

piction of the Carians as *barbarophonoi*. This may be true, but there is at least the possibility (noted by Leaf, *The Iliad* i 120) that at the beginning of Book 3 Homer's contrast between the silent dignity of the Achaeans and the Trojans who come on with the "clamour of cranes" (iii 3) "appears to mark a national difference between the two enemies." And, although it is tempting to regard the "clamour" as a remark upon the cacophony of the barbarian tongue, elsewhere the two sides speak the same language, and at xi 50, the "clamour" is attributed to the Greeks.

- ³ The lectures were given in the spring of 1908. The most recent publication, as far as I know, is the Dover edition: J. B. Bury, *The Ancient Greek Historians* (New York, 1958). See Lecture II for Herodotus.

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Gayatri Spivak. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present*. Harvard UP, 1999. Pp. 448. \$24.95 pb.

In response to the question "whither Marxism?" the work of Gayatri Spivak has persistently revised and modified the terms of Marxist and feminist thinking in order to account for the global restructuring of capital and labour. If the proletariat once stood as redemptive figures in the political culture of twentieth-century Europe and the former Soviet Union, the labour conditions for many contemporary South Asian women and immigrant workers have become so deregulated and geographically dispersed to prevent any unified labour movement, or class struggle. As Spivak suggests, the conditions for such radically disempowered social groups present a crisis in the cognitive abilities of Western critical theory and cultural politics. For this reason, Spivak's work does not adhere rigorously to the institutional strictures of critical theory; rather it has moved increasingly towards "a setting to work of deconstruction" that takes place outside the disciplinary calculus of philosophy, literature, or history. Such a move does not simply weaken the theoretical rigour of Spivak's thought, but accentuates a crucial concern in her thought: to trace an ethical and rhetorical space for articulating the social agencies and everyday lives of disempowered women, without falling into an epistemological double bind that represents or speaks for different subaltern women.

At first glance, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* seems to reassemble much of Spivak's earlier published work from the eighties, including for example, "The Rani of Sirmur," "Imperialism and Sexual Difference," "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," and a rewritten version of "Can the Subaltern Speak?" as well as later essays such as "Diasporas Old and New" and "Love, Cruelty and Cultural Talks in the Hot Peace." Yet, through the re-framing of these earlier arguments, Spivak interrogates the conceptual and geopolitical ground of postcolonial studies, at a time when nation states are losing political and economic control to multinational corporations and global organisations. By doing so, Spivak attempts to change the object of politicised interdisciplinary work and to trace the historical ruptures, as well as the repetitions between the histories of colonialism and the current phase of global electronic finance capitalism, which inflect contemporary cultural production.

The book is organised into four chapters under the headings of philosophy, literature, history, and culture. Such a formal structure may appear to preserve intact the disciplinary methods and objects of knowledge that Spivak claims to question. Yet, by inhabiting the systematic conventions of each of these disciplines, Spivak traces the limitations and blindspots of Western thought in its representation and administration of the Third World from nineteenth-century territorial imperialism to contemporary global Development policies. By following closely the operations of classic texts in mainstream European philosophy, literary studies, and history, Spivak recalls Jacques Derrida's insistence that the movements of deconstruction operate necessarily from the inside, so that "deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work." The ethical value of such a reading practice is captured in a subsequent parenthetical remark: "un-accusing, unexcusing, attentive, situationally productive through dismantling" (81). By advancing Derrida's argument in this way, Spivak develops an ethics of reading that affirms the erasure of the native informant in European cultural texts, while suspending the possibility of postcolonial critique from a secure position outside of colonial histories.

If the paralysis associated with certain forms of US-based identity politics have worked to manage diversity either through the rhetoric of blame or abject guilt, Spivak moves to examine how the philosophical, political, and cultural genealogies of colonialism have shaped national independence movements in South Asia, and how the formation of state political institutions in the so-called Third World perpetuated the exploitation of particular disempowered, subaltern groups. Spivak's ongoing concern with the ethics of alterity, rather than the politics of identity, thus serves to remind her readers of how the speech acts of particular subaltern groups cannot be adequately represented in the European liberal democratic terms of citizenship.

Chapter one focuses specifically on the colonial genealogy of the German philosophical enlightenment. Invoking an essay by Carl Pletch on the limits of the three-world model in the social sciences, Spivak considers how Kant, Hegel, and Marx figure "as remote discursive precursors" in the changing axiomatics of imperialism (3-4). By doing so, Spivak reveals how each of Kant, Hegel, and Marx are not merely philosophers, but thinkers of the capitalist world system *avant la lettre*. In her reading of the Kantian sublime, Spivak charts the disavowal of the native informant between Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* and his *Critique of Judgement*. Emphasising the limits of cognitive control over the rational will, Kant's analytic of the sublime worked to expand the double bind of practical reason, where the moral subject was able to think a final purpose without being able to know it. Yet, if the moral subject needed culture to define his cognitive limitations in the face of the abyssal structure of the sublime, these limitations are also marked by the narrow terms of moral subjectivity. As Spivak argues, Kant's reading of the sublime presented itself differently to people who were not constituted as human subjects within Kant's

European philosophical system: “Without development of moral ideas, that which we, prepared by culture, call sublime presents itself to man in the raw [*dem rohen Menschen*] merely as terrible” (qtd. in Spivak 12-13).

For Spivak, Kant’s philosophical system is stabilised through the disavowal of an indeterminate “(no)-place” between the sublime notion of nature and the moral definition of freedom (24). Such a disavowal has political consequences for those figures who do not have access to the category of the human subject in Kant’s schema: the Australian aborigine or the man from Tierra del Fuego. As Spivak acknowledges, these figures are only casual objects of thought in Kant’s discussion, and so can be dismissed as a rhetorical gesture in conventional philosophical readings. Yet, in a provocative re-reading of Kant via Paul De Man and Jacques Derrida, Spivak goes on to reveal the ethico-political openings (rather than the epistemological limits) of deconstructive readings which maintain that such philosophical texts “can be made to deconstruct what [they] perform” (30). By noting the geopolitical determinants constituting Kant’s moral subject, Spivak concludes that the “aboriginal para-subject cannot be theo-rized as functionally *completely* frozen in a world where teleology is schematized into geography (writing the world)” (30). This *parergonal* location of disempowered, non-European subaltern groups in Kant’s text not only defines the epistemological limits and geopolitical determinants of Kant’s *philosophical* system, but also prefigures Spivak’s ethical reading of particular blindspots in cultural and geopolitical representations of the *(post)-imperialist world* system.

Leading on from this discussion, Spivak proceeds to develop an argument that runs throughout her book: that relationships of colonial power cannot be structurally reversed; rather they “require a persistent attempt to displace the reversal [and] to show the complicity between native hegemony and the axiomatics of imperialism” (37). In a reading of Hegel’s *Lectures On Aesthetics*, Spivak considers how the classic Hindu text, *The Gita*, worked to stabilize elite forms of Indian nationalism in the twentieth century, as well as occupying a particular dialectical phase in Hegel’s teleological projection of the (European) world spirit (*weltgeist*). For, as Spivak points out, such a Eurocentric geo-graphing of the world in the nineteenth century underwrote Hegel’s writing on aesthetics, as well as history and philosophy. By rearticulating this moment in Hegel’s *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Spivak spells out the implications of such a reading for elite forms of cultural nationalism in preindependence India. If the *Gita* stands as a “not-yet historical” text in Hegel’s *Lectures*, it provides a “supra-historical” resource for Indian nation-building (62). Rather than enabling the voice of the disempowered colonial subject, “[t]he agent of Hinduism is the high colonial/nationalist subject who ‘refines’ the religion into its universalist lineaments” (64). The “certain loss of style” (64) that results from this reading has ethical and political implications for subsequent, informed figurations of the “‘lost’ perspective” of the

“historical Indian” in contemporary, metropolitan-based postcolonial criticism (65). Spivak clearly resists the temptation to simply represent this lost historical perspective. Yet, as Spivak suggests, if we attend to this loss of style, and the historical subordination of the native informant, we can at least begin to articulate the (ex)orbitant space occupied by this figure, rather than circling around “Idea, Logos and Form” (67).

The closing section of the chapter on philosophy offers an illuminating reading of the Asiatic Mode of Production (AMP) in the Marxist corpus. If the AMP signified a prehistorical space in Marx’s theory of historical materialism, Spivak argues that this untheorised place can work to disrupt the constitution of the productive body as a human subject in Marx’s Eurocentric narrative. Echoing her earlier reading of the raw man in Kant’s *Third Critique*, Spivak notes how the property relationship defining the Asian individual in Marx’s text is figured as Species Life, but “has not yet differentiated itself into Species-Being” (80). Whereas Species Life denotes the abstract human who is coded as a disembodied resource in economic relationships leading back to primitive communism, Species-Being approximates the (European) class-conscious human subject that Marx persistently describes in his critical enterprise (77).

For Spivak, however, Marx’s elision of the Asian individual in the definition of Species-Being falls back on the Hegelian move to subordinate historical and geographical difference to a logical paradigm. As a consequence, Marx seems to define the AMP as a process without a subject. In returning to the imperialist determinants of Marx’s thought, however, Spivak unhinges an asymmetry in Marx’s notions of Species Life and Species Being that resurfaces in Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of a body without organs (BwO). Situating the BwO in terms of the capital relationship, Spivak encourages us to consider how the (re)productive body of particular subaltern women is integrated into the state political or philosophical organs of the European enlightenment, as well as contemporary late capitalist circuits.

What Spivak implies but does not state is that the non-systematic experiences and knowledges of such radically disempowered groups present a crisis in imagination when it comes to the cognitive abilities of Western critical theory (for more on this subject, see Hitchcock). After all, it is this knowledge and experience that inform Spivak’s *Critique*, and which Spivak persistently invokes as an ethical and political horizon for radical materialist thought. It is left to the implied reader of Spivak’s *Critique* to re-assemble the embodied knowledge of subaltern women through a recursive engagement with her discursive footnotes.

Such an important body of knowledge figures centrally in Spivak’s subsequent chapter on Literature. Starting with a discussion of Western feminist literary criticism and the third world woman in early nineteenth-century autobiographical fiction, Spivak expands her call for a new politics of reading that persistently undoes the sanctioned ignorance of

English literary history (131). In her readings of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Spivak marks the embedded silences and embodied histories of race-labour and colonialism in each of these narratives of bourgeois female individualism. Against such narratives, Spivak invokes the short fiction of Bengali writer, Mahasweta Devi, to emphasise how the enlightenment concepts of citizenship and nationhood are inappropriate to describe the lives and histories of particular tribal groups in contemporary India. If the soul-making enterprise of nineteenth-century British fiction mirrored the British imperial project of educating Indian subjects, Devi's fiction offers a crucial and situated counterpoint to postcolonial feminist readings which elide the class determinants operating in nineteenth-century bourgeois novels of female individualism. Against this elision, Spivak traces the historical relay between nineteenth-century paradigms of female individualism, secondwave notions of global sisterhood and contemporary policies on "Gender and Development" (148).

The third chapter on history returns to the question that Spivak poses in her opening remarks: that colonial discourse studies can "serve the production of current neocolonial knowledge by [either] placing colonialism/imperialism securely in the past, and/or by suggesting a continuous line from that past to our present" (1). Throughout this chapter, Spivak carefully traces the contingent ruptures and continuities between colonial trade, imperial governance and current global finance capitalism. In the mode of a Foucauldian archivist, Spivak attempts to write a history of the vanishing present by tracing the colonial genealogies and state formations which underpin the current global political and economic world system. Through a meticulous reading of the British imperial archives in nineteenth-century India, Spivak follows the disappearance of the Rani of Sirmur at a time when the transnational East India Company was brought under the political will of the British nation state. Even though the Rani "emerges in the archives because of the commercial/territorial interests of the East India Company" (227), this is not to suggest that she did not continue to act and live. In a coded reference to Foucault's later work on ethics and the care of the self, work that recalls her own charting of the ethical subject in postcolonial nation states in the essay "More on Power/Knowledge," Spivak briefly mentions how the "neglected details of the everyday" would perhaps tell a different history of the Rani (238). Such a reading is gestured towards in Spivak's discussion of the rhetorical fade-outs of the Rani's voice consciousness in the colonial archive, but it is not really developed any further.

The neglected details of the everyday also resurface in Spivak's rewritten version of "Can the Subaltern Speak?" The careful insistence with which Spivak is marking the limits of political representation for such disenfranchised women, rather than claiming that they have no social agency, does much to clarify her earlier provocation that the sexed

subaltern subject cannot speak. But what further epistemological challenge would the neglected historical details of these women's everyday lives offer to contemporary, postrepresentational materialist thought?

Such concerns are encoded in the appendix and footnotes to *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, and the final chapter on culture. In an ambitious attempt to complicate the Eurocentric narrative of globalised capital elaborated by Fredric Jameson, Spivak proceeds to trace the history of the vanishing present. By disarticulating Jameson's reading of postmodernity from its Western teleology, Spivak moves to consider the rhetorical and geopolitical blindspots in Jameson's reading of Marx. For Spivak, the place of practice in Marx pushes against the constitutive and socially-binding telos of capitalist modes of production (329-30). In Jameson, however, the persistent engagement with the singular and contingent alterity of practice in Marx is foreclosed: "there is the magical invocation of multinational capitalism without attention to its multinational consequences" (330).

In the absence of any systematic effort to link discussions of post-modern culture to contemporary histories of transnational migrant labour and policies of global development, Spivak emphasises how discussions of contemporary transnational labour migrancy need to be supplemented by a global social awareness that is enabled by transnational literacy. If "the disenfranchised woman of the diaspora" cannot "engage in the *critical* agency of civil society [...] to fight the depredations of 'global economic citizenship,'" Spivak suggests that the educated postcolonial migrant can. Invoking her own activist work with child labourers in Bangladesh schools, Spivak questions the Marxist moralism of a cultural studies which ignores the global economic and historical conditions linking transnational labour migrancy to development policies.

Spivak's closing comments on the "Setting to Work of Deconstruction" link the asymptotic relationships between the conceptual and ethical reading practices her work establishes, and the political concerns running throughout the book. The discussion of aporia in Jacques Derrida's work points to the necessary limits of an ethical reading practice that attempts to invoke the everyday lives and social agencies of disempowered groups as an example for contemporary materialist thought. Writing of local, counterglobalist activist movements, Spivak writes that:

The aporia of exemplarity is most keenly felt here. The subjects and collectivities that produce the examples are often in an aporetic bind with those who, far from and often ignorant of their field of work globalisation and development yet produce the systematic formulation. (430)

Echoing an earlier discussion of allegory in Paul de Man, Spivak recasts this aporetic non-relation between theory and its object as a permanent parabasis, which would change this distance into a persistent interruption of theoretical systematicity (156n. 64).

A Critique of Postcolonial Reason does not simply announce the conceptual bankruptcy of a US-based postcolonial theory, but encourages its implied academic reader to engage in an ethical reading practice that is more appropriate to articulate the contingent and non-systematic social agencies of disenfranchised groups. Such a call for an ethical response to the trace of the other is crucial to the future horizons of contemporary materialist thought. However, this ethical promise remains more speculative in its necessary refusal of a stable epistemological standpoint, and would need to be supplemented by a more substantive articulation of the everyday lives and social practices of the contemporary subaltern groups that Spivak invokes.

STEPHEN MORTON

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- L. M. Findlay and Isobel M. Findlay, eds. *Realizing Community: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*. Saskatoon: Humanities Research Unit and Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, University of Saskatchewan, 1995. Pp. 208. \$15.00.

Perhaps it's the ubiquity of the word "community" in the mouths of insincere politicians and naively wishful social activists on both left and right that makes me squirm a little when I hear it. Raymond Williams's observation from years ago that the term "never seems to be used unfavorably" is, like so many of Williams's observations, still true. Community is what we all seem to want. But what is it anyway, and would we want it if we had it? Is the phrase "intentional community" an oxymoron? Is a community made up of others just like us, or rather others we live with despite our differences? Can't tightly-knit communities be more like straitjackets than cosy sweaters? Did our grandparents and great-grandparents really have what we often miss, or have better lives in consequence? Why do we wax nostalgic about other people's communities, whether Amish or Amazonian?

This fine collection of essays, which comes out of a 1992 conference at the University of Saskatchewan, will give readers of various disciplinary and (dare I say) community backgrounds ample space to reflect on such questions; I highly recommend it.

Not that all the essays escape nostalgia. George Melnyk, for example, writes out of a "sense of loss" (103) for Doukhobor communities now that