

CHAPTER FIVE: STRUCTURALISM AND POSTSTRUCTURALISM - THE SIGN, THE SYMBOL, AND THE SUBJECT.

This chapter briefly examines the semiotic concept of the sign, and the process of symbolisation, by which it understands meaning to be socially produced. The key feature of the sign highlighted is its signification of meaning by virtue simply of the difference it inscribes between what it signifies (its object of meaning) and other signs. Drawing on Leach (1976), the sign is differentiated from the symbol for purposes of clarifying the concepts deployed by Geertz (1973) and by Linnekin and Poyer (1990) in the preceding chapter, and because sign and symbol are also found used interchangeably in semiotic analysis itself. The sign is defined as, although arbitrary in assignation, metonymic in referentiality, where the symbol is metaphoric in referentiality and as well as arbitrary in assignment.

Semiotics is analysed in the broader context of the structuralism of which it is a part. This is because two other elements of structuralist discipline, linguistics and the social anthropology of Levi-Strauss (1985; also in Derrida, 1977; von Sturmer, 1987), bear great influence on contemporary understanding of 'culture' as a working concept. The semiotic sign is itself found wanting because it does not sufficiently explain how some

signs achieve greater value than others, in the construction of ethnic identity for instance.

The chapter thus turns to poststructuralism, and the work of Althusser (Donald & Hall, 1986; Grosz, 1989; Hall, 1992), Foucault (in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Patton, 1987), Lacan (1985; and Coward & Ellis, 1977; Weedon, 1987), Kristeva (in Moi, 1986; Grosz, 1989; Weedon, 1987) and Derrida (1977) to find an explanation for the production of meaningful symbols which suits the consocial and primordial identities examined in Chapter Four. From Lacan (1985; and Coward & Ellis, 1977; Weedon, 1987) and Kristeva (in Moi, 1986; Grosz, 1989; Weedon, 1987) is derived a psychological understanding of meaningful production which also explains why language is so integrally linked with the emotional, psychological cogency of meaning, its production and ordering. From Althusser (Donald & Hall, 1986; Grosz, 1989; Hall, 1992) is taken a renewed understanding of the pervasive influence of ideology in social structuring, and the decentring of the sovereign individual. From Foucault (in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Patton, 1987) the chapter gains an understanding of the discursive nature of the workings of power within society, and therefore by which ideology can wield influence.

Finally, from Derrida (1977) is derived a radical reinterpretation of the inscription of meaning in symbolic form, and a rejection of word-based (logocentric) language as the 'natural' medium. Derrida proposes the temporality and temporariness of the fixing of meaning in words and symbols. He develops the process of deconstruction of symbolic meaning as a method of uncovering the construction of meaning. The chapter takes up this notion in proposing an understanding of symbols which incorporates their temporary nature. Cultural and Structural Symbols, and Deep Cultural and Deep Structural Symbols, are hypothesised as the process by which ideology is cathected with individual identity. They are thus proposed as constitutive of identity inasmuch as ideology is constitutive of identity. They are what subtends the emotional cogency of identity by which ideology is valorised. And they are as unfixable as they are fixable. The addressing of symbols and Deep Symbols is thus put forward as as central to multicultural practice as addressing ideological issues and rational argument.

The Sign, Structuralism and the Symbol

Semiotics, and the formal epistemological field of structuralism, originates from the lectures of the linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, from 1907 to 1911, and his posthumously published *Course in General Linguistics*. While the American philosopher C.S. Peirce first attempted to categorise that form of symbolisation known as the **sign**, it was Saussure who formalised its scientific study through structural linguistics (see Coward & Ellis, 1977:12). Unlike linguistics, however, semiotics challenged the then accepted assumption that the word and its meaning, symbol and the idea it represented, were one in the same. It divided the constitution of meaning instead into three distinct elements: the signified - that is, the idea or meaning to be symbolised; the signifier - that is, the 'symbol' to do the job of transmission; and the sign - that is, the two combined, perceived as a whole unit by the perceiving subject (an individual). The governing principle of the assignment of signifier to signified lay only in that, as the sign, the signifier signified the sign's **difference** from other signs - that is, from other perceptions of meaning.

This notion of **difference** as an organising concept is one that has been noted before, with Gordon and Keyes.

'The linguistic signifier in isolation has no intrinsic link with the signified', write Coward and Ellis (1977:13). 'Nothing "in nature" decrees that a certain signifier should articulate a certain signified', for 'even onomatopoeic sounds ... differ from language to language' (Coward & Ellis, 1977:13). The sign is thus 'constituted in the **social fixing** of the appearance of a relation of equivalence between signifier and signified' (Coward & Ellis, 1977:13; emphasis added). And the process of linguistic structuring which produces and organises such signs, **signification**, 'not only sets in place but also creates both signifiers and signifieds, and the structure is a **system of difference**' (Coward & Ellis, 1977:13; emphasis added).

The social construction of meaning on the basis of the identification of difference stands as the **first premise** of the anthropological and semiotic academic enterprises that become widely known as, simply, **structuralism**:

Structuralism, the first aspect of the examination of the sign, was the analysis of meaning from the perspective of its production by the interaction of various elements in a network of differences. It ascertained the precise rules of functioning of a given structure, and the precise rules of structural transformations. This was the basis for understanding the production of meaning from a system of differences, and the regulation of the relations of difference to fix a specific meaning. ... The lesson of this development of structuralism was that man is to be understood as constructed by the symbol and not the point of origin of symbolism.

Coward & Ellis, 1977:3

What is immediately apparent in the Coward and Ellis explication above is that they do not differentiate between the terms 'sign' and 'symbol'. Geertz similarly actually defines sign and symbol as interchangeable at the outset of his thesis *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Geertz, 1973:14). This confusion is not restricted to the social sciences, according to Edmund Leach. Divergent and/or synonymous use of these two terms, along with others such as 'signal', 'index' and 'icon', is common amongst those usually cited as authorities on the subject - C.S. Pierce, F. de Saussure, R. Jakobson, and R. Barthes to name a few (Leach, 1976:9-10).

The difference, according to Leach, is that the symbol 'stands for' its referent 'by arbitrary association', whereas the sign stands for its referent 'as part for whole' (Leach, 1976:12). The crown thus serves as a **sign** for royalty, explains Leach, whereas the cross and the fish serve as **symbols** for Christianity (Leach, 1976:18). The symbol is **metaphoric** where sign is **metonymic**, and the symbol's arbitrariness in fact increases as its signified becomes ideological or mythological e.g. the serpent as a symbol of evil. Geertz concurs axiomatically with this understanding of the metaphoric 'internal processes' (Harre, 1981:17) of

the symbol and symbolisation (Geertz, 1973:211), in that it is central to his theory of interpreting cultures.

Where this usage of the concept of the symbol differs from Leach's, however, not only in Geertz, Keyes and Royce but in much of what is being called here the "symbolic expression" school of sociology (e.g. Allport, 1954; Baker, 1983; Bullivant, 1984; Cohen, 1982; Horowitz, 1975; Keesing, 1982; Linnekin & Poyer, 1990; Steinberg, 1981), is in the volitionality or motivational power sociology and social anthropology ascribe to the symbol. For as such, arbitrary as the symbol may be in its ascription to a referent, as a cultural entity it is in some part causal in its referent's relationship to ethnic identity in the determination of social action i.e. mobilisation, expressions of group solidarity, active resistance to external pressures for change such as normative assimilation. As has been suggested in various ways above, symbols seem to have the 'power' to 'invoke' ethnic identity and motivate action in the name of ethnic identity.

Semiotics, Structural Anthropology and Linguistics

Semiotics and anthropology take different structuralist approaches to the social construction of

meaning, and the latter does not yield an analysis of symbolisation that ameliorates the reductionist problem. The structuralist anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss, for instance, attempts to link cultural structure to the structure of human thought/mind under the aegis of, according to von Sturmer (1987:108), a 'Universal Unity'. In so doing, culture acts as a cipher for universal laws, and symbols in turn serve as vehicles for the cultural transmission of such imperatives. In fact, as a reading of Levi-Strauss's own writings, such as his later work, *The View From Afar* (Levi-Strauss, 1985) reveals, Levi-Strauss uses the transfer of symbols as functions of mythological narrative structures - as symbol "shells" which change in referent completely in transfer across an ethnic or cultural boundary - to show the universality of the mythological narrative structures themselves as mechanisms of universal law⁵. Structural anthropology does little to reveal the 'internal processes' (Harre,

⁵ A review of Levi-Strauss' comparison of the neighbouring Bella Bella and Chilcotin tribes in British Columbia, and their versions of a particular myth to show one is transformed into the other by narrative (logical) inversions and symmetrical oppositions of key elements in the stories' parallel contents (Levi-Strauss, 1985:105-110) reveals that, while his aim is to demonstrate how 'mental operations obey laws not unlike those operating in the physical world' (Levi-Strauss, 1985:108), in so doing Levi-Strauss buries his own position as the ethnographer interpreting the meanings of symbols and narratives concerned and, as von Sturmer suggests (von Sturmer, 1987:115), creates out of the myths themselves signs of signs - an abstracted tool of analysis from an abstracted cultural cipher of universal laws. His universalist analysis denies his own processes of symbolisation as a subject and the subject or 'sovereign individual' component of volitionality found in collective ethnic consciousness.

1981:17) of symbolisation so much as its role as a vehicle for external, 'universal' processes.

The same can be said of linguistics. A comparison between semiotics and its coeval discipline, linguistics, as an analysis of interpersonal processes of communication, does serve to highlight the value to this discussion of semiotics. Whereas linguistics, for instance, under the keen critical mind of Noam Chomsky (1972), was proposing that a universal grammar for all languages could be found, semiotics went straight to the 'grammar' of meaning itself, signification. And where Chomskian theory recognises that meaning moves to a logic distinct from that structuring language and thus inevitably proposes two levels of linguistic structuring - deep and surface (see Chomsky, 1972), Halliday and Hassan (1985) are able to engage directly in an analysis of spoken text itself as meaning, for they see language is an instrument of the semantic construction of meaning. While Chomsky's surface structure obeys the logical laws of linguistic construction, his deep structure obeys the deeper logic of semantics, and as such inevitably leads Chomsky to a similar search for descriptions of subtextual relationships to that which Halliday and Hasan pursue directly.

Thus where linguistics' quest for universal laws of language seems to become bogged down in the deeper workings of meaning, semiotics simply sidesteps this quest. Instead of looking for universal systems of structuring meaning in its act of communication (i.e. language), semiotics seeks laws which may govern the construction of meaning in society by social processes. For signifiers are not just words; they can be bodily gestures, movements, pictures, photographs, road signs - anything to which meaning is ascribed. Semiotics thus recognises the inseparability of culture and meaning, so that in analysing text Halliday and Hasan describe culture as the meaning's 'semiotic potential' (Halliday & Hassan, 1985:99), and describe the 'intertextuality' of cultural context, text, and other texts past and present (Halliday & Hassan, 1985:46-47).

Similarly the man largely responsible for resurrecting semiotics in the 1950s and 60s, Frenchman Roland Barthes (1989), does not need a universalizing mythological structure to transform symbol across ethnic boundaries, because the process of signification is in and of itself a process of transmission across subjects, social groupings, geographical boundaries - indeed any boundaries perceivable by human beings. Barthes instead develops the possibility of signifying the sign itself to 'deepen' its conceptual possibilities. Barthes' version of mythology is totally analysable in and of itself with

the sign as its epistemological building block (see Barthes, 1989:117-126), and is a mythology which analyses contemporary institutions such as 'the nation' or 'the family' by virtue of their meta-signification.

The strengths of this way of thinking for the purposes of this thesis lies in these two notions; firstly that the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary and, secondly, that the unity of the sign lies in its perception as such by the subject. These are interesting here because, if the 'fixing' of the sign is arbitrary, in that the assignment of the signifier to the signified is arbitrary, then the 'unfixing' of the sign should be equally possible. So in sociological analysis of the symbol, a separation of the symbol from its 'meaning' should also be possible. Especially if the symbol is as 'arbitrary' in its ascription to a referent as Leach suggests.

Moreover, it can further be argued. if the unitary nature of the sign is a perception of the subject, then it is the subject who constructs a unitary meaningful representation of the real world, not the real world itself. Meaning and its representation are thus not seen as universal, subject to universal, rational-empirical laws, except inasmuch as they are constructions by the human subject. This analysis points again to the need for

a psychological explanation for the relationship between identity and the production of meaning - although, as shall be shown below, other theorists outside sociology look to an ideological explanation instead.

The problem with the semiotic approach, however, is that as it stands it does not completely solve the problem this thesis is seeking to resolve, precisely because it does not itself accede to a psychological analysis of a unitary subject (this thesis's 'sovereign individual'). How is it some signs are ascribed greater importance than others, if there is neither the authorial subject producer of meaning nor an extra-subject culturo-structural agency capable of effecting the arbitrary ascription of signifier to signified/signified to signifier with the volitionality sociologists ascribe to the symbol? Does a theory of ethnicity need the sociologist's structuring social facts, the social institutions capable of ordering people's lives despite their individual volitions, in order to understand how some signs are given greater prominence than others in general range of signs available to the individual subject for perception?

Poststructuralist Identity and the Semiotic Chora

To find an answer to this question, it is necessary to turn to the Poststructuralist theory which emerged from contributors to the French magazine *Tel Quel* during the 1960s, the same magazine that also fielded the structuralist works of Barthes (1989; and in Coward & Ellis, 1977) and Levi-Strauss (1985; also in Derrida, 1977; von Sturmer, 1987). Writers such as Michel Foucault (in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Patton, 1987), Jacques Derrida (1977), Louis Althusser (Donald & Hall, 1986; Grosz, 1989; Hall, 1992), Jacques Lacan (1985; and Coward & Ellis, 1977; Weedon, 1987) and Julia Kristeva (in Moi, 1986; Grosz, 1989; Weedon, 1987) all developed theoretical approaches which are useful to this thesis at this stage.

Coward and Ellis (1977:99) do not necessarily agree with Leach's differentiation of symbol and sign on the basis of metaphorical and metonymic functions, preferring instead to analyse signification itself in terms of metaphor and metonymy. Indeed, their use of the term 'symbolic', whilst often synonymous with the process of signification, tends to be more in keeping with the volitional, deterministic conception of the symbol held by sociologists examined above. Moreover, they ascribe to the symbolic a "higher order" quality, as in the signification of the signifier developed by Barthes (see Coward & Ellis, 1977:49-57). (In his book *S/Z*, according to Coward and Ellis, Barthes analysed the realist novel

to show that this process buries the originary signification to create a 'symbolic code' whereby the text positions the reader in relation to the way it is to be read.)

In their analysis of the metaphorical and metonymic functions of signification, Coward and Ellis are following the theorising of post-Freudian psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1985; and Coward & Ellis, 1977; Weedon, 1987), whose notion of 'symbolic register' (Lacan, 1985:113), 'symbolic order' (Lacan, 1985:36) or simply 'the symbolic' (Lacan, 1985:163) refers to a level of symbolic ordering of signs and the process of signification available both in cultural representations and, through culture, to the individual's psychic make-up, which serves to constitute the subject. It is this latter approach to symbolisation which seems to offer this thesis the symbolising subject it seeks.

Arguably the single most influential figure for the *Tel Quel* group, Jaques Lacan (1985; and Coward & Ellis, 1977; Weedon, 1987) takes up the theory developed by Sigmund Freud around the turn of the century that the individual is not simply driven by needs and desires immediately observable in human behaviour. Some desires, specifically sexual desire for one's parent of the opposite sex, are repressed very early in the

individual's life. Indeed, it is their repression which leads to the psychological constitution of an individual's personality, their self, their sense of being a 'self' i.e. their identity.

According to Mitchell (1985), amongst others, the desires posited by Freud were firstly the infant's perception of its sexual difference from one or the other of its parents (Freud focussed the possession of lack of a phallus as the main locus of this differentiation) and consequent desire for its sexually opposite parent, and secondly its sense of impotence at its replacement by the same-sex parent (termed the Castration Complex) in relationship with the desired Other. The subsequent repression of the original desire through the fear of impotence ("castration"), combined with the associated guilt developed upon learning its 'moral' inappropriateness (incest) in the world of adults, completes the development of what Freud consequently terms the Oedipal-Castration Complex. In the process, an entire 'underground' life for the human psyche develops: the unconscious.

The unconscious, in Freudian theory, is mainly accessible to analysis through recall of dream activity. And analysis of dream activity reveals an entire realm of meaning and ordering of meaning that, for one thing,

refutes the notion promoted by some (linguists like Sapir, Whorf, and Chomsky, for instance) that any exterior construction of language could determine human understanding. For the symbolisation of dreams has a logic which defies that of conscious, rational thought⁶. Lacan (1985; see also Mitchell, 1985; Rose, 1985), however, relinks the developing unconscious, and the Oedipal repression of the self, with the child's entry into the symbolic ordering world of language.

During what Lacan calls the 'mirror-phase', which precedes the Oedipal phase, the child looks to its primary carer (in Lacan's terms, the mother) as if they are a mirror to itself, an extension of it. In Lacan's terms, the infant misrecognises itself in the parent as its own mirror-image, and in the process misrecognizes itself as in control of its own physical reality (for more detailed examination of Lacan's theory here, see Rose, 1985).

⁶ It is interesting to note Fischer's (1986) analysis of ethnicity as manifest in the psychoanalytic domains of dreaming and transference - and found as such in the work of certain prominent autobiographical and 'creative' writers of more than one ethnic identification. Psychoanalysis of the works of American authors of a second ethnic origin e.g. the Chinese-American Maxine Hong Kingston or the Armenian-American Michael Arlen reveals ethnic inter-references, especially of an interlinguistic and bifocal ('"two or more" cultures in juxtaposition')(Fischer, 1986:197) nature, which certainly casts doubt upon the logic of binary opposition by which ethnographers (and, this author adds, other structuralist sociologies studied in this thesis) traditionally cast ethnic identity. (Original reference to Fischer, 1986 found in Gunew, 1992:40)

Lacan (1985; and in Coward & Ellis, 1977; Weedon, 1987) posits that, as desire is Oedipally repressed, this misrecognition is embedded in the unconscious.

Consequently, as the primary carer is recognised by the infant as an individual independent of the infant as a result of this resolution of the Oedipal phase - as **Other** than the perceiving infant - so the infant misrecognises **itself** as Other. Lacan locates this process of misrecognition as coinciding syncretically with the acquisition of language. As Chris Weedon explains:

Just as the infant of the mirror phase misrecognizes itself as a unified and in physical control of itself, so the speaking subject in the symbolic order misrecognizes itself and its utterance as one and assumes it is the author of meaning.

Weedon, 1987:52.

In Lacan's theorising (Lacan, 1985; and Coward & Ellis, 1977; Weedon, 1987), language can thus be theorised as playing a key role not only in the constitution of the self, and therefore the self's identity, but also in the constitution of meaning by which that self understands the world - or, in sociological terms discussed above, the way in which the individual is socialised into the symbolic orders of the world. Moreover, the Lacanian infant seeks to *control* meaning as it seeks both to acquire speech and to gratify its driving desires. The Lacanian identity is thus bound

up with the construction of meaning in a manner which is central to its existence and operation therefrom; the motivation from which the identity's sense of itself as an identity comes into being is the same as its motivation to construct meaning⁷.

This model of identity is thus one which brings together the psychological processes of symbolisation and identity formation in a way that explains what motivates an individual to symbolise a version of the world capable of subtending seeming contradictions. This symbolisation of the world that can be axiomatically 'totalising and unifying', as per Kapferer (1987) above, despite the fact that this world in reality might be, as Steinberg (1981) suggests above, not 'fixed or unchanging' but 'in constant flux'; a world which is, as these two writers suggest, **cultural** in construction, manifestation and organisation.

This is an identity, then, that in theory can be seen for the purposes of this thesis as capable of constituting itself according to ethnic groupings perceived in the social world into which it is born, but

⁷ For detailed descriptions of Lacanian theory in a poststructuralist context, see Juliet Mitchell's and Jacqueline Rose's introductions to Lacan, 1985; Lacan, 1985; Weedon, 1987; Grosz, 1989; Coward & Ellis, 1977; and Kristeva in Moi, 1986.

also capable of re-constituting itself according to other interests it perceives to be of benefit to its conception of itself. Such interests might come in the form of changes in material circumstance, ecological circumstance, opportunities for social mobility, status and role opportunities, and so on. This is an identity which, by virtue of its misrecognition of itself as 'author' of meaning, and or itself as unified and unitary, has a vested psychological interest in maintaining its meaningful construction of reality as also seeming to be unified and unitary, to be **fixed** and stable for as long as it is in the individual's interests for it to remain seeming so.

It is a model of identity that can thus be seen as being motivated to recognise its own interests as also being those of the social groupings it construes itself as belonging to, such as the consocial theorists above hypothesise. The maintenance of one misrecognition (social reality or self) is necessary for the maintenance of the other. Such an identity thus has a vested interest in fixing signs in that cultural construction which help maintain that meaningful misrecognition of fixedness in a social ordering like an ethnic grouping, as long as it perceives that group membership to be in its interests. But as soon as it perceives membership of other groups to be advantageous, or membership of the current group to be disadvantageous, the ability to unfix symbolised

constructions of meaning enables the identity to move on and reconstitute itself whilst maintaining the misrecognition of unitariness. The model can thus explain the interest-based social orderings of functional structuralism found otherwise problematic above.

Julia Kristeva (in Moi, 1986; Grosz, 1989; Weedon, 1987), another member of the *Tel Quel* intellectuals, takes this model of identity's relationship with the construction of meaning a step further. Taking up Lacan's proposition of the mirror-phase, Kristeva argues that the misrecognised unitary self is, in the act of creation, also the source of symbolic meaning (see Kristeva in Moi, 1986:240-249). She actively reintroduces the use of the term 'symbol' and 'symbolic' into a poststructuralist debate that usually prefers the semiotic concept of the sign (see Kristeva in Moi, 1986:27,64-71). Kristeva identifies with feminist concerns that a failure of Lacan's theory, like Freud's, is that it associates the formation of this misrecognised self, the subject, with a biological link between the possession of a physical penis and phallogentrism - the power attendant on possessing a penis (see Grosz, 1989:45-46; Weedon, 1987:69). Kristeva argues that the subsequent repression of the feminine in the human psyche leads to a creation of an unconscious semiotic *chora* (see Kristeva in Moi, 1986:101-102).

This semiotic chora maintains the repressed feminine aspect, presenting ongoing challenges to the phallogentric discourses of meaning presented to the post-mirror-phase subject by the world of social relations, including the construction of meaning through spoken and written language (Grosz, 1989:42-44; Kristeva in Moi, 1986:25,46,95,98,103). In Kristeva's theorising, such challenges thus manifest themselves in non-verbal communication and signification that gave rise to the study of semiotics in the first place (see Kristeva in Moi, 1986:104-112; Weedon, 1987:69-70). The repressed feminine aspect of the Lacanian identity thus maintains a constant *oppositional* discourse to the dominant phallogentric (or patriarchal, as feminism might better describe the discursive practice itself) construction of meaning by constructing its own meaning (for a fuller explication of Kristeva's theorising, see Kristeva herself as well as Toril Moi's introduction to Moi, 1986; plus Grosz, 1989; Weedon, 1987).

This adds to the Lacanian identity a function for the generation of meaning in the human psyche which is oppositional to existing cultural presentations of meaning in and of itself, and is thus capable of initiating as well as sustaining change, and the social action required to effect the same, as conflict

structuralists would have it. As Kristeva herself has written, '"the signifying process ... makes an element of potential change out of every agent of the structure"' (quoted in Coward & Ellis, 1977:80) - and the structure she is referring to is the social structure theorised by conflict structuralists above.

This additional theoretical component thus provides, for the purposes of this thesis, the very oppositionality required for ethnic identity as described above: a process of and volition to produce meaning by the subject contrary to existing cultural constructions of acculturative pressure i.e. ethnic resistance. The Lacanian/Kristeva model of identity can thus be construed as offering ethnicity an ethnic identity capable of initiating and sustaining change and a motivation for selecting certain diacritica over others - albeit a selection based on criteria of an arbitrary nature, as theorised by semiotics. How that selection takes place remains to be explicated.

Poststructuralist Ideology and Meaning

In reality, poststructuralists argue, the Lacanian identity is not unified. As Stuart Hall frames it, because of the unresolved contradictions of desire that go into the formation of the Lacanian subject during its mirror-phase (Freud's Oedipal phase), the self's perception of its own unity is to a certain extent fantasized. As the poststructuralist subject goes through subsequent processes of identity development, these contradictions will only compound themselves, as even more confusing and contradictory roles are made available to the subject - roles of 'the friend', the 'best friend', the 'student', the 'sibling', the 'problem child' the 'succeeding child' and so on; many of which may conflict with the subject's actual perception(s) of itself. Identity is thus 'something formed through unconscious processes over time'. It 'always remains incomplete, is always "in process", always "being formed"' (Hall, 1992:287).

Thus, under poststructuralist influence, this thesis has a working concept of identity which is **not** fixed. It does not have the immutable geo-ideological boundaries assumed of the ethnic identity theorised by Barth, Banton, and Linnekin and Poyer above. It is an identity in and subject to ongoing processes of change, and is thus itself changeable. Indeed, as American psychologist Erik Erikson (1971) argued (outside the poststructuralist framework) as early as 1967, identity

is formed and changed through a series of psychological 'crises' which occupy an individual's entire lifespan, resulting in a final 'maturity' which may never be reached.

As such, the poststructuralist identity is open to the processes of signification. The act even of maintaining it for the adult, with all of its compounding complexities, entails the construction of meaning - which, in semiotic terms, implies the arbitrary assignment of signifiers to signifieds. Inspired by the Lacanian reworking of identity, French Marxist Louis Althusser offered a re-interpretation of Marxism. According to Stuart Hall (1992), Althusser argued that Marx displaced two key propositions at the centre of what has been termed above the logical positivism of Western thought; they are that 'there is a universal essence of man' and that 'this essence is the attribute of "each single individual" who is its real subject' (Hall, 1992:286). Althusser instead took up Lacan's model of a subject whose meaningful orientation to the world was preexistent; that the subject is *constituted* by constructions of meaning external to them.

This theoretical revolution de-centred the subject, or what has been referred to above as the 'sovereign individual', from its position of primacy in the study of

society and human behaviour. Indeed, the notion of 'de-centring the subject' has become one of the hallmarks of poststructuralist thinking, and is well summarized as a position by Coward and Ellis in an extension of their definition of structuralism above:

The individual, even prior to his or her birth, is always subject-ed to the structure into which he or she is born. The structure is what sets in place an experience for the subject which it includes. This demands a radical re-estimation of the individual; it should no longer be possible to adhere to the notion of the individual as embodying some ideal pre-given essence. Being always subject-ed, the subject can never be a transcendental, punctual source of a symbolic system. It is de-centred within this structure, constructed in a specific system of differences and their arrangements.

Coward and Ellis, 1977:3-4

To constitute the driving force of this 'system of differences' Althusser resurrected the neglected function of ideology. The Italian Marxist Gramsci had already developed the concept of hegemony referred to above to describe the institutional wielding of power in social ordering without the need for direct physical coercion, force or imperative. Althusser took this Gramscian concept a step further, postulating that not only did hegemonic control of ideology maintain orders of social dominance, but that ideology itself constituted the subjects making up the social relations under its aegis (Coward & Ellis, 1977:71-76). Where Marx refers to ideology as 'false consciousness', Althusser simply views it as a distorted representation of "real" social relations 'by which the individual is treated as a

consistent sub consistent subject in control of his own de
act' (Coward & Ellis, 1977:75), despite the Lacanian
analysis that the subject is not consistent (as in,
unitary) and not 'the centre of the social whole' (Coward
& Ellis, 1977:75):

... the social process has no centre, no
motivating force in the sense that Renaissance
humanism saw man as the centre of the world,
actively willing the events of his social
organisation. Instead, society is composed of
multiple contradictions in relationships of
overdetermination. It is necessary, then, that
the relationships of people to the structure is
produced in a process of representation so that
they can act within the structure. Ideology is
the practice which articulates this
relationship, what Althusser calls the
necessarily imaginary relationship between
individuals and the social structure ... by
which they are constructed.

Coward & Ellis, 1977:74

In order to achieve this construction of the
subject, as Donald and Hall (1986) suggest, Althusser's
ideology is what structures the unconscious of the
Lacanian subject (through the process of signification) -
a subject which is thus, in the words of Donald and Hall,
'symbolically constituted' (Donald & Hall, 1986:xvii).
Such a subject, however, does not take account of the
individual's 'will to meaning' theorised by Weber
(Brand, 1987:61), a will implied in part by Kristeva's
semiotic chora. Althusser implies signification happens
to the subject, rather than as a result of a dynamic
relationship between volitional subject and constituting
ideology. (For a brief, comprehensive explication of
Althusser's contribution here, see Grosz, 1989:12-16.)

Alongside Althusser's repositioning of ideology is Michel Foucault's discourse theory. According to one critic (Patton, 1987), Foucault came not from a radical approach to Marxism but from a radical critique of history and its denial by the positivist construction of knowledge (Patton, 1987:229). As such, Foucault theorised power as the mechanism by which the individual subject is constituted (Patton, 1987:236-237) where Althusser theorised ideology. Like Althusser, his analysis does not presuppose any universal, centralising human essence (Patton, 1987:239) implicit in the Kantian 'knowing subject' (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983:xix,109,120).

U.S. scholars Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983) thus suggest that Foucault rejects the transcendental rationalism of Kant and the reductionism of logical positivism (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983:32-33). He also rejects structuralism's claims to objective truth (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983:83). Foucault's view of history, say Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983), is not the progress of universal reason driven by the subject but the play of rituals of power (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983:109-110). Knowledge and power are inseparable. Foucault can thus be seen to 'decentre' not only the subject but also truth, such that the subject is constituted by the discursive practices of power. Just as it is these practices which

produce the objects to which they refer, so signs do not represent their referents (signifieds) but "form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, quoted in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983:62), and the subject is the discursive process of differentiation. "We are difference," says Foucault (quoted in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983:87).

Foucault's theorising of discourses, it can thus be argued here, constituted not as disciplines of knowledge but as practices of power (see Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1987:50-51, 84, 129, 130, 134, 135, 141, 144, 147, 153, 159, 175; and Foucault in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1987:208-226), lends much to the sociological understanding of social structures because it removes from the social institutions of functional structuralism their structural determinism, just as it removes from conflict structuralism the historical determinism of class relations. Discourse theory proposes power itself as the structuring mechanism; a mechanism which structures through the dynamic and intersubjective relationship between the subject and the practices by which the subject is constituted - many of which are as already described by conventional sociology above.

To Althusser's notion of ideology as the constituting agency of the subject, Foucault's discursive practices can thus be seen to add not just the system of

ideas supporting hegemonic dominance, but also the ways in which these ideas are communicated. This does not mean simply the written or spoken texts of the semioticians. It involves the social practices and institutional organisation of sociologists. Ordering systems of ideas, in a Foucaultian analysis, are not simply stated in order to influence willing recipients. They are part and parcel of the formulation of knowledge itself, which itself consists in the practices by which individuals 'create' in their social relations with each other.

The value of discourse theory to Althusser's ideology can thus be argued to consist in the pervasive mechanism it provides for the transmission and maintenance of ideological control. Ideology is no longer one comparatively minor element of the power relations between social classes. It can be seen as central to the constitution of these power relations, and the subjects constituted by them. It can thus sustain a subject whose 'will to meaning' is driven by Kristeva's semiotic chora. As Chris Weedon summarises:

Meanings do not exist prior to their articulation in language and language is not an abstract system but is always socially and historically located in discourses. Discourses represent political interests and in consequence are constantly vying for status and power. The site of this battle for power is the subjectivity of the individual and it is a battle in which the individual is an active but not sovereign protagonist.

Weedon, 1987:41

However, poststructuralist ideology is still, as Coward and Ellis imply (1977:2), placed in the position of being able to 'fix' the Lacanian subject. It does this by actively supplying the subject with the symbolic resources by which it can misrecognise itself as Other in its imaginative construal of a unitary world, so that it can continue to misrecognise itself as whole and central to that world; its 'author'. This is an understanding which goes some considerable way towards explaining the 'passions engendered by ethnic conflict' noted by Gordon (1975:92) above in a way that strict Althusserian ideology does not. But the model still does not fully explain the emotional cogency of ethnic persistence. Why, for instance, does ethnic identity persist for individuals who do not take up ethnic group membership in a host culture after migration when there is no other reason to resist the imperatives of assimilationist ideology?⁸ Nor, for that matter, does this poststructuralist model of identity explain the simple fact of expressive ethnic activity such as ritual, visual art, craft, dance and song when ethnic identity is not under any particular discursive threat, as exemplified for instance by the rituals and religious practices that routinely punctuate a yearly calendar in a particular

⁸ An examination of Overseas Chinese, focusing on Hong Kong and Taiwanese Business Migrants to Australia and Canada, will provide an example of this phenomenon in Chapter Five.

culture? The French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1977) makes poststructuralism's final contribution for the purposes of this thesis in this regard. This thesis is in a position, however, to confront the bifurcation of cultural and structural pluralisms mooted as problematic for the theory of multiculturalism under review here.

Pluralism Debunked - Some Discussion

For the purposes of this thesis, the decentring of the subject from social relations constituted by the discursive structuring power of ideology can be argued as providing a synthesis of culture and politics which is capable of theoretically challenging the division between cultural and structural pluralism outlined as problematic in Chapter Two. For any pluralism emerging in a culture under whatever aegis - ethnic, gender, economic, status - to become known to that culture and mobile within it, it must firstly attain ideological status - that is to say, to be transmissible within the culture in a form that can facilitate its power for those diverse groupings constituting the pluralist condition. In order to do this, it must develop discourses capable of interacting with those of the existing dominant hegemony(ies). And, as can be interpolated from the discussion of Foucault above, discursive practice is structural in the same condition as it is cultural. There is no separation

between the two. Any governmental policy, like Australian and Canadian Multiculturalism, aimed at facilitating such a theoretical separation can be seen as operating discursively in the interests of its own hegemony, either with knowledge of the theoretical flaw or not. The bifurcation of structural and cultural pluralism can be seen, in other words, as a political red herring, an act of epistemological obfuscation, theoretical stonewalling.

The implications of the Althusser-Foucault version of culture outlined above are also fairly immediately apparent for the concept of ethnic identity drawn upon in Chapters One, Two and Three. Since identity is not a stable, fixed characteristic of the unified self, it can be argued here, its inscription within a larger ethnic grouping can be equally as unstable and liable to change. Indeed, the collective ethnic identity itself is more likely to sustain analysis, as it at least can be constituted by an ideology or ideological influences involved in the maintenance of existing power relations or the establishment of new power relations. To talk about maintaining ethnic heritage, for instance, as Canadian multiculturalism does (Hawkins, 1988:391; Burnett, 1984:21) (Australian multicultural policy only commits itself to maintaining access to the **opportunity** of maintaining ethnic heritage), without talking about attendant structural issues such as rights to representation in government, access to media and other

instruments of ideological production and so on, can be seen as one of two questionable propositions. It is either to engage ideologically in marginalising the very ethnic minorities one is on the surface purporting to support, or it is simply an act of ideological ignorance and, perhaps, naivety. It is not, however, analytically sustainable, and it is only politically sustainable until the groupings thus ethnically ascribed develop the discursive practices to erode the dominance of the existing hegemony.

For the purposes of this thesis, then, poststructuralist analysis can be employed to radically discredit the platform of culturo-structural pluralism on which the policy of Multiculturalism - and indeed Assimilation and Integration before it - is based. It also provides a dynamic inter-relationship between identity, ideology and the sign (symbol) that sustains an ethnicity, and a concept of ethnic identity, sought by this thesis: that is to say, a concept of ethnicity and ethnic identity capable of the nationalist and/counter-colonialist mobilisation theorised by Marxist sociologists (the ethnic change theorised by primordialists like Keyes) in the functional context of the social structuring postulated by Parsons. Poststructuralism fails to account for two significant factors, however.

The first of these lies in the fact that, under an analysis consonant with both Althusser and Foucault, there is no original or no significant progenitor of meaning. Foucault, according to Patton (1987), argues convincingly that the attempt to reduce a theory to its historically impossible origins is spurious anyway (see Patton, 1987:229-231). But if ideological alternatives to the existing hegemonic order are to be conceived, and there is no atavistic, primordial, originary ethnicity, where does the ascription of meaning come from?

Semiotics, upon which the poststructuralists build their ideas about meaning, claims that the act of signification at the site of the sign is arbitrary. But if the subject is, as Foucault, Althusser and Lacan would argue, constituted by ideology and, in the context of ethnicity, politically mobilised by ideology, where is the meaning to come from to form or select some signs as more significant than others? How is it that some signs, and not others, discursively furnish the ideology required to constitute the subjects such that they can be mobilised to political action, or any action at all?

Moreover, and herein lies the second mitigating factor, individuals not only maintain personal identity on the ethnic level, they actively resist ideological discourse which should, if Althusser, Foucault and Lacan

are correct, change them i.e. re-constitute their identities. Indeed, there are individuals capable of acting upon other individuals on the basis of construed ethnic identities in a manner which has no relation to an intelligibility such as an ideology; prejudice is characteristically irrational and unreasonable (see Adorno et al, 1969:9). In other words, there is a volitional subject capable of resisting ideological constitution which can act on the basis of personally maintained orders of meaning such as beliefs, and can do so regardless of the illusory nature of their perception of their own unity. There is also, as Kristeva's semiotic chora suggests, a volitional subject capable of generating new meaning outside the metaphor and metonymy of existing discourse (see Kristeva in Moi, 1986:93-96,98,228-229). It is here that Derrida (1977) makes poststructuralism's final contribution to the analysis.

Derrida, the Trace, and Symbolisation

Derrida (1977) embarked upon a radical critique of the whole notion of 'human nature', which seemed to him to be the conceptual cornerstone of post-Enlightenment Western thinking. He particularly criticised Rousseau (Derrida, 1977:209-275) for metaphorically collapsing concepts of 'Nature' and 'Society' into the cultural notion of 'human nature', driven by 'passion' and its

natural 'presence' - concepts on which Rousseau built his revolutionary ideology of human progress. Derrida also criticises Levi Strauss for his reductionist dependence on this Rousseauian notion, asserting the primacy of the spoken word over writing in his quest for the origins of language and culture, for instance (Derrida, 1977:102-144).

Derrida himself, in his paradigmatic exercise in anti-essentialist thinking, *Of Grammatology* (Derrida, 1977), questions the very concept of the natural 'presence' of 'human nature' and its state of beingness, and in doing so pursues the construction of meaning in language itself. He challenges the liberal humanist emphasis developed by the likes of Rousseau and Levi-Strauss (and, incidentally, highly present in Chomskian linguistics) that the human 'voice', the spoken word, is the natural site of the production of meaning. Derrida argues convincingly, for instance that 'writing' is a far more accurate way of describing the production of language, in that it is far closer to the psychological processes producing spoken text and can be shown to be coeval with, if not pre-existent to, oral verbal communication (see Derrida, 1977:144-158, 209-242, 280-283).

He then goes on to question the dominance of 'words' as the unit of meaning by which we understand 'language' at all - a dominance he terms *logocentrism* (Derrida, 1977:49). How, to paraphrase Derrida simply, is the word formed from the ongoing chain of signification? Where does one word end and another begin in the continuum of meaning that is the ongoing experience of a living human subject? Surely, it might be argued from the analysis of semiotics above, the act of signification is an arbitrary one - the assignment of one specific signifier to one specific signified which in fact only registers its difference from another signifier and signified? Derrida suggests that as soon as the "word" (sign) is coined to signify one aspect of experience as meaningful, as **difference**, the experience is no longer present as meaningful in the essential state of presence coined by the sign. Signification 'moves on', as it were (see Derrida, 1977:49). Words (signs) are always retrospective, assigned after the fact (see Derrida, 1977:280).

Signification presented as 'natural', after Saussure, conceals this fact. 'What broaches the movement of signification is what makes its interruption impossible' (Derrida, 1977:49), Derrida frames the paradox. 'The self-identity of the signified conceals itself unceasingly and is always on the move' (Derrida, 1977:49). As experience **is** ongoing and temporal,

logocentric language **defers** the 'presence' implied in meaning (Derrida, 1977:280), until some implied 'beyond' - it might be inferred, for instance, the next time the word (sign) is used, in whatever experiential context requires or stimulates its use.

Meaning, to paraphrase Derrida once more, is thus never really **fixed**. On the contrary, it is subject to a constant process of temporary fixing by logocentric signification which is in fact only stable by virtue of its assumed origin, its originary presence - the presence it can no longer represent (see Derrida, 1977:225-229,275,280). Indeed, the presence of the sign itself questions the existence of the origin. The origin of meaning thus cannot be constituted 'except reciprocally by a nonorigin' Derrida calls 'the trace', and 'which thus becomes the origin of the origin'(Derrida, 1977:61), 'the moment of discourse'(Derrida, 1977:62) as Foucault might have it, the point at which difference occurs. Derrida calls this paradoxical process of the inscription of the trace **differance**:

It is not a question of a constituted difference here, but rather, before all determination of the content, of the pure movement which produces difference. The (pure) trace is differance.

Derrida, 1977:62

It is here that the persistence of the concept of 'difference' in cultural differentiation, which seems to have emerged so often above at that crucial point where the social scientist seeks a meaningful mechanism to describe the process of ethnic differentiation (Coward and Ellis, 1977:3-4; Gordon, 1975:89; Keyes, 1982:7; Watson, 1990:17), finds its substantiation in the symbol. In Derridan analysis, it is not so much the fixing of a sign that renders it, for the purposes of this thesis, immutable, but the fixing of it *in language*, especially logocentric language. Difference is the articulation of the sign and as such, in Derridan analysis, is the 'becoming-writing of language' (Derrida, 1977:229). Writing, as Derrida frames it, is thus 'the other name of this difference' (Derrida, 1977:268), and it is in this way that 'language is originarily metaphorical' (Derrida, 1977:271), to the extent that it effaces its origin. As such, language and signification as writing 'naturalizes culture', writes Derrida (Derrida, 1977:301). 'It is that precultural force which is at work as articulation within culture, working to efface a difference which it has opened' (Derrida, 1977:301).

From the perspective, then, of language as writing, Derrida radically reinterprets Saussurian signification, and the relationship between symbol and sign, which is precisely the **opposite** to that construed by semiology, as differentiated by Leach (1976) above. Derrida (1977)

differentiates the symbol from the sign after Saussure, by virtue of the former's having some sort of **natural attachment** to that which it symbolises, the signified it signifies (Derrida, 1977:45-48). Whereas the sign, Derrida infers, has no such natural attachment. It is arbitrary and unmotivated by the signifier (Derrida, 1977:45-47). Thus while differance implies that 'there is neither symbol nor sign but a becoming-sign of the symbol' (Derrida, 1977:47), the symbol is what institutes the trace in some graphically representable version of signification. The instituted trace is thus the 'becoming unmotivated' (Derrida, 1977:47) of the process of signification, its removal from the originary presence of meaning. The 'becoming unmotivated of the symbol' thus implies its fixedness, the fixation which culls 'sign' from the process of signification. It is an active process. A demotivation (see Derrida, 1977:50-51). Applied to the purpose of this thesis, the process of symbolisation as described by Derrida here can thus be seen as one in the same as the process of cultural differentiation. Ethnic differentiation, it is interpolated here, cannot take place fixing and unfixing process of symbolisation. This process can be seen as that sought by Keyes by which ethnic differentiation establishes 'different categories of difference' (Keyes, 1982:7).

Restoring The Unitary Subject (Sovereign Invididual)

This thesis thus proposes a radical epistemological differentiation of the symbol from the sign for the purposes of the sociological analysis of ethnic identity. It proposes, after Derrida (1977), that the symbol is in fact what **fixes** the sign as meaningful in cultural discourse. After Foucault (see Foucault, 1983; Drefus & Rabinow, 1983; Patton, 1987), this cultural discourse is inherently political as it is structural, being concerned with the power relations by which human relations are constituted, and thus being the organising principle by which the institutional structure of a society, for instance, is created, sustained and changed. After Althusser (see Grosz, 1989:12-16), ideology is accepted as one of the main discursive practices by which social institutions and other agencies of social structure can order meaning for the individual.

But an equal agent of perception of meaning, or the **fixing** of the sign as symbol, is required. The individual's identity, as a self-regulating mechanism governing behaviour, can be seen as constituting such an agency. Lacan's subject, however, presents us with no such identity in the sense that it can be viewed as a whole, unitary psychological mechanism (Mitchell, 1985:5). For this subject, as Kristeva might argue, the

process of symbolisation describes that by which signifiers which are assigned to signifieds and, through the logocentric influence of language, are **fixed** in a symbolic order through the pre-Oedipal action of Lacan's 'mirror phase' (see Kristeva in Moi, 1986: 220-230, 242). As Lacan's identity creates itself in the illusory sense of its own unity, so signs signified through language, constructed as meaningful through the use of words, are (to paraphrase Kristeva) signified in the illusory sense of their permanence, their unity, their wholeness and unchangeability. Words and/or graphic representation make signs *as if* objects, *as if* facts, even though they are only constructions of human thought and linguistic practice (see Rose, 1985:31-33). The deferral of meaning through the deployment of logocentric language seen in Derrida (1977), it can thus be argued here, enables the subject to maintain the illusion of the unitary self through the added illusion of words, and their imagined permanence.

This Lacanian position in relation to identity would thus seem to make the generation of meaning an accident, a paradoxical by-product of the misrecognition of the self during the 'mirror phase' and its subsequent consolidation through repression during the Oedipal phase. Despite Lacan's seeming dependence on a 'symbolic order' for his understanding of the subject (see Lacan, 1985:112-113,116-121; Rose, 1985:36-43), he seems not to

explain how the signifier becomes symbolic, let alone symbolic on the motivational scale that has been detailed above in relation to ethnic identity.

It is here that Kristeva's semiotic chora can be brought to bear upon the argument. Because the chora precedes the formative influence of institutional ideology through language, it is the one site within the human psyche capable of oppositional challenge to the phallogocentric domination of discourse facilitated by the logocentric domination of language (see Grosz, 1989:43; Kristeva in Moi, 1986:101-121; Weedon, 1987:70,89). Indeed, it could be argued that Kristeva views the chora as bound into such an opposition as it is bound into the unconscious by the 'mirror' and Oedipal phases (e.g. Kristeva in Moi, 1986:95-102).

Attempts to challenge and break the boundaries of logocentrism's maintenance of the illusion of verbal language's certainty and permanence, its *authority*, such as is evident in much contemporary poetry and literature (see Grosz, 1989:54-56; Kristeva in Moi, 1986:30,110-113; Moi, 1986:17), can now be seen to spring from the chora. In other words, the chora provides the motivational or volitional force for the production of *new meaning*, either by challenging existing verbal language use (e.g.

the literary arts) or challenging the discursive dominance of language in general (e.g. other expressive arts like dance, music, the visual arts)⁷. This idea will have great significance in the final chapter of this thesis. For the moment, the contribution of Kristeva's semiotic chora to the argument here is that it provides a function central to the Lacanian 'identity' capable of generating meaning, of seeking the generation of symbols from signs by virtue of its relationship with the ideology presented to it by the external, social, institutional world. In aspiring to maintain the misrecognised unity of the self, the Kristevan subject also aspires to maintain symbols as fixed, and meaningfully so. The process of symbolisation, then, can be seen for the purposes of this thesis as also capable of emotional inspiration - motivation - at a level inseparable from the fixative nature of ethnic identity.

Indeed, Derridan analysis enables this thesis further to analyse **ethnic identity itself** as a sign which, once fixed as a symbol of the individual's identity by the individual subject, has no reason to change until reason is presented. It is, as a symbol, actively fixed in its Derridan state of 'becoming unmotivated', and can be seen as actively maintained as

⁷ Kristeva uses an examination of the phenomenon of the poetic function in language on which to base the development of her concept of the semiotic chora. For more detail, see Kristeva in Moi, 1986.

such by the subject under Lacanian/Kristevan analysis. Identity, like other logocentric signs, is fixed until unfixed.

For the purposes of a policy of multiculturalism, it is the *unfixability* of such signs that is important. Poststructuralist analysis, for the purposes of this discussion, shows that while individuals may maintain and assert ethnic identity as a unitary, primordial, atavistic entity that they, as individuals, can be reduced to and which cannot be violated, under poststructuralist analysis it is **not** immutable. The signs which make it up as symbols can be unfixed and changed, just as the sign it itself represents - ethnicity - can be unfixed and altered.

Moreover, ethnic identity as a symbol is not equivalent in the value ascribed to it by the symbolising individual as, for instance, a diacritica of ethnicity might be - dress or speech, for instance. This is because, it is contended here, the process of fixing signs as symbols involves the fixing of the ideas by which they are given meaning through the semiotic action of the chora. In this analysis, the symbol fixes ideology as much as ideology fixes the symbol. The manner by which Adorno, for instance, was able to assert forty years ago

that 'personality may be regarded as a determinant of ideological preferences' but not necessarily 'an ultimate determinant' (Adorno et al, 1969:5) can now be placed in an epistemologically sustainable context.

There still remains the cogency with which ethnic identity is maintained, the emotional strength of the cathexis involved, that has yet to be resolved with the concept of ethnic identity developed. As argued above, Kristeva's semiotic chora adds emotional volitional cogency to the Lacanian subject. But, it is argued here, why should Lacan's mirror phase in the formation of identity be the only phase? Why is identity, and the unconscious, somehow seen as being hermetically sealed in this phase, only to be added to and compounded by subsequent role-taking and experiential conflict?

Lacanian thinking seems to be reductionist in this respect. Because the mirror-phase is impenetrable to verifiable investigation - a researcher can never actually verify by questioning the subject whether what they hypothesise to be the reasons behind observed behaviour are in fact the causes of observed behaviour - Lacan subscribes to a mystique of the pre-linguistic child. As Coward and Ellis write:

Lacan produces a mythical hypothesis of the child in its existence before it becomes a language-using member of society. This myth can only ever be mythical precisely because any knowledge one has of the processes pre-existing language and the unconscious are known only through language with its symbolic relations.

Coward & Ellis, 1977:101

In Derridan terms, time and the concept of temporal ordering take on metaphorical proportions for Lacan and Kristeva (see Derrida, 1977:65-66,72,275,289-290). They construe an impenetrable 'barrier' of time, it can be argued here, the gateway to which is the acquisition of language; a 'barrier' which does not sustain analysis by virtue of its metaphoricity.

There is no need for the Lacan/Kristeva model of identity to be temporally reductionist in this mythological manner. Mitchell (1985:19) points out that Freud's castration complex is what retrospectively gives relevance to previous subject-object loss experiences such as loss of faeces; surely it can thus itself be drawn upon by subsequent stages of psychological development to provide similar constitutive perspective. Erik Erikson's theory of identity, referred to above (Erikson, 1971), is also (biologically) reductionist (Erikson, 1971:91-93), but it subscribes to no such 'forcing house' pre-linguistic drama of the psyche as subscribed to by Lacan and Kristeva. Whilst recognising the importance of Freud's Oedipal stage, Erikson sees at least the whole of childhood up to and including

adolescence as the site for an ongoing formation of identity through internal 'crisis'. Erikson (1971:96-141) details eight stages (or crises) of identity, the last of which may never be reached in a human lifetime .

Erikson's subject, however, is not diminished as living a 'lie' coined at the Mirror/Oedipal stage, a 'misrecognition' of itself as a whole and unitary subject. Each stage has its own value, its own epigenesis (time or period of ascension), and its own contribution to make to the identity as a whole. And, regardless of whether or not this thesis chooses to commit itself to the theoretical details of Erikson's epigenetic identity, as opposed to some other model developed by some other theorist, its value here is in defocussing the Lacanian subject's originary siting in the mirror phase. For in de-emphasising the totality of the subject's siting in the mirror phase, this thesis can also de-emphasise the poststructuralist diminution of the subject's self-deluding maintenance of a sense of its own unity; an emphasis for which poststructuralism is criticised as anti-humanist (Milner, 1991:76).

Why should, after all, the powerful identity confusion of adolescence which hails the arrival of ideology as an active and dynamic component of the

individual's conscious and unconscious activity (see Erikson, 1971:131-135), be any less valid than an aspect of identity developed before the acquisition of language? The Lacanian incorporation of the construction and constructing nature of meaning into the formation of the unconscious provides a useful way of understanding the relationship between ideology, the identity and signification. It can only, however, offer a useful means of understanding the relationship between identity and ethnicity if its development is allowed to continue beyond the mythologised point of formation into the later, conceptually higher-order processes of socialisation in which a collective concept like ethnicity subsists. To assert otherwise is to deny the individual their sense of their own significance (or self esteem, as social psychologists call it), as inherited by their identity, regardless of whether such a sense of wholeness is a construction or not. To phrase that construction as a 'misrecognition' is merely to load it pejoratively, to devalue it; which is consequently to diminish the importance of the values adopted by that subject as mere constructions of ideology-in-discourse (discursive practice).

To the contrary, it can be argued that the contribution of Kristeva's chora may not truly be felt until the subject develops the psychological disposition towards conscious awareness of the ideological influence

of the phallogocentric and logocentric of social discourse upon it. The chora places the adolescent subject in a powerful position to analyse ideology, and discursive practice in general, and begin a critical process of counter-hegemonic challenge to logocentrism and phallogocentrism in any of its manifestations. This is not just because adolescents can debate, write poetry, generate visual expressions or wordless performances which explore, and in exploring bring to consciousness, the controlling, constituting nature of the discourses to which they are exposed. It is because, in Erikson's analysis, adolescence is the period in identity formation during which the subject (or that aspect of it Erikson calls the *psychosocial identity*)(e.g.Erikson, 1971:135) actually formulates its relationship to ideology - determines for itself which ideas or sets of ideas it will and will not "take on" as its own system of social values and norms (Erikson, 1971: 132-135)

This thesis, then, reasserts the volitional subject - unitary or not. For the volitional subject - the subject with its own identity-driven will, capable of identifying its own emotional attachments and bringing to consciousness its own discursively ideological constitution - as a subject capable of sustaining an ethnic identity; for instance, in affirmative but nevertheless acculturative conditions. This thesis thus

reinstates the sovereign individual, with its Weberian will.

This, however, is not all this thesis reinstates as theoretical currency. In acknowledging that the institutional organisation of social relations may give greater ideological cogency to some signs than others (e.g. The Family, The Law, Education, Religion, Marriage), and that some signs are fixed more permanently than others (at least in the mind of the subject) by virtue of their apprehension through logocentric language, it becomes useful to differentiate both between logocentrically fixed signs and other signs, and between institutionally (or ideologically) valorised signs and signs of less discursive significance. It is thus that this thesis re-introduces the term *symbol* as Derrida differentiates it above, from the sign.

Deep Cultural and Deep Structural Symbols

To recap on the above, contrary to Leach (1976) this thesis argues that it is the sign which arbitrarily represents an object or idea in its meaningful form - or form apprehensible to discourse - and the symbol which, as a sign, bears some more internally logical (or

'natural', as Derrida might have it) relationship with the object or idea it represents. For the symbol, by virtue of its being fixed in the illusion of unity by the deferral of meaning of logocentric language, is constituted as meaningful (and as meaningfully inseparable from its object of expression) by discursive practice. As such, it is the influence of ideology which gives symbols a sense of permanence, fixedness and *authority* that signs do not necessarily possess, although both are functions of the discursive constitution of meaning. But, by the same account, the symbols themselves are reciprocally what **fixes** ideology as an active, intelligibly mobile component of discourse.

The relationship between symbol and ideology, then, unlike the relationship between sign and ideology, is reciprocal. Ideology **dominates** the symbol no more than the symbol dominates ideology.

This thesis suggests further that the greater the complex of signification surrounding a symbol - the more signs and symbols deployed to support the particular symbol involved in an ideological cathexis - the *deeper* its inherence is likely to be in the individual psyche;

which means the *greater* its cathexis⁸. Terms like deeper and greater are, of course, metonymic; the type of *deeper* symbol suggested here might better be described in terms of how much harder it is to *unfix* than other symbols, because it is structurally buried beneath or within many other 'fixings' (symbolising signifiers or, in Barthes' terms, metasignifications) - held in place by them. For ease of understanding, however, this thesis calls such symbols Deep Symbols, and asserts that they are fixed by significant discursive organisations of ideology such as social institutions, in the same 'act' as they fix such ideological influences as meaningful for those organisations.

Poststructuralism is not the only source of such a concept. U.S. sociologist C. Wright Mills, like Geertz in response to a criticism of Parsonian functionalism, developed his own concept of 'master symbols of legitimation' (Wright Mills, 1970:46) back in the 1950s: symbols which legitimate a social institution's ascription of power to those hierachically placed within it to command such power. Such symbols might be seen as the law, education, family and health. They might also be

⁸ The term 'cathexis' is a psychological description of the process by which some objects or ideas represented to the psyche become "bonded" by it such that they sustain emotional or affective cogency. It can be seen as a 'ppsyhic charge' or 'instinctual energy' of the mind (Connell, 1987:112). For an illustration of its usefulness in sociological understanding, see Connell, 1987:98, 111-116.

seen as institutional in a less structural sense. In Australia, as Edgar points out, such master symbols might consist in 'private property', or 'free enterprise', or 'earning your own living', or 'owning your own home' (Edgar, 1980:138). Such symbols already take the metaphorical power of the symbol out of the strict realm of structuralist sociology into the domain of semiology, even though this was not Wright Mills analysis in his day. As such, while not studied here in detail, they provide a strong sociological adjunct to the current focus on symbolism. (For more detail, see C. Wright Mills' *The Sociological Imagination*, 1970.)

Symbolic Interactionists, after the work of George Herbert Mead, offer a more conventionally empiricist approach to the sociology of symbols. They analyse social interaction itself as symbolic i.e. as the source of meaning in social relations (Becker & McCall, 1990). Without poststructuralism's understanding of the pervasive reach of logocentric discourse and text, Symbolic Interactionist studies show just how possible it is to sustain a sociological concept of symbolism based in social interaction, rather than the logocentrically constructed meanings within those interactions. In other words, Symbolic Interactionism brings to this thesis the possibility that social action can be empirically analysed as symbolic i.e. as a social fact.

This provides a dimension of empirical justification for the thesis more in keeping with conventional, structural-functionalist sociology. This author maintains, however, that this isolation of the symbolising nature of interaction serves for the purposes of this thesis to illustrate and support the Foucaultian notion of discursive practice. A rite, ritual or some other cultural practice can be just as much a Deep Symbol as a written Constitution or a public role (like President) because, under discourse theory, it **is** constituted discursively i.e. as power through the ideas sustaining it (ideology).

This thesis further differentiates between Deep Symbols that are actively current in logocentric discourse as functions of counter-hegemonic social mobilisation - i.e. organised attempts to change the structure of social relations - and Deep Symbols which seem 'dormant' in the ongoing exercise of social relations i.e. symbols which might be seen as serving functions of purely cultural maintenance. The former shall be called Deep Structural Symbols and the latter Deep Cultural Symbols.

It is recognised that this bifurcation attentuates the spurious division of Cultural and Structural Pluralism this thesis is criticising, but in doing so it also provides a mechanism for addressing the same. For, in this understanding of Deep Symbolism, unlike cultural and structural pluralism, the structurality and culturality are far from mutually exclusive. On the contrary, all Deep Structural Symbols are Deep Cultural Symbols. Deep Cultural Symbols only become Deep Structural Symbols when they are mobilised (or, indeed, manufactured) for social action - hegemonic or counter-hegemonic.

Deep Cultural Symbols thus become useful in describing the sort of symbols, and symbolising hierachies or complexes, which characterise Geertz's primordial ethnic identity - identity which is simply maintained, with pride, because it has no need to change. Deep Structural Symbols become useful in discussing Deep Cultural Symbols which have been actively, if perhaps unconsciously, co-opted by social groupings forging and deploying ideological discourse in order to alter the discursive edifices of the dominant hegemony. They do not need to be simply oppositional, however. Ideology is just as actively deployed by the dominant hegemony to engineer changes in social relations, and Deep Cultural Symbols can become ideologically mobile (Deep Structural Symbols) in order to assist in this process.

Multiculturalism in Australia can be seen as one such attempt to convert Ethnicity as a Deep Cultural Symbol into a Deep Structural Symbol representative of government initiative in matters cultural; an initiative which hides an ideological agenda mooted in Chapter One i.e. to limit the actual structural power of the social groupings concerned by seemingly acknowledging their 'cultural' existence. The Hawke-Keating Labor Government's 'Accord' can be seen as another attempt, this time to create a Deep Structural Symbol representative of an ideological re-alignment in social relations, and the nature of social discourse, from three-way structural opposition between Business, Unions and Government to a three-way co-operation. After twelve years, the term 'The Accord' has become cultural currency in public discussion on matters of public policy (e.g. Jennett & Stewart, 1990:2,3,6,7,35,44-7,50,54-8,62,66-7,73-5,79,81-99,295,392,396,404-5).

Having established a concept of symbol, then, and symbolisation which enables a dynamic concept of ethnicity, incorporating the influence of ideology and symbol under the aegis of discursive practice, to stand up to analysis, this thesis is now able to offer an alternative to the rhetorically problematic Multiculturalism, with its dependence on a spurious

bifurcation of Structural and Cultural Pluralisms. This will be the work of the next and final chapter.