. This is a denial of all transient beings. This is "revenge": a desire for a non-passing time that degrades the physical world; indeed, "for Nietzsche the most deepseated revenge consists in that reflection which posits supratemporal ideality as absolute" (225). This is analogous to Kundera's notion that nostalgia dissolves the past, and that the thought of eternal recurrence enables the subject (being) to accept transiency while letting the notion of eternity remain present, without the thought of an absolute "supratemporal ideality." This can be realized through the subjectivity of the Overman who is perpetually in the state of becoming. This is the role that Oskar and Saleem play in their own autobiographies.

2. Writing Recurrence

Saleem and Oskar write in a strange race against time, against their own transiency. They are caught in the Shandyesque dilemma: they record the events of their lives while realizing that if they record everything their story will not progress through time. They will never arrive at the point of their own birth. Time will stop at an infinite synchronic layering at one point in the past. But history in their texts is also diachronic, and they must confront the passage of time in order to establish memories that lead to the present from which they write. Even though they manage to catch up with themselves they, unlike Tristram, realize that they cannot get everything into their texts. In an attempt to transcend synchronic details, Oskar and Saleem use the genre of the fairy tale to condense historical time and place it at a distance. But the opulence of their autobiographies does not allow for closure and morality of the fairy tale: Rushdie and Grass always return to the changing details of difference. When Saleem tries to begin his story outside of historical time, in the "once upon a time" (9) of the fairy tale, he realizes that he is marked by the precision of time: August 15th, 1947, 12:00 o'clock midnight. Saleem asserts, "thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously hand-cuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country" (9). Indeed, the closer the *Midnight's Children* are born to the originary time of India's Independence, the more magical they are. Oskar's birth time is also precise, in that the astrological movement of the planets and their exact positioning in time have an influence on the direction his existence will take (44). Still, he questions his fate: "[b]ut who sent the moth and allowed it, in the midst of a late-summer thunderstorm

roaring like a high school principal, to make me fall in love with the drum my mother had promised me and develop my aptitude for it?" (44). In both cases time is ambiguous. These moments (birth) are totalizing factors of history, defining moments that give only a closed meaning to Saleem and India or Oskar and Danzig rather than affirming the possibilities of change and return within time.

Oskar informs his readers that, when he has the occasion, he will tell "some fairy tale" (11) to Bruno Münsterberg, his attendant. Oskar makes no claim that he is hand-cuffed to history like Saleem, but he suffers from the same indecision about having to begin his story--of coping with time. Both of these narrators turn to a history of the body, but they understand their relationship to the totality of history in different ways: it is not surprising that Oskar, the dwarf, sees himself playing a small role, while the gangly Saleem sees himself at the center of all events (I will return to this in chapter II). Saleem laments that "time (having no further use for me) is running out" (9); his "crumbling, overused body" (9) will soon dissolve into a state of complete disorder. History, his history and his country's is not easily summed up, because "there are so many stories to tell, too many, such an excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumours, so dense a compiling of the improbable and the mundane!" (9). Oskar, on the other hand, is not crumbling. He simply asks, "how shall I begin?" (13). He gives a brief description of the genre of the novel, commenting on the problem of time, space, and the hero, but he finally resolves his problem of getting started: "I shall begin far away from me; for no one ought to tell the story of his life who hasn't the patience to say a word or two about his grandparents before plunging into his own existence" (13). Saleem settles the problem of his existence and his connection with the

"birth" of India with the same formula, except that his numbers are more exact: "I must commence the business of remaking my life from the point at which it really began, some thirty-two years before anything so obvious, as *present*, as my clock-ridden, crime-stained birth "(10). The resolution of the possibilities is genealogical and requires an investigation of the body to interpret history. This genealogy of the body will bear witness to their country's history. Against this genealogical history is the enclosing desire of ending history and time with the notion of the Independence of India and the German solution of racial purity. Nevertheless, history continues to unfold as the "recurrence of the same" in the city of Danzig and in the country of India.

In the chapter "Should I or Shouldn't I," Oskar seems to play the role of the traditional historian, presenting the history of "Danzig" as a series of fallings and rebuildings of the city. The chapter directly follows Oskar's "murder" of his presumptive father, Matzerath, during a destruction of Danzig by the fleeing Germans and the invading Russians. Oskar reveals that what begins in recorded history as Gyddanyzc undergoes many transformations before it reaches his present and is called Gdansk. It is a recurring destruction and rebuilding of the area, the most recent culminating with the arrival of Russian troops, its partition, followed by the arrival of Poles coming to live in Kashubian houses. History certainly continues in Gdansk after the war, and a disturbing violent repetition of the destruction of the city precedes Oskar's writing:

[t]he city was destroyed and rebuilt in turn by dukes of Pomerelia, the grand masters of the Teutonic Order, the kings and anti-kings of Poland, the counts of Brandenburg, and the bishops of Wloclawek. The directors

of the building and wrecking enterprises were named Otto and Walde-mar, Bogussa, Heinrich von Plotzke--and Dietrich von Altenbergt, who built the fortress of the Teutonic Knights on the spot which became the Hevelius-Platz, where in the twentieth century the Polish Post Office was defended. (388)

The eternal recurrence of the human condition is marked on a piece of land, and on the peoples who inhabit the land. If the people forget about the history of destruction and rebuilding, they deny the physical world where recurring events are accrued--the past is dissolved and the physical world is erased in the hope that violence will not return. The events that occur in this space are not lost on Oskar, he recognizes that the German nostalgia that led to World War Two was an attempt to stop the possibility of future violence within The Third Reich. The methods are employed by "the heavenly gasman with the gas meter under his arm, that always goes ticktock" (198), counting down to a final order for Germany. It was the attempt to stop recurrence without regard for how many bodies fell by the wayside as collective German desire moved toward its goal--perfect order. German desire was a denial of the transient body, positioning the iconographic smooth body, the symbol of health and purity, in place of the dynamic body that exists in a changing and recurring history. It was the "pure" body that was the manifestation of the elect who would deny other histories and other bodies like Oskar's "deformed" Kashubian body, a body dissolved into the nostalgia of Aryan history or Nazi iconography.

In Saleem's case, the utopian vision of an Independent India, the unified homeland for a heterogeneous group of people living in a heterogenous space, is an illusion. He regards

the forced unification of India and its separation from Pakistan as being partially responsible for precipitating much of the violence that led to war with Pakistan and to India's internal state of Emergency. In the chapter "Tick, tock," Mounthatten's *ticktock* is a countdown toward the stoppage of time, the moment when India will be born anew, along with its Children of Midnight, and all of its contradictions will be blended and smoothed over. At that moment the country's new unity will solve the problems of violence with the dominating culture (as found in the chapter "Mercurochrome") and with the Muslims who will set up their "pure" land in Pakistan. However, the severances of the foreign from India are not complete. The vestiges of British rule cannot be denied in the past, present, and future of Indian history, and India continues to have "religious" conflicts even though they have declared themselves a secular unity. History can also dissolve nostalgia or myth: after recounting his personal history and the history of India, Saleem refers back to the birth of India as a myth that

would periodically need the sanctification and renewal which can only be provided by rituals of blood. India, the new myth--a collective fiction in which anything was possible, a fable rivalled only by the two other mighty fantasies; money and God. (112)

Saleem sarcastically claims that he will not tell, but ends up telling (112), of the violence that occurred at the time of his birth, rationalizing, "[a]fter all, one is not born everyday" (112). Indeed, the births of India, Saleem, and his rival Shiva are associated with confusion and disorder, rather than the putting in order of a "noble mansion of free India, where all her children may dwell" (118). British sentiments and genealogy remain in the Methwold House:

Methwold has "trained" the Indian families to adopt British daily routines and, through the blood line, Saleem is connected to William Methwold and Vanita. But Saleem is not just concerned with biology: he is convinced that the births that occurred on the night of Independence are magical: "all over the new India, the dream we all shared, children were being born who were only partially the offspring of their parents--the children of midnight were also the children *of the time*; fathered, you understand, by history" (118). They are magical because originally they are connected to the dream of denying genealogy, of starting fresh with a clean Indian slate; however, their truly magical bodies are the sites of history. History is marked by *the time* on and with their bodies, and it is their bodies, the markers of time and History, that the Indian government wants to destroy in order to maintain the illusion of Indian order.

The birth of India and Saleem moves toward the birth of another *ticktock*, the birth of Emergency and the birth of Saleem's--although Shiva is the biological father--child at midnight on June 25th, 1975. History recurs, except rather than denying violence in discourse, as the new country did when the heterogeneous India was unified into one, the *ticktock* of June 25th, 1975 brought words and insight to the birth:

suspension-of-civil rights, and censorship-of-the-press, and armoured-units-on-special-alert, and arrest-of-subversive-elements; something was ending, something was being born, and at the precise instant of the birth of the new India and the beginning of a continuous midnight which would not end for two long years, my son, the child of renewed ticktock, came into the world. (419)

Underneath the smooth recording of the Utopia of 1947 and the Emergency of 1975, is the embodiment of special people, writers like Saleem, who do not succumb to the desire of bringing time and the body to an end. As one way of being comes to an end and a new way begins, the past is not severed, because the past (the "good" and the "bad") recurs in the bodies of dying and living people: they say "yes" to transiency.

The redemption of the ill will toward time and the body requires the will to say "yes" to time and its transiency, rather than counting down to an originary beginning (a clean slate) or a terrible end (a purging through Emergency). History does not simply pass away, it is always available for re-consultation within memory and historical recurrence. Heidegger finds the key:

The "yes" to time is the will that transiency endure, that it not be disparaged as nothing worth. Yet how can passing away endure? Only in this way: as passing away it must not only continuously go, but must also always come. Only in this way: passing away and transiency must recur in their coming as the same. And such recurrence itself is perdurant only if it is eternal. According to the doctrine of metaphysics, the predicate "eternity" belongs to the Being of beings. (226)

Affirming the "yes" to time is an insight into the Being of being, and by having transience abide, the nature of the person who has this thought is transformed into the Overman, because their notion of Being accepts a subjectivity that is always in the state of permanent becoming within the eternal recurrence of the same. The eternal recurrence of the same means that physical objects within eternity of Being are not static, but are a mutable vibration

of the self in the Moment with transience abiding. It is this physical world that the Overman, as a Dionysian figure, celebrates and it is from this condition that the human being will be able to confront the recurrences of history in a process of interpretation within Moment. Even with each revolution of the sun, or as history recurs, and "you're older/ Shorter of breath and one day closer to death," events do not pass away into nothingness. They are always somehow *fully available for interpretation*. This insight causes Zarathustra to weep in the company of life, exclaiming, because of this "whispered" secret, that "life was dearer to me than all my wisdom ever was" (227). Zarathustra, Oskar, and Saleem are special people who can read the recurrences of history, and they find meaning in the differences that recur in the body, which is integral to their historical sign-system.

3. Reading the Body

In order to bring the body back into historical interpretation, Michel Foucault, in his article "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," contends that the body is a material sign system that supplants the possibility of a unified and single origin. Reading the body exposes historical origins as discursive reductions, which is analogous to the midnight origin of Saleem's India or Oskar's Danzig. The body-text is crucial to Oskar's and Saleem's searches for meaning within genealogical origins and historical sources, because the body is the site of different historical meanings and processes. In opposition to metaphysical eternity that degrades the body into non-Being, Foucault contends a historical investigation that is the search for *origins* is reductive in its search for the essence-of-things. It is a working-backward toward a

conclusive signified, which in turn supports the historical discourse utilized to discover the so-called *historical truth*. The fact comes before the historical investigation because the hegemony requires the fact to justify its position of power, and any difference will call it into crisis. Foucault argues that "the origin lies at the place of inevitable loss, the point where the truth of things corresponds to a truthful discourse, the site of fleeting articulation that discourse has obscured and finally lost" (79). He asserts that a search into the innumerable events that construct a series of values and types of knowledge deflates this oppressive discourse, which unveils the myriad elements that were suppressed in order to continue the belief in the truthfulness of the myth. By myth, I am referring to reductive history that singles out *pivotal* dates (midnight, 15 August, 1947) and *significant historical people* (like Hitler and the Gandhi family), and attributing to them a totality of signification as the origin of a new way of perceiving the world or as the originators of that change. They become the makers and the representations from which historical fact is created as *truth*. For my purposes, Foucault's etymological investigation of Nietzsche's discussion of *Herkunft*, or *descent*, in relation to "origin" (and hence, truth) is the most useful.

The study of *descent* is the analysis of the bonds of blood of a certain 'family' to establish similarities within a certain lineage; it can, however, also be the search for differences within a certain group. The search for differences within a group reveals a series of disparate events that come to establish who and what a person is--the Being of being. Saleem and Oskar re-tell the messy story of their blood origins, but in both cases the need to refer to their fathers as "presumptive" demonstrates the problem of relying solely on blood relationships, and not on other aspects of difference. For example, the male Sinai family trait of the

cucumber nose is deceiving in Saleem's genealogy. His big nose, which is ironically so important to his inheritance, is not connected by blood to the Sinai genealogy but is a trait from both the British and Indian genealogy, received from Methwold and Vanita. How many mistakes are made, and are now not perceivable, in any official history? Saleem discovers that the search into historical details uncovers a mass of information, and that the course of time focuses the past into an illusion of smooth edges by cutting out disparate and contradictory events:

Reality is a question of perspective; the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems--but as you approach the present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible. Suppose yourself in a large cinema, sitting at first in the back row, and gradually moving up, row by row, until your nose is almost pressed against the screen. Gradually the stars' faces dissolve into dancing grain; tiny details assume grotesque proportions; the illusion dissolves--or rather, it becomes clear that the illusion itself *is* reality. (165-6)

It is not only the charting of a blood line that is important to the existence of a person, although it is significant, but it is a combination of *all* the events that have happened within a certain period of time and space that affect the body that is pertinent. The dissolution of smooth historical edges into grain is the search for reality and meaning; it is also a breaking down of a historical discourse that focuses history into one perception of the world and the self by forcing it to be whole and unified (like the establishment of India and the Third Reich). All events and existences cannot be condensed into clear-cut history. The search and

recognition of the multitude of events will contribute to a re-writing of history, even if it is distorting and grotesque to see up close.

The study of history as *descent* brings the body and time back into the discursive field of historical meaning, because the body can enter discourse to uncover differences within society. This is the body that metaphysics and utopian desire try to deny, because it is changing, contradictory, and always in a state of becoming. For Foucault, the body-text is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body. (83)

Oskar and Saleem make bodies speak; however, they are in constant battle against those in power who try to silence the body: in *Midnight's Children* with the Gandhi vasectomy squad and the imprisonment and mutilation of the Midnight's Children, or in *The Tin Drum*, with the homogeneity of the Third Reich and the Catholic Church. In the Foucauldian analysis the process of dissolution is enacted upon a somewhat passive body, but events that mark the flesh do so without asking the body's permission. Bodies act upon and mark other bodies, and they can present themselves in so-called high and low risk situations, but even these bodies are marked by their amount of activity or passivity. No matter what the body does it is marked by events and marks events, voluntarily and involuntarily.

The chapter "Herbert Truczinski's Back" in the *Tin Drum* centres on the remarkable

scar-stories on the back of the Sweden Bar waiter. Oskar interprets the scars as Herbert's history, "[h]is back alone bore the marks of Finnish and Polish knives, of the snickersnees of the longshoreman from the Speicherinsel, and the sailor's knives of the cadets from the training ships" (174). Herbert's back is the site where the tension of nationalities in the free city of Danzig manifests itself, and it can be read and re-read as a fragment of "the story" of The Sweden Bar and Danzig. Oskar has only to consult the back by "touching one of the scars" (174) to find out some of the particulars of the event of which that scar has been the result, and these re-tellings are also dependent on Herbert's mood. This dissolution and disfiguring of the flesh is really a series of unfinished and changing stories. The scars are not a complete and finished unification of Herbert's self; instead they comment on his Being and the Being of all the people who have come to fight in the Sweden Bar where he is the waiter, but there is never a totalization. What this shows is that the self is literally carved, or morcellated, into thousands of decentred and fragmented parts. Also, Herbert's back is a text in the making, and even the Latvian sea captain who cannot mark his back is affected in death by his absence, or inability to mark.

This tracing of genealogical dissolution, however grotesque, is not a negative dissipation like nostalgia; rather it is a search into a few of the many events that establish a life. To be dissolved by history, in this sense, is the result of the investigation that both Saleem and Oskar make into their own unfinished and dynamic bodies. To deny that the body is dissolved by history is to ignore many facets of the body that are marked by events in time: Saleem suffers from his impotency, hair-loss, deafness, and all kinds of defects (similarly, Oskar's dwarf body that resists growth, winds up protruding out of his back).

Saleem's body is pregnant with many revelations into the history of himself and the effects he has on his family and his country; it is dissolved by the many stories that relate to his body, and like the stories on Herbert's back, his stories are dispersed into many other stories. Saleem discovers that the self, by its movement through history, is "anything but a whole, anything but homogeneous, all kinds of everywhichthing are jumbled up inside him, and he is one person one minute and another the next" (236-7). However, he identifies the desire for a simplicity that perceives the body as whole when his parents discover that they are not his parents by blood. After a blood test and the loss of his finger, Saleem laments the problems that are derived from a heterogenous body:

uncork the body, and God knows what you will permit to come tumbling out. Suddenly you are forever other than you were; and the world becomes such that parents cease to be parents, and love can turn to hate. And these, mark you, are only the effects on private life. The consequences for the sphere of public action, as will be shown, are--were--will be no less profound. (237)

Saleem yearns for a way to preserve the wholeness of the body as a way of keeping order, perhaps in chutneys. But this wholeness is an illusion and chutney does funny things to history, unlike the focused screen at the cinema or an historical text that presents the *truth* as whole and complete. After the body is carved away at, exposing the finished body as actually forever growing, changing into new forms, and dying, a new dissolving body takes its shape in the historical movement through time--real Being in time. Saleem's dissolution into many stories at the end of the novel is a positive understanding of the investigation of

descent as it is manifested in the human body. As the wholeness and finishedness of the flesh is carved, a new historical text is made.

Oskar reads an alternative history from the marks on Herbert's back, and on all the flesh around him. Saleem also becomes his own historical text, as his dissolved body at the end of the novel reveals the unfinishedness of interpretations of history, as well as dispelling the notion of the homogeneousness of the body. Saleem sees his historical body in the mirror:

nine-fingered, horn-templed, monk's-tonsured, stain-faced, bow-legged, cucumber-nosed, castrated, and now prematurely aged, I saw in the mirror of humility a human being to whom history could do no more, a grotesque creature who had been released from the pre-ordained destiny which had battered him until he was half-senseless; with one good ear and one bad ear I heard the soft footfalls of the Black Angel of death.

(447)

By the end of his narration (after how many events?), Saleem is able to perceive himself outside of the destiny of historical discourse as it is set out by the "makers" of the country, as he looks at his body to see how history has marked him in all these different ways. It is not so much that he is dissolving and that his body has been mutilated by history, as that he has come to read the signs of his body rather than rely on the prophecy of his birth and the symbolic connection to the hegemonic version of history. The search for heterogeneity is also important in his metaphoric presence as India. His face is compared to the British map of India, a homogenized space in discourse, not the real connection of a group of people to a

given space; but, his body is part of a historical reading of the multitude of India's events, and must be considered in the analysis, rather than being reduced to a sign to support the hegemonic version of history. India, like Germany and every place else, has many stories to tell, and when one thinks there is an end or a wholeness, Saleem's anxiety about recording all the events of a history will be suspended, along with the knowledge of multiple events. As he laments his exhausted body, which he thinks can no longer be marked, he also celebrates the untold story of the "champion defecator" who arrives and "proceeds to extrude the longest turd I have ever seen" (457). Saleem recognizes that there is always an excess to history. He is not able to include the complete story of the "champion defecator" in his autobiography—he will never be able to finish his story .

This particular Foucauldian interpretation of Nietzsche excludes the Overman and Zarathustra, but Foucault reestablishes that it is critical for the reading and interpreting of history to recover the body for confronting the possibilities of difference. My project is to add to Foucault's reading of history Nietzsche's thought of the eternal return of the same, and to bring life to the Foucauldian "marked" body by bringing the dancing and singing body back into discourse. A history that includes a reading of the body and eternal recurrence must be performed—it must feel the marks.

4. Performing the Body

We understand the vision and enigma of eternal recurrence through the feelings that are brought about by Zarathustra's thought and how they affect his body. In Part III of *Thus*

Spoke Zarathustra, Zarathustra's disposition vacillates between anger and joy, anxiety and laughter, physical strength and nausea, before he can sing his song of vitality and affirmation: "Oh, how should I not lust after eternity and after the nuptial ring of rings, the ring of recurrence?" (228). The body of the Overman and thought of eternal recurrence is correlated in an always-nascent subject who experiences a permanently inchoate world, a dynamic condition that undoes the longing for severing corrupt corporeal desires from a conceptual truth. In order to transcend the resentment of time, a subject must affirm its Being as a state of becoming in a world that is also becoming, a condition in which one can read the body-text. This is expressed through the intense feelings of a body that physically celebrates becoming as *a part* of a fragmented and unending subject that is *in process*. Such a body destroys the fixed notion of the truth of Being that is induced by the spirit of gravity's pessimistic craving for completion in nothingness, the hope for an absolute meaning that will ensue a transforming corporality's passing away, as envisioned in the finishedness of apocalyptic and utopian thought.

Heidegger concludes that Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence brings metaphysical thinking, which purports to determine what is and what is not in being, to an end. The Overman's physical experience of the Moment "points in an exceptional way to things unthought, cogently and confusedly at once" (230). The essence of metaphysics claims to have an origin that precedes any type of action in the physical world, so anything that comes into being within the world is related back to and *defined* by that pre-existing thought. Any *new* possibilities that can arise out of the Overman's physical condition as a way of re-thinking Being are rejected:

what is decisive for the *essence* of metaphysics is by no means the fact that the designated distinction is formulated as the opposition of the suprasensuous to the sensuous realm, but the fact that this distinction--in the sense of a yawning gulf between the realms--remains primary and all-sustaining. The distinction persists even when the Platonic hierarchy of suprasensuous and the sensuous is inverted and the sensuous realm is experienced more essentially and more thoroughly--in the direction Nietzsche indicates with the name *Dionysos*. (230)

Being, as Being, precedes being in metaphysical thought; however, if a being is able to stand in the Moment and eternally vibrate as a physical and mutable subjectivity in a state of becoming, willing the eternal recurrence of the same, Being will also be in a state of becoming, undergoing re-signification with each becoming and return. Being's becoming resides in the subjectivity of the body as it negotiates meaning in the intense physical feelings that are a result of performance. Meaning in a becoming world must always be re-negotiated because the Dionysian will that dances, willing the eternal recurrence of the same, although abiding, is transient and mutable. Being is produced in an eternal vibration of re-signification in the Moment, where the body of a being is concurrently transformed and interpreted by that being, in ways that have not previously been thought, in a way of thinking that is not intelligible within the discourse of Being as it has been burdened by its essential aversion to time. Heidegger's description of this thought as being "cogent" and "confused" is pertinent because in order to transcend metaphysical Being, the transcendental notion of Being must be destroyed or shown not to fulfil certain preconceived meanings that are the result of a

changing world. There is also a need to re-order continually the new notion of Being in a way that is at least partially cogent and intelligible in order to have meaning within a process of novel meanings.

Zarathustra communicates the tremendous anxiety and longing he felt when he first envisioned the thought of the eternal recurrence of the same and the Moment in "On the Vision and the Riddle" (*TSZ* III, 2). He tells his "story" to sailors and adventurers who are wanderers like himself only after they have been at sea for two days. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is a dramatic text, and Zarathustra tells how the vision and the riddle caused, and continues to cause in its recounting, the transformation of his feelings:⁴

O my brothers, I heard a laughter that was no human laughter; and now
a thirst gnaws at me, a longing that never grows still. My longing for
this laughter gnaws at me; oh, how do I bear to go on living! And how
could I bear to die now!" (160)

The dramatic re-telling of events and feelings attempts to affect sensations in his body and in the bodies of his audience. This kind of "narrative" performance demands bodily interpretations that are combined with the written word or with the signs on the body-text. Meaning is found in the effects that events have on bodies in the fiction, as well as in the persons who experience the events and the thoughts of the text as they pass through their own bodies. Zarathustra deciphers the physical experience of thinking to produce meaning, and Nietzsche utilizes the metaphors of flight and sinking or heavy and light, in part, to describe the material aspect of feelings as they relate to sensations of the body.

Zarathustra ventures out on the changing and hazardous sea. He confronts the risk of

death with his audience and listens to "the strange and dangerous" (155) things that can be heard in the isolated space of the sea. On the second day "the ice of his heart broke" (155), enabling him to speak. In order to tell his tale, Zarathustra must melt the implacable ice of his heart. Ice forms in the body of the person who locates being within a solid notion of Being which promises a finished eternity isolated from the frozen and solidified body. Traditionally, the heart is the locality of the soul, and a melting soul is transformed from the bodiless transcendental essence of Being toward the dynamic soul of the Overman through a physical experience that is similar to his being at sea, on a moving foundation. Zarathustra speaks to the sailors about a physical weight that tried to weigh him down, the weight that tried to prevent him from seeing the "the vision of the loneliest" (156). Nietzsche uses weight to describe the effect of the dwarf's (the spirit of gravity) cynicism that attempts to subjugate the body by overburdening it with metaphysical desire, degrading the body into a useless site for producing meaning. In "On the Spirit of Gravity," Zarathustra describes the spirit of gravity as the discourse of absolute "good" and "evil," and these metaphysical values can weigh beings down and estrange the body from Being:

"Yes , life is a grave burden." But only man is a grave burden for himself! That is because he carries on his shoulders too much that is alien to him. Like a camel, he kneels down and lets himself be well loaded. Especially the strong, reverent spirit that would bear much: he loads too many *alien* grave words and values on himself, and then life seems a desert to him. (193)

It is precisely these grave words and values that prescribe *the* way for humankind. Zarathus-

tra, however, is the advocate of travelling many ways, and in order to achieve this one must learn "to stand and walk and run and jump and climb and dance" (195). Through sailing imagery, he states, "with swift legs I climbed high masts; and to sit on high masts of knowledge seemed to me no small happiness" (195). This means that there are many masts of knowledge that must be ascended, not simply through discourse, but through some kind of physical confrontation, which is literally connected to dancing and jumping in the world. The opposition to this is the weighing down of the body, forcing its deportment through *"the way"* of the already existing discourses of "good" and "evil," transcendental signifiers that fix and bring possible future meanings to an end within *their* descriptive systems. Zarathustra, however, ejaculates that there are many ways and not just one: "this is *my* way; where is yours?"--thus I answered those who asked me 'the way.' For *the way*--that does not exist" (195).

The dwarf's cynical reason is opposed to the possibilities of different ways that Zarathustra discovers by physically confronting the thought of the eternal recurrence of the same, the moment that also compels him to seize the magnitude (and lightness) of his body. The dwarf opposes Zarathustra's way with the thought of a singular way, a way that will make him despise and mistrust his body in the hope that he can confine Zarathustra in the abyss and impede his ascension of the mountain path: "[u]pward--defying the spirit that drew it downward toward the abyss, the spirit of gravity, my devil and archenemy. Upward--although he sat on me, half dwarf, half mole, lame, making lame, dripping lead into my ear, leaden thoughts in my brain" (156). Zarathustra resists these thoughts by describing how the dwarf's body has been decimated by his thoughts of a fixed way--a way that bypasses

meaning that resides in the body. Nevertheless, Zarathustra does feel the negative effect of the dwarf's words, and the meaning of his "leadensome thought" is manifested by turning the body into a burden. Nietzsche shows the effects of the metaphysical aversion to time by showing how this consciously bitter discourse atrophies the body in thought. The body is degraded in the discourse that establishes the Being of beings, and Nietzsche shows what the body is turned into when it is silenced and its celebration of becoming is prohibited. This is not a diatribe against dwarves or people with physical "imperfections" such as we find in Oskar and Saleem; in fact, all bodies are in the state of becoming that need to be interpreted in ways other than as anxieties that repudiate and destroy the body. The dwarf proclaims that the body is the site of failure, "you threw yourself up high, but every stone that is thrown must fall" (156), degrading the body into nothingness, making it "lame" as a site for existence by prohibiting the ascent toward a becoming existence.

Zarathustra's physical feeling that corresponds with the thought of the eternal recurrence of the same makes the dwarf disappear because he is merely an incorporeal thought, an incomplete interpretation of Being. The dwarf understands that "time itself is a circle" (158), but he does not have any sensation of the insight because, for him, the meaning of this statement is static. It is common to hear the casually stated fatalism, "what goes around comes around," without any insight into its liberating possibilities. It is an uncomplicated way of resolving the nihilistic belief in the improbability of influencing the events of the world. Zarathustra explains eternal recurrence to the dwarf and, bearing in mind that this is the part of himself that is weighed down by the cynical discourse of the spirit of gravity, the words alone do not impress upon the dwarf the meaning of the thought. However, when

Zarathustra re-experiences the dog's howl from his childhood memory, the sound penetrates his physical being, preparing his body for the vision that is also a riddle that demands a distinctive interpretation. It cannot be explained by just describing it as a circular recurrence of events that will happen again somewhere in the future, because events are happening *now*. That part of himself that has recourse only to words as intangible signs, the simple "saying" of the circle, is evaporated in the presence of the repetition of the moon of midnight, the howl of a dog, and pity, because to see into the significance of this proposition terrifies a physical soul *now*, showing the inadequacy of relying on the stagnant words of the dwarf alone.

The repetition of the dog's howl brings Zarathustra the vision that causes intense feelings to surface; in fact, he tells the sailors, "thus it cried out of me--my dread, my hatred, my nausea, my pity, all that is good and wicked in me cried out of me with a single cry" (159). Zarathustra describes the enigmatic revelation that causes such a purging of feeling as a picture, an easily perceptible illustration. Like the description of Moment it is simple to say or see, but it is difficult to comprehend the fullness of its meaning:

what I saw--I had never seen the like. A young shepherd I saw, writhing, gagging, in spasms, his face distorted, and a heavy black snake hung out of his mouth. Had I ever seen so much nausea and pale dread on one face? He seemed to have been asleep when the snake crawled into his throat, and there it bit itself fast. My hand tore at the snake and tore in vain; it did not tear the snake out of his throat. Then it cried out of me--"Bite! Bite its head off! Bite! (159)

Zarathustra expresses his feelings in a powerful way, but not as powerfully as the shepherd who is that intense and dynamic part of himself that he is trying to encounter. The shepherd manages to bite the head off the snake and is transformed; he is "no longer shepherd, no longer human--one changed, radiant, *laughing!*" (160). This is Zarathustra's longing, and the desire to laugh in this new way "gnaws" at his being. A significant part of this desire is for a physical change in his being, the desire to feel; he has been sensually affected and the scream has come about because he has dared to confront and interpret a meaning from this vision, even though it causes him to become nauseous by bringing him face to face with his darkest thoughts. Zarathustra does not, however, interpret the vision for the sailors, because they must interpret the riddle for themselves and because his own transcendence is not complete, meaning the riddle is still, in part, a mystery. To state what the riddle means at this point is simply to repeat words of circularity that the dwarf utilizes in order to circumvent myriad fluctuating meanings that reside in bodily feelings. In order to interpret this vision one must be an explorer who does not fear dark places that cause the body to shudder and laugh. It is only later in "The Convalescent" (*TSZ* III, 13) that Zarathustra interprets the riddle, when the drama of the text is brought to a height in his return home and the significance of the riddle can be expressed more fully.

After having gone out into the world to teach the death of God to his apostles, Zarathustra returns home to his cave to convalesce and during this time of solitude he is transformed into an intense being like the shepherd of the vision. In a moment of fervour and "in a terrible voice" (215), he describes who he is before he confronts his thoughts: "I, Zarathustra, the advocate of life, the advocate of suffering, the advocate of the circle; I

summon you, my most abysmal thought!" (216). Again, he experiences his thought in a physical way, and his rapture causes his animals to flee with alarm and he is left physically and emotionally drained: "no sooner had Zarathustra spoken these words than he fell down as one dead and long remained as one dead" (216). The most abysmal thought is the concept of eternal recurrence, already described to the dwarf earlier in Part III, but it did not have the same severity and power as in the cave. The difference in intensity shows the radical performative stance that the Overman must take if he or she wants insight into the deepest implications of eternal recurrence. The calamity that Zarathustra sees and feels in the cave is the eternal recurrence of the same depicted in the snake that chokes the shepherd (and himself): "the great disgust with man--*this* choked me and had crawled into my throat; and what the soothsayer said: 'All is the same, nothing is worth while, knowledge chokes'" (219). Heidegger predicates Zarathustra's going out into the world to teach his thought with the tragedy of the Being of beings in relation to the thought of a recurring body. The implications of the thought of eternal recurrence is that the great human has yet to exist, throwing Zarathustra into deep despair:

the greatest man and the smallest man: all-too-similar to each other, even
the greatest all-too-human. All-too-small, the greatest!--that was my
disgust with man. And the eternal recurrence of even the smallest--that
was my disgust with all existence. Alas! Nausea! Nausea! Nausea!"
(219)

Zarathustra is repelled by mankind. The snake of knowledge that can choke with the spirit of revenge comes to him as vision and a riddle, and it is a great help and a great danger to him

because it causes his body to become sick. It speaks to his body, showing the intensity and importance of a thought that can defeat him or help him understand his being. It is precisely through the vulnerable medium of language, in conversation with his animals, that his thought comes to be understood and given the capability of further expression in his body through singing and dancing.

His animals tell him to go out into the world and teach his thought because this is the destiny of the one who understands the eternal recurrence of the same--it is part of his nature. But they also warn him, "how could this destiny not be your greatest danger and destiny too?" (220). The greatest danger is to become a spectator of the events that simply pass by in the world, to be like the small man who recurs, but does not experience the Moment or realize (or care) that he is small. The experience lies in the acceptance that Moment is where the past and the future are in collision, rather than transience. This lies, according to Heidegger, in the ability to perform in Moment, and experience it as an eternity, an eternal now that experiences time in its fullest sense, and this "occurs only to one who does not remain a spectator but who *is himself* the Moment, performing actions directed toward the future and at the same time accepting and affirming the past, by no means letting it drop" (56). The animals come to conclude that this is precisely what Zarathustra's downgoing is when they enter the script of the moment with their own nature of being-in-circularity, that "all these years are alike in what is greatest and what is smallest" (220). They understand that Zarathustra has become who he is in his becoming, and that is the teacher of eternal recurrence of the same and the Overman.

Oskar and Saleem are in similar positions when they write their personal histories.

They each embed themselves in the history of the world (city, country, etc.) that surrounds them, and, as their narratives expand, they retell the retelling of specific events from their pasts. They are not so much concerned with the finished texts of their autobiographies as they are with the conditions of the processes that they are embroiled in during the production of their texts. An event is written as an attempt to confront the whole of the present, but the events of the past, including the events of writing, are also re-experienced through self-conscious performances that reiterate the *rhythms* of the past that are blended with the utterances of the past. By performing the historical word, as Zarathustra performs his thought, these rhythms are continuously unveiling a new subject and a new text because they cannot be contained and are always forcing a new meaning on the word. The recollection of an event consists of two components: 1) the many different succeeding and preceding utterances that pertain to the event, and 2) the re-experience of the bodily rhythms induced by the event. This mixture creates a new text and new rhythms. The recognition of bodily rhythms as part of the signifying process, expressed through Oskar's drumming or Saleem's chutney-cooking, exposes an active bodily force engaged in an intense interpretive mode. Similarly, Zarathustra learns to sing his words to give them a fuller significance that is more pliant and diverse than a mechanical repetition of the organized words of a story. Oskar and Saleem are genealogists who interpret the effects of history on their bodies (marks and feelings) by repeating their pasts (and futures) in the vibration of the experienced Moment, while stepping into the gateway of each ensuing Moment and repeating themselves--an eternal return, a dynamic shrinkage, but not a denial, of the past and future into the present. As the narrative passes through the narrators' different performances and utterances of the past, it also records

the recursive elements of their lives (and history) as they are manifested in the ambiguous genealogies of their distinctive and changing bodies.

Oskar and Saleem want to give meaning to their lives by revealing their stories to the prospect of an Other (the reader), and they recognize language (the written autobiography) as the medium to elaborate significance, the medium in which they can be recognized. However, the spoken or written *words* of an utterance and their relation to an *object* (event) in the world are not enough to make an utterance (their story) signify--as such, words are like the dwarf's hollow repetition of someone else's speech. Still, it is peculiar that these two autobiographers prefer to write from a space where the Other is always alien and an infringement on their privacy. Like Zarathustra in his cave, they are reclusive, Oskar in a white bed and Saleem in a nickle factory. The Other is ostensibly destructive to their being, but they still offer their thoughts to the world: Zarathustra becomes a teacher and Oskar and Saleem give their stories to any reader of their autobiographies. At the time of confronting their thoughts it seems that they have given up on the rhythms of experiential life outside of the refuge of writing and memory (drumming and cooking), the Dasein of everyday life, and they are only thirty-three years old!

Oskar writes from his sanctuary in an insane asylum where he is under the care and the panoptic gaze of his keeper, Bruno Münsterberg (who turns Oskar's stories into plastered string spooks--another manifestation of rhythm, another kind of interpretation). He proclaims the importance of his drums to his writing:

[i]f I didn't have my drum, which, when handled adroitly and patiently,
remembers all the incidentals that I need to get the essential down on

paper, and if I didn't have the permission of the management to drum on it three or four hours a day, I'd be a poor bastard with nothing to say for my grandparents. (21)

Oskar "persists in excreting syllables" (12) because he feels somehow compelled to record his memories on virgin paper, but always in concert with the tin drum that gives the words of his story full significance. For Saleem, it is chutney, instead of music, that flavours his story. Saleem is aware of time, he recognizes that he has "begun to crack all over like an old jug" (37), but with the support of his care-giver/critic, Padma, he marries language and cooking:

[r]ising from my pages comes the unmistakable whiff of chutney. So let me obfuscate no further: I, Saleem Sinai, possessor of the most delicately-gifted olfactory organ in history, have dedicated my latter days to the large-scale preparation of condiments. . . . And my chutneys and kasaundies are, after all, connected to my nocturnal scribblings--by day amongst the pickle-vats, by night within these sheets, I spend my time at the great work of preserving. Memory, as well as fruit, is being saved from the corruption of the clocks. (37-38)

Oskar and Saleem's performances of drumming and cooking respectively demand a radical interpretation, because the oscillation of signification between performance and writing can never be finished, nor is signification ever reliable as a metaphysical and transcendental truth; instead, it is a continuous and profound confrontation of a recurring history. The writing of history becomes an aesthetic project that is a "production" rather than a final "representation" *of the way it was*. Performance and writing are the repetitive processes of documenting

experienced meanings that are continually put into crisis because they are always becoming, which is a direct confrontation of the fluctuation of history that never *stops* as a synthesis, but keeps motivating new meanings. These methods of recording a history-in-process must also permit these narrators to cope with the presence ("stability") of their memory long enough (performance and writing) to bring some kind of momentary form and significance to their texts. The past brings meaning to each performative moment and these moments are accrued in a repetitive collection of written memories--an always-unfinished autobiography/interpretation--a collection of significant Moments that have, and will always have, recourse to the process of their coming into being. This is why at the end of these novels the characters resolve their convalescence by deciding to go back out into the world, even though they know of the danger of eternal recurrence and that their subjectivity will always be confronted by a crisis and dissolved. In the same way, Zarathustra and the animals become aware of the profound significance of the thought of eternal recurrence.

Zarathustra severs the cynicism of the dwarf from his subjectivity by saying yes to all that repels him in the abyss of his thought, knowing that "man needs what is most evil in him for what is best in him--that whatever is most evil is his best power and the hardest stone for the highest creator; and that man must become better and more evil" (218-19). He is not destroyed by the calamity of the scream. Rather, it enables him to construct *his* Being of being in an authentic and more complete way. The animals also show a progression of understanding when they encourage Zarathustra to turn their "ditty" and conversation into a song that is connected with nature. They tell him to reconsider his thought through song in order to enact the words of the script of the eternal recurrence of the same in a healthy and

interpretive life:

"Do not speak on, O convalescent!" thus his animals answered him; "but go out where the world awaits you like a garden. Go out to the roses and bees and dovecotes. But especially to the songbirds, that you may learn from them how to sing! For singing is for the convalescent; the healthy can speak. (220)

Zarathustra knows who he is when he returns home: he is "the advocate of life, the advocate of suffering, the advocate of the circle" (216). Heidegger points out that all of these phenomena are unified in the circularity of Being, and the great cry is a result of their eternal connection: "they belong together and form one: being as a whole, to which suffering, the abyss, belongs and which *is* inasmuch as, circling, it recurs" (50). The affirmation of the eternal recurrence of the same, experienced through song in the Moment, is intense. The sensation of the Moment requires one to think in both the direction of the height and the direction of the abyss, one cannot deny the repulsive; instead, one must learn to sing in the abyss to overcome being destroyed by cynicism, and the same can be said for the kind of optimism that denies the world and predicates Being on the loss of the corrupt body. This is what Zarathustra, Oskar, and Saleem, must teach to the world: that we eternally recur and that we must perform with our bodies in the Moment, affirming the beautiful and the disgusting, and not *wish* away either aspect of Moment. To say, "yes!", is to dance and to scream.

II

Vibrating Subject: Making Symbols Dance

*He rubbed his belly.
I keep them here
[he said]
Here, put your hand on it
See, it is moving.
There is life here
for the people.*

*And in the belly of this story
the rituals and the ceremony
are still growing.*

What She Said:

*The only cure
I know
is a good ceremony,
that's what she said.*

Leslie Marmon Silko

*I can not invent it,
I said it was agate,*

*I said, it lived, it gave-
fragrance - was near enough*

*to explain that quality
for which there is no name;*

*I do not want to name it,
I want to watch its faint*

*heart-beat, pulse-beat
as it quivers, I do not want*

*to talk about it,
I want to minimize thought,*

*concentrate on it
till I shrink,*

*dematerialize
and am drawn into it.*

H.D.

1. Positioning Desire and the Subject

To confront the totality of history, its full recurrence that includes the highest and the lowest of the human, and to oppose the apocalyptic and utopian desire to complete and stabilize history, it is essential to develop a theory of the subject and of language that shows the transcendental subject and signifier as a metaphysical delusion--as an aversion to time that is disgusted by the unfinished body and its ambiguous will. The acknowledgement of bodily rhythms in signification has been elaborated in Julia Kristeva's post-structuralist linguistic and psychoanalytic theories, and they are explicated in Kelly Oliver's new book *Reading Kristeva*. In her introduction, Oliver maintains that her book can be read as several different theoretical stories that interpret her interpretation of Kristeva's texts. Of particular concern here is the explanation of Kristeva's premise that the body's drives play an important role in the formulation of the subject and its desire to produce meaning in relation to an Other. Oliver maintains that her "book can be read as the story of that reformulated subject, Kristeva's subject-in-process/on trial" (13). Zarathustra, Saleem, and Oskar are people who want to signify, and as subjects-in-process/on trial, they perform the rhythms of their bodies in order to give full meaning to their words, counting on the music from what Kristeva refers to as the semiotic *chora*--the maternal and material space without boundary where the story of the reformulating subject and the Other is.

Kristeva's subject-in-process/on trial accentuates the body in signification and enlivens Jacques Lacan's theory of the subject that maintains resentment toward the body, surrendering it to the discourse of desire. The gateway is also a useful image to illustrate the

development of the subject and the possibilities of signification. For Lacan, a gateway, a "Bar of Repression," is constructed and closed forever during the mirror stage of development. The subject is separated from its unified connection with the mother's body and is positioned to *read* objects within the symbolic order's metonymy of desire, replacing connections to a body in the "real" world with the signs of language. This separation is instigated by the child's recognition of an Other through his/her reflection in a mirror, and Lacan's interpretation of Freud's Family Romance completes the severance with the threat of castration, of being cut off from gratification (the Phallus) that submits the child to the Law of the Father as a replacement for the desire of the mother. The Lacanian subject wants to pass back through the gateway and return to its "impossible" unity with the mother, the space where the drives speak in the "wholeness"; however, it is an impossible return because the wholeness did not exist and the gateway to the drives has been closed off and repressed in the speaking subject forever.

Kaja Silverman, in *The Subject of Semiotics*,³ states that "one could say of the Lacanian subject that it is almost entirely defined by lack" (151). This lack arises out of sexual differentiation and the conviction of having *lost* half of the self; "[t]he subject is defined as lacking because it is believed to be a fragment of something larger and more primordial" (153). For Lacan, the drives are the flow of the libido that have been turned into symbolic representations almost from the time of birth. The child's body is organized and differentiated, and specific parts of the body are designated for libidinal flow, and the "mother is the usual agent of this inscription, defining the erotic zones through the care she lavishes upon them" (155). This is a social organization that is different from the needs of a

body that is not territorialized because these needs are connected to parts of the body, orifices, that are sanctioned by culture. The Lacanian subject, says Silverman, is cut off from its "original" libidinal flows by the mother's social organization of the body and its drives, and as

a result of this attachment, the drives provide only an indirect expression of the libidinal flow. Thus very early in its history the subject loses unmediated contact with its own libidinal flows, and succumbs to the domination of its culture's genital economy. (156)

The pre-Oedipal organization of the drives assembles the form of the imaginary order that precedes the linguistic symbolic order. These "two registers complement each other, the symbolic establishing the differences which are such an essential part of cultural existence, and the imaginary making it possible to discover correspondences and homologies" (157). The imaginary is an inclusive presence where the child imagines him/herself to be connected to everything in the world, while the symbolic order's features are separation, difference, and lack.

In the imaginary order the child's experience is fragmented, but there is no Other to separate these different experiences of a presumed unification from the self. Only after having seen its image in a mirror does the child realize that he/she is a separate entity, and this new-found knowledge also lets the child know that that image in the mirror is a representation of him/her: "Lacan tells us that somewhere between the ages of six months and eighteen months the subject arrives at an apprehension of both itself and the other--indeed, of itself *as other*" (157). The image in the mirror is the first recognition and representation of

"I," an ideal image of itself--a coherent body that is separated from other objects in the world. The perceived image is a mis-recognition of the self that cannot be merged with: in order to become a unified "I" the child "must become two (itself plus its reflection) in order to become one (a unified self); hence, Lacan's 'split subject'" (Oliver 20). The child eventually substitutes his image in the mirror with the mother, causing alienation and rupture to their imaginary unity. The acknowledgment of an Other marks the transition from the imaginary order to the symbolic order.

There is a battle for recognition through the imaginary, the desire to become the desire of the Other, that Lacan derived, through Kojève, from Hegel's master/slave dialectic (Oliver 38). The battle for recognition results in a rivalry between the child and the image in the mirror, and the image in the mirror as Other is eventually connected to the mother. A rivalry with the Other ensues because the child perceives the satisfaction of desire only within the unity of the imaginary: the child has the choice "either to extinguish its desire or annihilate the object who controls the satisfaction of its desires" (Oliver 38). The Other is evidence of the child's alienation from its mother and the world, and the recognition of detachment also marks the impossibility of returning to the "unity of contradictions" in the imaginary order--the mother/child dyad is split forever. In order to resolve this rivalry with the Other without annihilating the Other or desire, the child must pass into the symbolic order: "like Hegel's master/slave relationship, the mirror stage is a fight to the death where desire cannot be satisfied except by moving on to another way of conceiving the relationship" (Oliver 38). For Lacan, this separation is completed by the castration complex within the Oedipal situation, forcing the child into the world of repression and the symbolic--language

and signification.

Silverman describes Lacan's rendering of the signifier and the signified in signification as separate functions: the signifier is synchronic (paradigmatic), the material differentiation between other signifiers (*langue*), and the signified is the diachronic (syntagmatic) utterance (*parole*) of discourse that historically positions the signifier. The paradigmatic placement of the signifier establishes signification where "meaning emerges as a result of the play of differences within a closed system" (163). For Lacan, meaning arises out of the diachronic unfolding of a signifying chain, and "[s]ince it does not pre-exist the syntagmatic alignment of signifiers, the signified *is* that syntagmatic alignment" (163). Signification, here, is not an isolated event within an individual's use of signifiers, but it is acted out within an already-established discourse. In the mirror stage the child sees a representation of the self, a something that stands in for the self--a signifier that is separate from the phenomenon of the self. In order to signify, the signifier must "abandon all relation to the real, and take up residence within a closed field of meaning, not that it partake in a given field of materiality" (164). Discourse within the symbolic order is the place where all meaning is generated. The physical world of the body plays no part in signification; instead, "[w]ith the subject's entry into the symbolic order it is reduced to the status of signifier in the field of the Other" (166).

Silverman describes the differences between Freud and Lacan's versions of the *Fort/da* game to illustrate their differences of privileging language or the drives:

Like Freud, Lacan reads the "*fort*"/"*da*" episode as an allegory about the linguistic mastery of the drives. However, whereas Freud connects that mastery with the binding activity which helps bring the *preconscious* into

existence, Lacan associates it with a signifying transaction by means of which the *unconscious* is established. This signifying transaction involves the terms "*fort*" and "*da*," and the play of differences between them which has the effect of eliminating any outside reference. (169)

The "*fort*"/"*da*" game is the initiation of the child into language, but before this process is complete as the first signifying chain, the child repeats the word "*fort*," which Lacan refers to as the "unary" signifier that does not have syntagmatic or paradigmatic attachments. There "is neither a linguistic system nor a discourse to support it" (170); however, when the child utters the "binary" signifier "*da*," it refers paradigmatically and syntagmatically back to the unary signifier. For Lacan this is "the creation of meaning; the exclusion of the drives; the formulation of the unconscious; the emergence of the subject into the symbolic order, otherwise known as the field of the Other: and the inauguration of desire" (171). The binary signifier refers back to the unary signifier rather than the drives so they are eventually closed off through "fading" of being or *aphanisis*, which "represents the most extreme and permanent of the alienations by means of which the Lacanian subject is constituted" (171). The development of the unconscious and the disconnection from the "real" cuts the human off from being and establishes meaning in pre-determined Being--that is, the discourse of desire. With the development of a distinct and separate self, the child has to relate to disconnected objects that it previously identified as part of itself. The child realizes that its previous unity of fragmented parts was imaginary. The manifestation of desire is to be cut from the whole, it is "the product of the divisions by means of which the subject is constituted, divisions which inspire a profound sense of lack" (176). The father cuts the child off from the

possible return to the dyadic unity with the mother in the Oedipal crisis, prohibiting access to the maternal body. Freud equates the phallus with the penis, but Silverman points out that it "is a word used by Lacan to designate all of those values which are opposed to lack, and he is at pains to emphasize its discursive status rather than its anatomical status" (182-3). The drives can still establish desire; however, the only means for representation lies in the symbolic order, and because it is impossible to return to the illusory "real" unity with the mother, desire can never be fulfilled.

By entering the symbolic order through threat of castration (absence of gratification) and the Oedipal situation, and settling for having the phallus (signifier/gratification) instead of being the phallus, the child accepts and utilizes the phallus as the representation of the Law of the Father through the Name of the Father. This also signifies separation and loss to the child. Oliver describes this primary repression that formulates the unconscious and lack as a situation determined solely by the child's relationship with the Phallus:

all desire is desire for the Phallus. It is the desire for the satisfaction of desire, gratification. The child learns that the phallus is imaginary, that its desire to be its mother's desire cannot be satisfied. So it substitutes the Law of the Father for the desire of the mother. It substitutes a symbolic Phallus for the imaginary Phallus. (21)

The Law of the Father and the Name of the Father become the patriarchal separations that connect the child to the symbolic order and keep the child away from the imaginary relationship with the mother, which is part of an imaginary connection with his/her own body. In Lacanian subjectivity, the subject's identity is determined by a relationship with the language

of the Other within discourse as the child learns to desire in relation to the phallus as signifier in order to find gratification. Silverman asserts that "[t]he subject not only learns to desire within the symbolic order, it learns *what* to desire" (177-8). She comments further on the subject's subjugation to desire and the monolith of language:

desire results from the cultural co-optation of the subject's libidinal resources--that the subject supplies the raw materials, but is barred access to the site of production. In short, Lacan indicates that the subject's desires are manufactured for it. The factory--the site of production--is the symbolic. (178)

This grim version of complete subjugation of the body to the Word is the very disconnection that Kristeva tries to re-connect by re-integrating the drives into the symbolic order's meaning production, providing the possibility for subverting language by making it signify in a new way, which also means that the subject is put in a new position to generate meaning.

Lacan's subject is defined by the symbols of language that operate under the Law of the Father. Symbols occupy the gap between the imaginary order (gratification from a unified relationship with the mother) and the I/Other that comes into being when the child realizes he/she is separate from the mother. This relationship is defined by lack because the gap can never be filled, nor can it be traversed because it is impossible to return to an illusory primordial wholeness. With the erection of the ego and the unconscious, Kristeva sees the Lacanian subject as forever cut off from the possibility of accessing bodily "meaning productions" from the heterogeneous material of the drives; instead, the discourse of desire takes over as the origin of all significance: "[t]he living body is sacrificed to desire, which is

cut off from the body. The body becomes only a sign" (33). Oliver cites this loss as one of Kristeva's focal criticisms of Lacan, because "when language is not mixed with the drives, this subjugation to the Law of the Signifier turns the living person into a sign and signifying activity stops" (33). In order to bring the body back into meaning production, the semiotic body that incorporates the heterogeneous drives makes its way into language and significance.

The genealogical body is the site of possible interpretations of the reading and writing of history. Foucault establishes the body as a text imprinted by the past, but the body is also the site where discourse is connected to the drives and made meaningful in the present. Oskar and Saleem come to realize that there are meaningful cadences, separate from the symbolic order's hegemonic discourse, that reside in the maternal rhythms found in the relationship between the mother and the child that exist before, and continue after, birth. These maternal rhythms continually connect themselves to signs in the symbolic order, and Oskar and Saleem spend their autobiographies performing these rhythms to add resilience to their language and writing and, in doing so, they write a history that is alive. Their histories are not transcendental, they have meaning in time and at the moment of performance and interpretation. They are two male writers who are cautious of meanings that reside only in an *abstract* bodiless notion of discourse, the discourse of a rigid symbolic order that is propagated, traditionally, by a paternal discourse. Oskar and Saleem drum and cook their experiences in the same way that Zarathustra sings the experience of his thoughts and, in doing so, they convey their bodily feelings through a discourse that does not simply rely on lack. The dwarf from Zarathustra, who represents that part of the self that degrades words by detaching experience from meaning, is imposed from outside the self. In these texts, the

dwarf is the discourse of Lacanian desire that establishes meaning in language solely as a *conceptual* lack.

Kristeva maintains that it is possible to signify within the symbolic order through the Law of the Father while simultaneously being engaged in new possibilities of signification that rely on the pulsations from the body. The semiotic body is always producing new meanings as well as changing the very medium, the symbolic order, that makes the articulation of its possibilities possible. Oskar and Saleem are motivated to perform and to write: their performances compel their semiotic bodies to speak anew in the symbolic order and they disrupt their subjectivity in the process as their relationship to the symbolic order crumbles and is reformed. In the midst of this destruction, they are able to let the rhythmical aspects of their lives speak without becoming unintelligible. The drives of the semiotic body, such as the anal and oral, are the pre-Oedipal pulsations of the Freudian primary process that pre-exist the subject's initiation into desire. The Lacanian drives are considered already symbolic because they have been socialized by the mother; however, "within the semiotic body there is already an experience of otherness that prefigures the other in the mirror even as it sets it up" (32).

The experience of otherness is a result of a rejection that is experienced within a space that Kristeva calls the *chora*, a place that she appropriates from Plato's *Timeaus* as "an unnameable maternal receptacle" (Oliver 46). Oliver describes the heterogeneity and ordering of the *chora*'s maternal space:

[t]his *chora*, this distant place, is not without regulation and therefore it is the prototype for both the place of enunciation (the subject) and the

place of denotation (the object). The maternal body is the organizing principle of the semiotic *chora*, because the *chora* is the space in which the mother's body regulates the oral and anal drives. (46)

The connection between the *chora*'s regulation and the logic of signification originates in the relationship between the child and the mother's body. The semiotic force of the *chora* is "without interior or exterior" (35), and is where the first sublimations occur. The logic of order within the unnamable maternal receptacle is based on separation and otherness; it is established within the biological and social primal relationship between the mother and the child:

the rhythms and sounds of their bodies together fused into one. For Kristeva this is not an imaginary union. Rather, at this point, it is also a real union. The child is physically dependent on its union with the mother. The bodies physically "signal" to each other before the onset of language proper, before the mirror stage. Their semiotic relation sets up the onset of language proper. (34)

This relationship between the child and the mother is acted out within the semiotic body and it generates the logic of prohibition and otherness that will lead to the final separation and the identification with an Other. The separation of matter, the lack the child feels when separated from the mother's breast or the opposite feeling of excess that is a result of expelling waste from the body, is analogous to the logic of prohibition that the Name of the Father represents. This is important for Kristevan subjectivity because it formulates the problem of having always to position the speaking subject as an actual body within the discourse of the

desire in a way that relies on the semiotic body to place "speech" in a physical context. The positioning of speech is an oscillation between the symbolic and the semiotic, and meaning is negotiated between the world of the father (symbolic) and the world of the mother (semiotic) in *Midnight's Children* and *The Tin Drum*.

Saleem spends a large portion of his autobiography struggling to overcome the predetermined roles that have been established for him in the symbolic order's discourse of desire--the patriarchal hegemony's aspiration to write their own version of history that reflects a unified and independent India. He declares that his placement in Indian history was established before he became self-conscious: "[s]oothsayers had prophesied me, newspapers celebrated my arrival, politicians ratified my authenticity. I was entirely without a say in the matter" (9). Saleem is one of the most magical of the one thousand and one children of midnight (his rival Shiva shares this position with him) who are fathered by history, and the government that is in power as the *father* for the new children of India raises them with the hope of fitting them into his political dream. Jawahar Nehru writes to Saleem to congratulate him on his birth, informing his historical *son* that he is the "newest bearer of that ancient face of India which is also eternally young. We shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, a mirror of our own" (122). Nehru's tribute is ironic, because Saleem and the other children of midnight mirror India's dynamic and ambivalent history with its peculiar and disordered genealogy. They do not represent a nation of homogeneous unity. Saleem insists that the children of midnight's birth was "as though history, arriving at a point of the highest significance and promise, had chosen to sow, in that instant, the seeds of a future which would genuinely differ from anything the world had seen

up to that time" (195). This is the case, but it is their difference that threatens history's highest significance and promise while, at the same time, being that very significance and promise. The diversity of these children marks differences that the Indian government, under Indira Gandhi, tries to erase by making the children sterile (one of Sanjay Gandhi's projects that Rushdie satirizes throughout the text): they will not reproduce their differences. (They are all tortured and sterilized in the chapter "The Shadow of the Mosque.") The erasure of difference maintains the illusion of India while destroying the possibility of a future for the people who live there. Saleem contends that these children have an ambiguous metaphorical significance, their births and dissolution by the government's construction

can be seen as the last throw of everything antiquated and retrogressive in our myth-ridden nation, whose defeat was entirely desirable in the context of a modernizing, twentieth century economy; or as the true hope of freedom, which is now forever extinguished. (200)

Either way, and for most his autobiography, Saleem seems to be searching for some kind of an end, where his birth can be viewed as solely for the purpose of fulfilling the prophecies that were set before his existence. This is precisely what he must overcome, and he eventually finds that writing and chutney-cooking will help him subvert the order of the prophetic discourse.

Chutney makes its way into Saleem's history on many levels, and it is the very material that he uses to remember the feelings of his past. Chutney preserves more than fruit and vegetables: it has a presence within the formation of the Sinai family history as an active ingredient, and the manufacturing of his and his family's history literally becomes Saleem's

occupation. His stories and chutney provide a diverse portion of an alternative history for India. They feed India a diet of different flavours. As an alternate history, chutney records events and establishes memory, not as political names and dates, but as dynamic and changeable tastes and feelings that are elaborated and preserved within the sphere of maternal rhythms. Early in his autobiography, Saleem realizes that he has made a mistake in his version of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. Saleem confesses that "Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time" (166) in his autobiography, but his mistake does not destroy the validity of his history. He is recording a history that is different from traditional history and its total reliance on the discourse of desire to fill the unfillable gaps of the past with words of the symbolic order and while ignoring deeper connections to the feelings that exist in the "real" world. The use of dates in the symbolic order is important; however, if they are written and expressed only within a discourse that represses the body then they are less effective as an historical confrontation of the past. Saleem worries that his mistake will "invalidate the entire fabric" (166) of his history, but he acquiesces and returns to smells as they are repeated and transformed in the present to conjure up the past. He does not let the mistake devalue the totality of his text. Historical discourse becomes relevant when it reacts with the senses of the body, and the smells of his workplace develop an enhanced memory:

A hot night; bubbling air filled with the lingering scents of the silenced pickle-vats; voices in the dark. Pickle fumes, heavenly oppressive in the heat, stimulate the juices of memory, accentuating similarities and differences between now and then . . . it was hot then; it is (unseasonably) hot now. (166)

Saleem connects his fears when he discovered his telekinetic connection to the children of midnight with his present fear that he will dissolve before he can get his story written. He separates the subjectivity of his childhood from his subjectivity as an adult writer, referring to his past incarnation as "him" and his present self as "I:" "He and I, I and He" (167). He is still connected to the past existence of himself through the repetition of bodily feelings:

"[d]ifferent and similar, we are joined by heat. A shimmering heat-haze, then and now, blurs his then-time into mine . . . my confusion, travelling across the heat waves, is also his" (167). Saleem's changed subjectivity is connected with the experiences of his past through their expression in the taste and smell of chutney. The influence of chutney is connected to the women in Saleem's life and feelings in chutney act as a counter and an enhancer to the symbolic order of the disembodied patriarchal discourse that seems to be solely concerned with the chronological order of names and dates.

Saleem returns to food and the kitchen to write his story so that he can be in contact with the material and site of the maternal rhythms of the woman in his life. Maternal rhythms are expressed in cooking to preserve and influence feelings in the family, which is as small as the Sinai family unit or as large as the whole of India that is fed by Maria Pereira-Braganza with her Braganza Pickles Company. Chutney is a mark that establishes and preserves Saleem's inheritance and physical being. Food is both a nourishing interpretation and influencer of the world, and this dual capability of food is apparent when Reverend Mother's cooking is compared to the ordered business world of her son-in-law, Ahmed. The closure of his symbolic order, his frozen assets, has snapped his body "like an icicle" (139). His presence, or the defining of his existence within the symbolic order, is over-determined, and

it is reflected in the reaction that his body has to the destruction of his order: his meaning in life exists within the order of his assets, and when they are taken away his body becomes as frozen and useless as his assets. Reverend Mother, on the other hand, passes on her feelings to the family through the rhythms of cooking: she "doled out the curries and meathalls of intransigence, dishes imbued with the personality of their creator; Amina ate the fish salans of stubbornness and the birianis of determination" (139). Food is not singular in its persuasion, it manages to contain and mix with all the contradictory aspects of the lives that exist in the house at the time, and this is what Saleem means when he insists at the beginning of the novel, and repeats throughout, "I have been a swallower of lives; and to know me, just the one of me, you'll have to swallow the lot as well" (9). Food is a fitting example of the history or novel that Saleem asks his readers to swallow whole, because, along with Reverend Mother's feelings, Mary Pereira's cooking provides a "partially counteractive effect--since she had stirred into them the guilt of her heart, and the fear of discovery, so that, good as they tasted, they had the power of making those who ate them subject to nameless uncertainties and dreams of accusing fingers" (139).

Food acts as an aspect of an historical event and as a record of that event, a connection that Saleem recognizes when he retells the story of his nasal operation which destroyed the telepathic nature of this body. Saleem feeds Padma his chutney in order to establish the feelings of his past, but he also uses it in a Penelope-like way to save himself from the medicine men of the present--who have already poisoned him once--by completing the story of past doctors and unweaving the present:

the same chutney which, back in 1957, my ayah Mary Pereira had made

so perfectly; the grasshopper-green chutney which is forever associated with those days--carried them back into the world of my past, while chutney mellowed them and made them receptive, I spoke to them, gently, persuasively, and by a mixture of condiment and oratory kept myself out of the hands of the pernicious green-medicine men. (210-11)

Saleem employs this same method of using chutney to make him remember and to enhance his story throughout his autobiography. He takes up the maternal tradition of Mary Pereira-Braganza, whose chutney is delicious because "she puts her feelings inside them" (458). We do not get to eat the end result of Saleem's chutney cooking; instead, we get the transcription of food into language as it is affected by the maternal rhythms of cooking, and not *just* an attempt to fulfil a discursive lack separate from the body. Saleem affirms that he writes his story while he is the manager of Mary's pickle factory: "Mary, with her ancient hatred of 'the mens,' admits no males except myself into her new comfortable universe" (460). Saleem has taken up residence within this "comfortable universe" of cooking, which is like the semiotic *chora*, but he uses it to bring meaning to history as it is established and written within the symbolic order.

In Saleem's history the possibility of passing through the gateway, through the Bar of Repression, and into the semiotic *chora* is found in the rhythms of chutney-making. While Oskar finds it in his drum. Oskar is "one of those clairaudient infants" (42) who, from the moment of birth, "decided to do certain things and on no account do certain others" (43). He does not have to confront Saleem's Nehrunian counterpart in the German government, he only has to confront Matzerath, his presumptive father. Matzerath is a person who trustingly

inherits the condition of the symbolic order and the discourse of desire, even though he "had a knack for metamorphosing feelings into soup" (39). Matzerath expresses his delight with Oskar at the moment of his birth, he "will take over the store when he grows up. At last we know why we have been working our fingers to the bone" (43). Oskar claims to have been born with the language and symbolic order already formulated in his being, but the thought of being a grocer and putting everything into order on the shelves and in the cash register repels him. His mother's words present him with a more vibrant hope for his future. Oskar claims that "at an early age I made the acquaintance of feminine logic. The next words [of Oskar's mother] were: 'When little Oskar is three, he will have a toy drum'" (43). Oskar can face the world with the promised continuation of his mother's, and his, *jouissance*; he maintains that it "was only the prospect of the drum that prevented me then from expressing more forcefully my desire to return to the womb" (44). Drumming is, for Oskar, like the semiotic rhythms of the maternal body and it is directly related to the possibility of memory that is recorded in the traces of several body-texts that Oskar privileges. Oskar's connection to these body parts is more or less deranged, but what is important is that they are established in his memory in maternal rhythms, and not solely to words in the symbolic order.

He contends that the scars on Herbert Truczinski's back, and other sensitive scars or objects that he has eroticized and transformed into scars, are recorded and amalgamated in the beats of his drumsticks. They are, as well, ordered in a list:

[i]n the same class [as Herbert's back] I should put the secret parts of a few women and young girls, my own pecker, the plaster watering can on the boy Jesus, and the ring finger. . . . Whenever I wanted to recall

Herbert Truczinski's back, I would sit drumming with that preserved finger in front of me, helping my memory with my drum. Whenever I wished--which was not very often--to reconstitute a woman's body, Oskar, not sufficiently convinced by a woman's scarlike parts, would invent Herbert Truczinski's scars. (173)

Body parts and objects are joined together and even confused to produce a sensual feeling that relates to experience. As seemingly warped as they are, Oskar's stories rely on the body and maternal rhythms to give them significance. When Oskar refers to himself in the third person he recognizes that the maternal rhythms effect his bodily presence, that his subjectivity and his interpretation of his past subjectivities are continually being transformed. Drumming connects Oskar's being to pleasurable bodily experiences and the Foucauldian body-text is recovered anew, as a sensitive physical text rather than simply being a body that is marked and made into a sign through his drumming. The maternal rhythms of the womb also give Oskar the possibility of a future, because this rhythm that is developed in the relationship between his and his mother's body will continue to signify in future texts, and is even more important than his sexual performance:

when I was still an embryo, before Oskar was even called Oskar, my umbilical cord, as I sat playing with it, promised me successively drumsticks, Herbert's scars, the occasionally erupting craters of young and not so young women, and finally the ring finger, and at the same time in a parallel development beginning with the boy Jesus's watering can, it promised me my own sex which I always and invariably carry about with

me--capricious monument to my own inadequacy and limited possibilities. (173)

The drumming that exists between Oskar and his mother prepares the logic for him to connect his bodily feelings to objects in the world, giving them semiotic and symbolic meaning. Oskar's watering can is like the symbolic order that is inadequate and limited until it is embodied with rhythm. A watering can without rhythm may be upsetting (for the male and the female, according to Padma), but it is survivable as long as there is still the possibility of bringing performed maternal rhythms to language, to the phallic economy--and this is precisely how Oskar and Saleem survive their impotence. In order to bring drumming and chutney-cooking into signification, the subject and discourse must be situated within a context, in what Kristeva terms the *thetic* break.

The *thetic* is a regulator that positions the subject so that he/she can speak, and the "thetic phase" is a break and a border of the symbolic order that makes new significations possible. The *thetic* is necessary for the context of the subject's speech within discourse, but it is "the semiotic--the drives and their articulation--that gives rise to the *thetic* break" (40). The first separation, integral to the mirror stage in Lacanian thought, has already been developed in the relationship between the mother and the child. It reaches a threshold that becomes the *thetic* break when the child recognizes itself as a separate subject in the mirror, disengaging objects from the semiotic *chora*. The *thetic* phase marks the threshold between the heterogeneous zones of the semiotic and the symbolic, and "thetic unity is divided into signifier and signified, symbolic and real, which are connected through the Imaginary" (40). The *thetic* break occurs at the second bracket in Figure 1, which is the gateway, Bar of

Repression, that separates two different relationships to these two heterogeneous realms.

Figure 1 Phases of the Thetic

To signify, the subject moves from a moment in the imaginary when a signifier and signified is perceived as one unified component charged with semiotic rhythms to that component's movement into the symbolic order where the sign is split in order to produce meaning. When the second bracket is closed in the imaginary unity of the thetic, the rhythms of the semiotic body are connected to signs from the symbolic order but there is not a perceivable difference between the signifier and the signified or the semiotic and the symbolic. During intense moments the thetic focuses the diverse energies of the semiotic onto a sign in such a way that it breaks its perceived unity, and the closure of the first bracket disconnects the subject from the unity of the imaginary. The diverse rhythms of the *chora* are focused onto a sign and they are pushed past the threshold of the symbolic order, which is a funnelling through the second bracket. The sign is substantiated within the meaning of the symbolic in a new way, because it has brought the semiotic rhythm with it. The transition of meaning production is negotiated through a thetic focus that moves between the opening and closing of the symbolic

and the imaginary orders, a process of semiotic unification that is split in the symbolic.

In Saleem's autobiography the movement between the semiotic and the symbolic is found in the rhythms of the maternal body that are reflected in the possibilities of cooking and in his ability to write. He claims that pickle jars contain "the most exalted possibilities: the feasibility of the chutnification of history; the grand hope of pickling time! I, however, have pickled chapters" (459). Chutney is not infallible and neither are words, but through both he professes, "in words and pickles, I have immortalized my memories, although distortions are inevitable in both methods" (459). The women have taught him how to enhance the power of his history by creating with spices, and bringing flavour and semiotic meaning to the dates and names that are arranged in the symbolic order, because the "art is to change the flavour in degree, but not in kind; and above all (in my thirty jars and a jar) to give it shape and form--that is to say meaning" (461). Chutney-making, as a semiotic rhythm, relies on signifiers from the symbolic order to establish its meaning, and to do this, it must place itself in the focus of the thetic phase for a moment and conform to its rule as it breaks into the symbolic order. The semiotic rhythm that is found so readily in the dynamic flavouring of chutney can also be found in the use of language when it falls apart and is used for different signifying possibilities, as is evident when Saleem crashes into the February 1957 language riots.

The illusion of a unified India was quick to dissipate after 1947. Eventually the country was broken down into states and territories that were divided strictly by the symbolic order and not by natural boundaries: they "were not formed by rivers, or mountains, or any natural features of the terrain; they were, instead, walls of words. Language divided us"

(189). However, the symbolic order is too rigid for the city of Mumbadevi in the state of Bombay, and the diverse populace is not content with one language (this is analogous to the situation in Oskar's Danzig, a city that is a concentration of difference). In Mumbadevi the concentration of difference leads to conflict and violence that is acerbated when the people are confronted with the notion that there *should* be one unified language to represent the state. Saleem comes "crashing into history" (191) on his sister's bike, disrupting the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti language marchers. They resent his "princely" upbringing, and goad him into speaking "some Gujarati" (191). Saleem can only remember a rhyme that Glandy Keith Colaco used to degrade and abuse Gujarati children in the school playground, "a rhyme designed to make fun of the speech rhythms of the [Gujarati] language: Soo ché? Saru ché!/ Danda lé ké maru ché!" (191). The importance of these words is not just their symbolic meaning: "*How are you?--I am well!--I'll take a stick and thrash you to hell! A nonsense; a nothing; nine words of emptiness*" (191): instead, it is that the childish rhyme emphasizes a playful rhythm influence by the *jouissance* of the semiotic *chora* that is combined with its symbolic meaning. The *jouissance* of the rhyme becomes thetic, breaks the boundary of the symbolic order of meaning-making and establishes significance as a show of anger when it becomes the language marcher's slogan. In the marcher's context the new thetic focus appropriates rhythm that breaks language down and builds it back up again by giving it new meaning. Saleem claims responsibility for the language riots that came about as a result of his rhyme, claiming that "to the tune of my little rhyme the first of the language riots got under way, fifteen killed, over three hundred wounded" (193). All that he did was deflate the symbolic language they were marching to uphold by showing its vulner-

ability and turning it into rhythm and new meaning. They were able to position its destruction thetically and use it again, albeit in a humorous and violent way.

There is an analogous situation in *The Tin Drum*. Oskar positions his rhythm thetically when he heeds Behra's advice about never getting in front of a rostrum, the official site to receive the words of the hegemony passively. Oskar ponders the hearing from which he should let semiotic drumming speak:

[e]veryone who has ever taken a good look at a rostrum from behind will be immunized *ipso facto* against any magic practised in any form whatsoever on rostrums. Pretty much the same applies to rear views of church altars; but that is another subject. (114)

Oskar situates himself underneath the rostrum in order to participate in World War Two from a special point-of-view and from it he actively interferes with the ritual of the Nazi order, undercutting its thetically constricted semiotic rhythm. In the same way that Saleem participates in the language marches and "instigates" the riots in Mumbadevi with his semiotic rhythms, destroying order and constructing new order, Oskar has a special involvement in the Nazi rise to power. Oskar not only perceives the Nazi parade from behind, but he turns the rally into "pure chaos, the trumpets blew Sodom and Gomorrah" (116). The ordered Nazi rally is turned into an unpredictable carnival of dancing and celebration. The semiotic body enters the order through Oskar's dissonance, but a different order is achieved when he turns it into a waltz. The symbolic is only momentarily subverted by the semiotic and is eventually turned into a new order that can be provided with a new signification. The symbolic is re-signified with a flow of previously repressed German desire which uncovers the need to

dance even in the face of the marching of the Nazi order. Both aspects of signification, the semiotic and the symbolic, are appealing at times, but they are always in conflict: when the semiotic body is allowed to speak the rigid order is destroyed, and when the symbolic speaks the semiotic is then repressed. It is important to note that the waltz is also symbolic, but within the context of the rostrum it is a subversive text brought on by the semiotic body's need to release its energy.

2. Semiotic Violence and the Sign

Oliver further develops the concept of the thetic by investigating Kristeva's interpretation of sacrifice and art as "social counterparts of the thetic" (40). The pre-symbolic semiotic body has violent features; however, they can be supplanted by a positioned violence that is focused against a victim. A subject who enters the social realm of the symbolic does not eliminate the instinctual violence of the semiotic body, but the symbolic object within discourse becomes the focus of sacrifice within a social community. This is pertinent to Zarathustra's thought of eternal recurrence because, even though history is a spacial and temporal writing of the violence of humankind, the violence will return somewhere because it is wrapped up and unfocused in the semiotic body--everybody's body. This violence can be focused onto anything *through* the symbolic order, including real people within society, but it can also be focused onto other objects. Oliver points out that the social violence of sacrifice "insofar as it confines violence to a single place or position, is thetic." The victim's body is sacrificed for the sake of the symbolic" (40). This focused violence is negotiated between the semiotic

body and the symbolic order. When the undirected semiotic violence becomes so strong that it pushes into the symbolic order, the semiotic body's substance (as in Lacan) must be sacrificed to the sign in order for it to be focused and intelligible. The thetic positioning of violence is seen as Moment's clear insight into the deepest "feelings" of the body, while the focus is also a tremendous feeling of loss because the

thetic, which institutes and prefigures the Symbolic, does not prohibit drive discharge or *jouissance*. Rather it regulates it, it prohibits *jouissance* at the same time that it permits it. In sacrifice the semiotic violence motivates its thetic focus, which gives rise to symbolization. The semiotic functions as the negative or surplus of the signifying system.

(41)

This strange alternation must be confronted in order to signify, as meaning is established not solely through pre-figured desire in a pre-established signifying system but also through the positioning of a subject who is informed by his/her rhythmical bodily drives. The semiotic *jouissance* builds up to the point where it pushes into the symbolic to establish meaning, to be heard, but in doing so it subverts the symbolic. It calls into question the borders and order of the symbolic by pushing its non-symbolic "feeling" into meaning production.

The connection between the semiotic and the symbolic is one that is always in crisis, because even when *jouissance* and its recurring violence is regulated and focused in the symbolic, its expression exists only for a moment. This expression can be compared in its most powerful sense to Zarathustra's Moment, a thetic break when the body is able to speak within the symbolic order, affirming its "yes." It is a sharp moment in time when the

semiotic makes itself felt within signification; however, this is also a point of meaning's highest vulnerability. Zarathustra's archenemy, the dwarf, has a relationship with language that denies the body that feels and exists in time, but when the body speaks in language, the semiotic also has an aversion to the order of language. Two poignant examples that show the vulnerability of the relationship between the semiotic body and the symbolic order and uncover the oscillation of meaning and loss in the discourse of desire are Saleem's memory erasure and the dissipation of his semiotic body into just the sense of smell and Oskar's presentation of his drum to the statue of Jesus in an attempt to bring rhythm to the Catholic Church.

Saleem's family is living in Pakistan at the beginning of the Indo-Pakistani war on September 22, 1965, the night which Saleem describes as "the return of ticktock. But now time is counting down to an end" (326). It is this second "midnight" that destroys the Sinai family when their house is levelled by a bomb and Saleem is hit by the debris--the lapis lazuli spittoon, a family heirloom--and turned into a memory-less bloodhound who is disconnected from his bodily feelings. The spittoon is connected to the symbolic order as an object that is a symbol of the family's desire to pass on its history through the traditional heirloom--it is somehow supposed to "contain" some meaning for the family and Saleem as it is passed on from generation to generation. Saleem embraces it throughout his story, but his connection to it is always changing and the spittoon is also subtly transformed over the years. The symbolic order, as seen in Lacan's analysis of the discourse of desire, relies on lack to create meaning that exists outside of the body. When Saleem is hit in the head the physical bodily connections of memories to objects are disconnected (but not annihilated).

Saleem refers to his being hit in the head as an phenomenon of purification, because it "cleanses" him of history and he is "restored to innocence and purity by a tumbling piece of the moon, wiped clean as a wooden writing-chest, brained (just as prophesied) by my mother's silver spittoon" (343). Just before he is "brained" by the spittoon and "stripped of the past present memory time shame and love, a fleeting but timeless explosion" (343), he experiences an "endless minuscule instant of knowing" (343). Discourse, the symbol of the family and its history as it is established in the symbolic order, is represented in the spittoon. The material substance that is a signifier and attributed significance destroys previous meaning in the Saleem's body, changing him forever, and meaning in the symbolic order is recharged in the drives before signification is possible again. The symbolic order is either changing itself and previous signification, setting up the possibility for another jolt of material to establish new boundaries of significance, or the symbolic is knocked out of the Saleem and he will never be able to signify again. This is the crux of the problem: the symbolic needs to be attached to the body's recurring rhythms and the body needs to attach itself to the symbolic order and made *thetic*, if only for a moment, to signify. Saleem is turned into a sign, the erased history of India, that has had both aspects of signification, the semiotic and the symbolic, obliterated, leaving only *traces* in his sense of smell and his deformed spittoon. He still participates in the history of India, even if it is across the border in Pakistan.

Saleem becomes a bloodhound in the Canine Unit for Tracking and Intelligence Activities (CUTIA) in the Pakistani army, another history denied by the official version of history, and his only connection to the symbolic order and his semiotic body, or the real world, is through his acute sense of smell. The remaining aspect of his body is still

connected to an abused female world, as the troop wears CUTIA "[s]he dog hadges" (348), and "[t]he acronym CUTIA, of course, means *bitch*" (348). The trace of his semiotic sense is co-opted and trained by the symbolic order for perverse reasons. The connection to the diversity of the maternal body has been numbed by the symbolic order's violent smashing of Saleem. The mythology of the man-dog professes that, although he is gifted with the sense of smell, his body is deadened:

'No memory, not interested in people, lives like a dog!'--'But the tracking business is true all right!--'You see that nose on him?'--'Yah, man, he can follow any trail on earth!'--'Through water, haba, across rocks! Such a tracker you never saw!'--'And he can't feel a thing! That's right! Numb, I swear; head-to-foot numb! (349)

Saleem's memory is drained, and he is disconnected from the possibilities that the body has with the symbolic order. Saleem is a lost subject, or a sign with all its surplus of meaning leaked out. He cannot signify because the symbolic order forced itself rigidly into signification so that for a moment it connected with his bodily rhythms, but it also paralysed them in order to transcend time and remain always signifiable. This moment disrupted both realms of heterogeneous matter to the point where neither can be expressed in relation to the other, his body has been dazed so badly that the symbols of the symbolic order no longer have meaning because he cannot re-connect them to his body--they exist only in the abstract space of discourse.

The cure for Saleem's lost body lies in the snake bite that he receives when his CUTIA group are lost in the Sundarbans, and like the snake that Zarathustra sees the

shepherd swallow, the jolt of material in his body is not a separate unity from symbolic order that can be made forever absent because it exists within the recurrence of events in time. Even though it is repressed material, it eventually pushes its way into signification. The snake bite instigates a reactivation of the drives similar to the spittoon's activation of "pure understanding" before it erases memory, but in reverse. These reactivated rhythms are then jolted into the memories of the symbolic order, and are made to signify. In the same way that he was cured as a child by the venom of a snake, venom reconnects Saleem to the past by forcing his body to speak: "I was rejoined to the past, jolted into unity by snake-poison, and it began to pour out through the buddha's lips. As his eyes returned to normal, his words flowed so freely that they seemed to be an aspect of the monsoon" (364). The return of the previously absent material enables him to speak again. His subjectivity is changed because his bodily experience has been recovered in a new way and he is able to connect it to the symbolic order. This process is never complete and all is not recovered. The "buddha had forgotten his name" (365), and there is still more to say.

The partial return of his body makes Saleem vulnerable to the myths of the symbolic order again. The myth tries to unify the past by exorcising the body--he is able to speak and retell his history in words, but directly after he recovers his past through a bodily jolt he is confronted with Hindu succubi who try to consume him with the past. The statues of the Hindu temple can be interpreted as bodily desire, as "its walls danced with friezes of men and women, who depicted coupling in postures of unsurpassable athleticism and sometimes highly comic absurdity" (366). At one time this mythological representation of statues of the symbolic order was connected in a ritual to the rhythms of the bodies of the participants who

came to worship the signs carved into the rock, their bodies bringing life to the text.

Aysha, Shaheed, and Farooq, however, give their bodies to the dead myth of the symbolic order when they dream that they are copulating with the "naked and identical daughters of the forest" (366), and in doing so "they were leaving infancy behind forever, and then forgetting reasons and implications and deafness, forgetting everything, they gave themselves to the four identical beauties without a single thought in their heads" (367). Their bodies and memories are dissolved by the Hindu myths of the past and they become like Saleem before his snake bite: bodiless and without memory.

Saleem's CUTIA group begins to disappear because the old myth does not connect with their bodies, it only disconnects them from their previously established symbolic order, turning the body's sexual pleasure--analogous to Saleem's keen sense of smell--against itself to destroy possibility of the oscillation of meaning-making with the symbolic. To be a sexual body is not enough to produce significance within the symbolic order, and by directing the force of the semiotic body into the symbolic order without transforming it and reactivating the drives, the myth (history) itself will absorb the body. The CUTIA troop recognize this dissolution of the body: "the day came when they looked at each other and realized they were becoming transparent, that it was possible to see through their bodies" (367). This insight shows them the decrepit text they had envisioned as solid: the temple is falling apart, and they are resisting its destruction by living vicariously in the dreams of symbolic discourse that provide them with desire objects. As a transcendental signifying system it can only destroy their bodies, and they realize that the old text that they have been copulating with was actually making their bodies absent from the possibilities of meaning-making. In this case,

the full myth of the Hindu temple in the symbolic order has lost its connection to the symbolic order. When they return to their bodies, the succubi are turned into "four funeral pyres; and in the center of each of the four, a small, blackened, fire-eaten heap of uncrushed bones" (367). As the symbolic order, the Hindu myth had already exorcised the rhythms of the woman's body from its signification, relying solely on lack and desire to provide meaning, thus sacrificing the possibility of reactivating the drives.

There are analogies between Saleem's history and Oskar's. Saleem's body is recovered only to be destroyed by the symbolic order (in "The shadow of the Mosque"); however, he still manages to recover enough of his body, nurturing it with chutney, to disassemble and reorganize his history in the symbolic order. Oskar, on the other hand, is in control of his body and the symbolic order right from the time of his birth. His ability to force his bodily rhythms on the symbolic order and receive them back is supreme. He enters The Church of The Sacred Heart several times with his mother (and later with Maria) who must confess the sins of her body, or degrade her body in language, because she is having an affair with her cousin Jan Bronski (Oskar's second presumptive father). Oskar recognizes his double not in his mother, but in the baby Jesus who sits on the knee of the Virgin Mary. He feels resentment toward this double because the plaster Jesus has his gestures--those of a drummer. If Oskar is going to be a separate subject who can continue to change in a process, he has to either destroy his double or come to speak for himself and change his relationship with his double by turning it into something else. He states, there "are things in this world which--sacred as they be--cannot be left as they are" (136). Oskar wants to let the symbolic Jesus speak, because he recognizes that he will have to separate himself somehow

from the symbol. At the same time, however, he recognizes that the sign--the Church in this case--must also have some connection to the body if it is going to signify. Oskar wants sculpture to be realistic, but he also wants it to have *jouissance* and, in opposition to the discourse of desire, he gives the Virgin and the boy Jesus a bodily rhythm, and the stimulation of the symbolic reactivates Oskar's drives:

A succinct intimation of the Virgin's shin suggested that the sculptor had first created flesh and then submerged it in draperies. When Oskar felt the boy Jesus's watering can, which should have been circumcised but wasn't, when he stroked it and cautiously pressed it as though to move it, he felt a pleasant and strangely new and disturbing sensation in his watering can, whereupon he left Jesus's alone in the hope that he would let his alone. (136)

This is the connection between the symbolic order and the semiotic body that makes meaning, but the reactivation of his drives appears to be more than Oskar can tolerate at the time. He expects the symbolic order to act in a bodily way without interfering directly with his body. He gives up because the sign of the Catholic Church does not signify for itself.

The watering can incident does not fully make its way into signification for Oskar because he expects it to carry on with its own semiotic connection as a sign and drum out its own tune. He offers his drum and his drumstick to the statue, the symbolic order, expecting it to provide its own semiotic rhythm, claiming that all

he wanted was a little private miracle, something he could hear and see, something that would make it clear to him once and for all whether he

should drum for or against; all he wanted was a sign to tell him which of the two blue-eyed identical twins was entitled and would be entitled in future to call himself Jesus. (138)

Oskar cannot believe in a God who would not drum--who does not have a body. He does not realize that the statue is just a symbol, and, in order for it to signify, he must bring his bodily rhythms to the sign. The statue does not drum for Oskar, so he attempts to teach it some rhythms of his own; however, before the statue has a chance to speak with Oskar's rhythms, the priest and the Vicar, Father Wienke and Vicar Rasczeia pull him away from the sign and exorcise his performative exchange from the sign. Oskar's body has been amputated from the symbolic order of the church, even his ability to scream glass to pieces fails--the symbolic order gets a bit mangled, Oskar has "cracked his halo, jostled his watering can, [and] broke off a bit of cloud" (139), but it still remains intact as a transcendental signifier, guarded by the Church and the Law of the Father of signification. It seems the symbolic order cannot be undone, but the drum lesson is not lost on the plaster Jesus.

Oskar returns to the church many years later and gives his drum to the statue, and then "tands back and laughs at Jesus's impotence. He is laughing at the symbolic order's lack of rhythm that keeps it silent, but Jesus finally drums. Oskar's stories are contained in the rhythm of his semiotic body, and when he gives it to the symbolic order, he is horrified that "it knew all the hits" (350). Turning to Oskar, Jesus connects to Oskar's rhythms of signification, for he

proceeded to weave Oskar's favourites into a potpourri: it began with 'Smash a Little Windowpane' and there was a bare suggestion of 'The

Schedule'; just like me, the little scoundrel played off Rasputin and Goethe. . . and, what flabbergasted me most of all, took refuge again and again beneath the four skirts of my grandmother Anna Koljaiczek. (350)

The symbolic order cannot speak without the semiotic body, but when the body speaks through the symbolic order there is not a synthesis of meaning, but a crisis turned back on the identity of the subject, so the symbolic order must have its boundaries questioned again. Oskar confronts the symbolic order of the Church a third time in order to change the nature of the signifier by placing himself directly into it, therefore changing its meaning.

Oskar identifies himself as Jesus and, as the leader of the Dusters--"who were against everything" (361)--he inspires his disciples to break into the Church of The Sacred Heart. Once inside he has them literally cut the plaster Jesus from the statue of the Virgin, and has Störtebecker place him directly onto the Virgin's knee. Oskar/Jesus is placed directly into the sign "so naturally in Jesus's place" (372) in order to deliver a black mass, subverting the symbolic order again--it can never end. He places himself in that space in order to destroy the rigid signification of the church, but he does not destroy the boundary of the symbolic order just by inverting its signification, as that would also support the order of the symbolic by negating it. Oskar creates a new sign and signification by bringing rhythm and the body to signification, or *jouissance*, that is regulated through the old sign of Jesus and presented in the new bodily Jesus who "drummed in the red glow of the flashlights, and led up to the Transubstantiation: This is my body" (373). The oscillation strategy has come full circle in its possibility as a sign, and now it can only start over again, rather than have a final

meaning.

Oskar and Saleem learn to write their histories in a language that incorporates the rhythm of their bodies, and the oscillation between the semiotic body and the symbolic order is violent and repetitive one. Signification is a thetic moment of great vulnerability in literature because it is the moment that the sign is broken down and built up all at once, and the subject whose existence is determined by the body's dance with discourse also enters the critical situation. Maternal bodily rhythms are a trace of memory that also bring the surplus into symbolic space, because it cannot be suppressed forever. Excess meaning is contained within the very nature of the human condition and is always being expressed in the body, not the Foucauldian or Lacanian body that is simply a sign, but the body that can cook or drum the feelings of the body into the symbolic order in a way that it can be made *felt* by the readers, making them participants.

3. Writing an Abject History

There is still another perspective to disclose in our explanation of the writing subject. This is Kristeva's illumination of such a subject by positioning it within the process of abjection. Abjection is an attempt to exclude a recurring yet transitory physical world because it causes horror. Kristeva exemplifies abjection in the doubleness of the pregnant mother and her splitting into two separate subjects at birth, a "condition" of doubleness that is concealed and relegated to the margins of the patriarchal discourses of science and religion. Kristeva cites the Virgin Mother as an image that "covers over the tension between the maternal and the

Symbolic" (50). The maternal body is a threat to society because:

[h]er *jouissance* threatens to make her a subject rather than the Other against which man becomes a subject. In addition, she not only represents but *is* a strange fold between culture and nature that cannot be fully incorporated by the Symbolic. (50)

The Virgin's *jouissance* is covered over, is declared "forbidden," by the cult of the virgin. Her body is inscribed by the Name of the Father to become a body that neither copulates nor has the pleasure of being connected to the child through birth. The "abject subject," the doubleness of the mother and child, is disallowed. The mother's pleasure and pain of conceiving and giving birth cannot be expressed because the semiotic body is forbidden in the symbolic order's cult of the Virgin. The abject is ambiguous. It is connected to the boundary of the symbolic order only in relation to "things" that have already been expelled from the symbolic. The abject lacks significance within the symbolic order because it is just on the other side of the boundary of the symbolic, but it always remains a threat because it calls into question this boundary. It is a no-thing that threatens the presence of a subject or object. It is a hidden contradiction that can burst into the symbolic order, even though it has already been expelled.

The abject is denied by the social (symbolic) order because it "threatens the unity/identity of both the society and the subject. It calls into question the boundaries on which it was constructed" (56). Abjection is especially important for Kristeva and Oliver because they see Western society suffering from a terror of the maternal body:

[t]he prohibition that founds, and yet undermines, society is the prohib-

ition against the maternal body, whether it is oedipal prohibition against incest formulated by Freud, the prohibition against the mother's desire or *jouissance* formulated by Lacan, or the prohibition against the semiotic *chora* formulated by Kristeva. All of these prohibitions are formulated against the maternal body. (56)

Abjection is the conflict of separation from the maternal body because, for Kristeva, the pregnant mother and the child are seen as one in a real sense. They are an inseparable unity until the time of birth when the mother's and child's identities are most readily called into question, a "*narcissistic crisis*," and, at first, the discharged "abject is pre-identity, pre-subject, preobject. It is undecidable because between subject and object, the unruly border, birth" (57). The mother/child abject is stuck in between self and Other--they do not know if they are joined or if they are separate. Kristeva asserts that the first separation, birth, sets up the precondition for separation that is necessary for signification; it is the first rejection. The ejected abject (neither object or subject, neither mother or child), however, turns the maternal body into a phobic 'object' in order to reconcile itself to the fact that it came out of that body, that it is/was fused as one with the Other. The child must do this because "the phobic has confused the Other with itself and unfolds its ego within the Other" (59).

In order to enter the symbolic order the child must face the abject mother as a separate subject and not confuse her with the self or simply exclude her. The abject subject is split at birth when the child is physically separated from the mother's body, the subject (mother and child) is split before the subjectivity of the child (object) has come into being. Oliver argues, "the abject shows up only within secondary repression, language. Through

language it points to the 'object,' abject, that has been repressed in primal repression" (59), the connection with the mother's body and its own birth. Within the patriarchal discourse, or the economy of the phallus, "the mother's is always a masochistic joy. She can take joy in the abject--violent and painful--birth of her child" (59). The child, on the other hand, desires and is horrified by the maternal anxiety of only being able to be gratified through masochistic joy outside of the paternal discourse, and "[i]f, within the paternal discourse, the mother's desire has no object, then in order for the child to become its mother's desire, it must take of the place of no-object, the abject" (60). Within Lacanian discourse, the mother cannot possess gratification (phallus) because it is not signifiable; instead, she is the Other of male desire, gratification (phallus). This means that in order to be the site of gratification, "the child must be the object of the phallus's desire, the hole, the hole out of which it came, 'the adored and abhorred [abject] maternal sex'" (Oliver quoting Kristeva 60). The child is put in the strange position of wanting to identify with the thing that horrifies him/her, making him/herself abject so that primal narcissistic identification will be denied "in order to avoid both separation from, and identification with, the maternal body--both equally painful, both equally impossible" (60). For Kristeva and Oliver the mother must be split and turned into a separate object so that the child (male) can identify, through the Oedipal situation, with an Other, so for the male child "[t]he mother is split in two: the abject and the sublime" (61). The child overcomes the mother's abjection through paternal agency--by making the mother sublime the child can enter signification and find another woman to love.

The abject can either be denied entrance into the symbolic or it can enter through the sublime. The abject connection is with a space, the mother's genitals, that is like the *chora*,

a no-place in the symbolic, the mysterious area that is simultaneously abhorred and desired. Oliver uses abjection to describe the processes involved in male and female sexual differentiation and their relation to the Oedipal situation. This no-place/border sets up the possibility of a position for Oskar and Saleem to speak about the abject of their lives and society, because language operates on two heterogenous levels:

[w]hile on the symbolic level they signify, on the semiotic level they act and reactivate. Insofar as language points to the heterogeneous process of language itself, it doubly reactivates the drives. Poetic language. . . "pre-alter" representation even while it exceeds it. (97)

The semiotic is successful at the boundaries of meaning production in allowing the abject, those things banished from the symbolic order, to enter language in a way that can be felt. The oscillation between the semiotic and the symbolic means that language must always be part of a process in order to signify the effects of the semiotic body. The indefinable is made sublime through a strange new language in order to be felt. The drives are not represented in this language, they are discharged. The no-place breaks and redefines the limits of language, but it does not work alone,

because space in itself (like Lacan's Borromean knot), the semiotic chora cannot challenge meaning's closure. Only a new way of speaking can do that. And this new way of speaking comes only through acknowledging that the signifying process is necessarily a heterogenous process. (97)

The semiotic chora, like the abject, is an ambiguous excess, so closure of thethetic is never permanent. The abject, like the snake Zarathustra sees in the shepherd's mouth, recurs, so it

is always arriving in possibility to be discharged within a new language--the material aspect of the snake or the abject can never be destroyed or made abject forever. The abject must be confronted to investigate history and overcome resentment.

Saleem brings abject history to his autobiography in a horrifying way. The bodies of war in the wake of the 1971 Indo-Pakistan border wars are formed in part, by the creation of yet another independent country - Bangladesh. Saleem's childhood friends are joined in a body of death, which is also a live pyramid:

There was a small pyramid in the middle of the field. Ants were crawling over it, but it was not an anthill. The pyramid had six feet and three heads and, in between, a jumbled area composed of bits of torso, scraps of uniforms, lengths of intestine and glimpses of shattered bones. The pyramid was still alive. (373)

Saleem attempts to break down the boundaries of the symbolic and convey the horrors of war, the terrifying un-signifiable aspects, so that they can be felt and have significance. He is trying to individualize the grotesque experience of war in the contradictory amalgamation of life and death of his country and his childhood friends. He insists that "the purpose of that entire war had been to re-unite me with an old life, to bring me back together with my old friends" (372). This new body, an amalgam of all of his childhood friends and his individualized youth, is metaphorically all the peoples who were once forcibly unified in one whole country, and who are now divided up into India-Pakistan-Bangladesh. The unification of these childhood bodies and ancient autonomous states takes the form of a mountain of disfigured bodies, the abject version of a unified India.

The irony of this encounter is that Saleem sees the war as being for the sole purpose of uniting him with his friends, and not as the further fragmentation of British India. It simultaneously reveals to him a horrific vision of a unified and a fragmented India. The mutilation and re-combining of his friends is a result of the desire to break up his country into separate parts, while it is also a grisly unity. The pyramid is the violence and horror of unification and separation rolled up into an abject body that is made up of thousands of dying and dead bodies that are part of the whole field. Saleem writes about his reunification with the abject body of his friends to embody a sign that signifies the real violence that unified India under British rule. It also shows the fervent violence connected with the physical imposition of outside discourses when they unify bodies in relation to the final frenzied dismantling of what was constructed as a unified country. India is a "field of leaking bone-marrow" (372) in unification and separation. The discourses of unification and separation are juxtaposed within violent actions towards bodies, and are made to signify the abject that previously had no position to establish meaning.

The abject also enters the text as the absurd humour that undoes nostalgia, the abject body is a dialogic sign that depicts the horrors that are inherent in both the unification and separation of these countries, while it concurrently injects an element of laughter as a way of confronting the abject. The pyramid of unification and separation can talk, and its response to Saleem, in the midst of its own horrific self and the horror surrounding it, is simply: "'Hullo, man'. . . 'What the hell are you here for" (373). Into the core of the Indian dilemma of unification and separation, Rushdie inserts humour through this bizarre meeting. This image is made up of signs of the body; however, their connotation is ambivalent. This

image conveys the horrors of war in a repulsive way, but through the mutilation of the body it shows the absurdity of the British hegemonic process of falsely unifying a people, which is invariably followed by the new struggle to separate again, by turning it into a monstrosity that is alive, moving, and, in an absurd way, still able to make a joke.

Writing fiction about the World War Two presents the same type of problems that are found in writing about the Indian and Pakistani wars. The violence of these wars and the atrocities inflicted upon human bodies is of such a magnitude that to simply list them as historical statistics alienates the reader from the severity of horror involved, making violence abject and non-signifiable. This is not to say that the documentation of the atrocities, such as the films of the concentration camps, and blunt statistical numbers, does not play an important role in the recording of history; however, the degree to which these events are horrific is always in battle against lost signification, making the re-signification of horror the job of the historian. In a way, the horrors of war are too immense to decipher outside of a juxtaposition with something else that is closer to everyday imaginable human experience, and Grass uses a subtext of tortured animals to do this. They have a presence that speaks to abject horror because their close proximity to everyday life comments periphrastically on the larger horrors of the war.

The disturbing treatment of animals lets Oskar speak about the abject horrors of war without having to describe events of mass destruction in apocalyptic terms. Grass does not evade the horrors of the war by leaving them abject; instead, these *smaller* atrocities towards animals speak to the larger ones, making the inanity of daily cruelty felt more intensely by relating them to everyday human experience, which includes the possibilities of a recurring

Holocaust. At the end of Book One in the Chapter "Faith, Hope, Love," Oskar employs a fairy tale style to tell the story of Meyn who "played the trumpet too beautifully for words" (192). Meyn owned four cats and "clouted them with a fire poker one day when for particular reasons he found the smell particularly distasteful" (194). The historical irony is that he is expelled from the S.A. "for inhuman cruelty to animals" (196) because Laubschad saw the dying cats as they "moved in the sack, [and] set the lid of the garbage can in motion" (195) and reported him. The fairy-tale juxtaposes this horrific act with the introductions of the fairy-tale characters, the gasman (Hitler) and his followers, who degrade a Jewish toy-maker's toys (including tin drums). The abuse of the cats is abhorred by the S.A., but the gasman and his brown-shirts drive the Jewish toy-maker Markus to suicide. Oskar's fairy tale language narrates the destruction of Markus and Meyn's cats, and struggles to distance and make abstract the horror of this event. Nevertheless, Oskar's performance of the clubbing bodies, gassing, and defecating makes the fairy tale felt in a profound way. The fairy tale points to the boundary of the symbolic and toward abject ambivalence, because in comparison to all of the people who were killed during the Second World War, who cares about these cats? But, if the cats' death is an atrocity that can be felt on a very deep level, then the atrocities of the war are felt to a deeper degree.⁶ The abject, non-signifiable aspects of the war are felt in their abhorrence if these so-called lesser events affect the reader at all, and in doing so they uncover the abject so that it can be felt in a powerful way.

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4. Being Saved: Writing it Down

A Conclusion, and a New Beginning

The subject and its possibility of making new meaning in language is a thetic rupture within the symbolic order, a redefinition of the sign that has aesthetic potential. Oliver is at odds with Kristeva's "aesthetic" approach to revolution in *Powers of Horror*. But I think it is precisely the aesthetic approach to writing, especially the writing of history, that allows the possibility of subversion and overcoming. The abject maternal body (or the abject semiotic body), which is the possibility of creative speech in all of us, is repressed in the unconscious in order to make the Word transcendental. For Nietzsche and Heidegger, resentment is caused by an aversion to time. Resentment causes an existence that will not pass away, opposing the un-signifiable semiotic body that is in a state of becoming. It is the body that Zarathustra relies on in order to give significance to his words. This is precisely the point that Oliver makes about Kristeva: "the authority of our religion, morality, politics, and language comes through the repression of horror; behind their authority lurks abject and unspeakable fascistic terror" (101). Yet, the repressed maternal horror is spoken through the language of abjection and is the ambiguous abject language of the maternal body (the semiotic drives). Abject language always undermines the transcendental in the symbolic order: the repressed reveals its contradictory self, changing the meaning of the sign. Abject language is aesthetic, and results in an experience that "can somehow be therapeutic for the reader as well as the writer" (102) precisely because it includes the rhythms of the body, bringing

questions as well as a fullness to the written word. It is like sacrifice because it "discharges this semiotic violence in language" (103). Abject language is vital to the possibilities of recovering the lost aspects of history that we fear will recur, because it overcomes fear by allowing us "to experience this earlier maternal sphere in language through the sublime and comic; abject turns horror into the "sublime" and "comic." Abject literature laughs at horror" (103). Oliver is concerned that "Kristeva's litany sends Nietzschean chills," but the "Dionysian horror, which both creates and destroys without discrimination, can be tolerated only through the sublime and comic art" (103). Oliver states that, like Nietzsche, Kristeva "seems to conclude that only aesthetically can life be justified" (103).

The horrors that Saleem and Oskar write about are the violent recurring aspects of societies and bodies. Their writing confronts history and destroys a proposed overcoming of history and time by political movements that promise utopian ends. The movement toward an end may appear to be a positive unification with the Independence of India, which was a necessary separation from colonial domination, but it was not a complete and perfect cure. In opposition, the Nazi Third Reich is easily condemned for its horrific acts upon people who did not fit into the ideal of racial purity. A theory of the aesthetics of history must include a way of making the abject aspects of living in the world felt. A movement towards a dynamic history is found in the overcoming of an aversion to time by a body that confronts, through performance and writing, the recurrence of violence. The abject is not hurled into the void, rather, it makes itself felt in language--it is Zarathustra's snake that represents the weight of the knowledge that the small man and horror recurs. The abject in language brings those things that humans avert their eyes from, and want to establish as anomalous, into significa-

tion. In actuality, the abject is repeated over and over in the history of the world and in the lives of the characters in these novels, and it is only by confronting the possibilities of horror, by making them signify, that they can be somehow changed and sacrificed in language. Against the larger events of history, Zarathustra, Oskar, and Saleem write the stories of their lives, and continue to live in the dances, empty pickle jars, and drum beats of recurring histories.

Endnotes

1 This is not to say that there are not progressive and weighty historical analyses in the 1990's. I mention this because this type of thinking has been prevalent in universities, and still plays an important role in sustaining a nostalgic view of history, because it endorses the passing away of an event, arguing that "things are getting better." The desire to see history as a series of anomalies, just to cite one example, can be seen in the controversy and aversion to A.J.P Taylor's 1961 book, *The Origins of the Second World War*, in which he argues that Hitler was not a monster, but rather, a symptom of a larger movement within German culture at this time in history.

2 Heidegger cites F.W.J. Schelling's *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom and the Objects Pertaining Thereto* (1809) in order to distinguish will as the essence of Being in modern metaphysics:

In the final and highest instance there is no being other than willing.

Willing is primal being and to it [willing] alone all the predicates of the same [primal Being] apply: absence of conditions; eternity; independence from time; self affirmation. All philosophy strives solely in order to find the supreme expression. (222)

He argues that this notion of will in modern metaphysics is at the core of the philosophy of Leibniz, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and "Nietzsche is thinking the selfsame thing when he acknowledges the primal Being of beings as will to power"(222). The essence of Being is will, and it is in relation to this essence that is rooted in revenge that humans attempt to establish their being in their best thoughts.

3 I will use Krell's translation of Nietzsche to ease the explanation of Heidegger's interpretation. Kaufmann's translation still carries the same "message" as Krell's; however, it is stated in a much "wilder" way, which reflects Zarathustra's mood more accurately. It flows, and is part of, the surrounding text:

"It was" -- that is the name of the will's gnashing of teeth and most secret melancholy. Powerless against what has been done, he is an angry spectator of all that is past. The will cannot will backwards; and that he cannot break time and time's covetousness, that is the will's loneliest melancholy. (139)

4 There is a great deal of sociological, psychological, and physiological research that contends that emotions such as joy and sadness (revealed in laughing and crying) can mean different things to different people, and that the *essentiality* of these feelings as revelations in "master-narratives" is mistaken. The lessons that are uncovered in master-narratives are culturally learned ways of getting a bodily response to stimuli, and are usually ways of keeping the hegemonic hierarchy in order. (Two obvious examples of this codification are the folk-tale, such as Aesop's fables or the Grimm brother's collection, and an audience

response at the theatre.) One is permitted to behave in a certain way when a certain event occurs, meaning that these terms are metaphysical, and pre-exist the person who experiences them. This does seem to be the case, but this is acceptable, because the textuality of our subjectivity allows for these master-narratives to be subverted and re-signified, and it is challenging the subject's need to attach to a master-narrative that the confrontation of eternal recurrence reconsiders by attempting to read and write a bodily reaction. I use these *feelings* as mutable signifiers within the discourse of emotions, meaning that emotion, even though learned and without complete final meaning, can still be used to produce new meanings.

5 My analysis of Lacanian psychoanalysis comes from Silverman's text, unless indicated otherwise.

6 Two more examples that uncover the abject found in smaller atrocities are: the puppies buried in the pillboxes in "Inspection of Concrete, or Barbaric, Mystical, Bored"; and Schmuhs's killing of sparrows in "On the Atlantic Wall, or Concrete Eternal". The puppy story is related in the genre of drama (another attempt to distance), and is juxtaposed to the annihilation of nuns. The death of Schmuhs by the huge body of sparrows brings Oskar back to the Atlantic wall with Lankes, who also desecrates a young nun by raping her.

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