CHAPTER THREE

GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK: A MOVEMENT

BEYOND DISCIPLINES

The Problem of Discipline

In his book *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practises, Politics*, the author Bart Moore-Gilbert begins his chapter on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak with a sentence that typically expresses the apprehensive praise that all of Spivak’s readers round the globe seem to have about her work:

The work of the US-based critic of Indian origin Gayatri Spivak constitutes one of the most substantial and innovative contributions to postcolonial forms of cultural analysis, though her essays are also some of the most elusive, complex and challenging in the field.¹

The words ‘substantial’ and ‘innovative’ are qualified by the three adjectives that follow—‘elusive’, ‘complex’ and ‘challenging’, all of which bring out the difficulty of Spivak’s readers as they try to manoeuvre through her writings. They are, I feel, euphemistic expressions of anxiety rather than genuine compliments born of trust and respect for a fellow academic.
The difficulty that most readers face in approaching Spivak is methodological. It is difficult, at times impossible, to locate Spivak within a school of critical or philosophical development as she refuses to be assimilated within the boundary of any particular discipline. She has refused to be included within particular schools of thought or philosophical approaches and has been insistent about the necessarily ad-hoc nature of her writings. Although her readers and critics alike have tried to locate her as a Marxist, a Feminist, or a Deconstructionist at different times—she has consciously eluded all such labels and maintained that her work is ‘fragmentary and anecdotal’ in nature.²

Such amorphous writing makes it difficult for readers to attempt a critique of her work from a specific position. She eludes disciplinary boundaries only to switch from one to the other, and this informality of style is a difficult turn to negotiate. This is one of the primary reasons for her readers to believe that she is opaque and difficult, as she is never ready to give the meaning away. Obviously, the discerning reader immediately understands this to be a well-founded strategy on her part to frustrate essentialist agency of the First World—something she deliberately and continuously cautions her readers about. Her refusal to be ‘named’ is her refusal to be essentialized, and this incessant disciplinary vacillation is a characteristically well-guarded project to be heard and yet not be eaten up by metropolitan power-knowledge strategies so prevalent in the Western academy.
Edward Said And Gayatri Spivak: Similarities And Departures

On the face of it Gayatri Spivak’s strategy might seem to be designed on the same lines as the strategy of ‘amateurism’ propagated by Edward Said. But, I suppose, there is a major difference in the basic agenda of Said and Spivak. Through his idea of amateurism Said meant to move towards a ‘worldliness’—a personal and active engagement with the politics of the world around him. Criticism for him exceeded an academic agenda or simply a critique of Orientalist hegemony; it was the political practice of an activist, a function of the public intellectual:

Criticism for Said is personal, active, entwined with the world, implicated in its process of implementation, and committed to the almost disappearing notion that the intellectual, through the operation of the oppositional, critical spirit, can reveal hypocrisy, uncover the false, prepare the ground for change…It is undoubtedly this worldliness which drives his own theory of the interactive operations of text, reader and critic.

Although Spivak has always admired and acknowledged Said as a key presence in the field of postcolonial studies, we cannot say she has emulated or followed him. Whereas the ad-hoc nature of her work is akin to Said’s concept of ‘amateurism’, I must say there is little similarity otherwise in their respective manner of addressing the problem of postcolonial studies. Whereas Said has a well-defined
political presence in his oppositional role as a public intellectual—his continuous attempts to define his position, torn between his location in the academia in the First World and his engagement with the issues of representation of the Third World—Spivak has preferred an obtuse and ambiguous presence. Her location has remained a problem and she has herself wanted it that way:

I have two faces. I am not in exile. I am not a migrant. I am a green-card-carrying critic of neo-colonialism in the United States. It’s a difficult position to negotiate, because I will not marginalize myself in the United States in order to get sympathy from people who are genuinely marginalized.\(^6\)

Moreover the difficulty in penetrating her work, the use of terminology and jargon sometimes invented by herself, and the continuous shifts and crossovers in her writings have made it impossible for her to play the role of the ‘amateur’ public intellectual. She is not exactly writing for the public, nor are her works accessible (in terms of comprehension) to an extra-academic readership, so that she has remained more of a self-centred albeit dominating presence, elitist and removed. This, however, has got nothing to do with the subject matter of her work, where she is sometimes addressing intricate problems that relate directly to the question of the subaltern. I shall come back to this part of my argument later in this chapter and elsewhere as well, when I discuss Spivak’s associations with the Subaltern Studies collective. There are other marked differences in terms of
agenda, strategy and technique between Said and Spivak that are worth taking note of.

**Spivak the Critic: Strategic Interventionism**

Gayatri Spivak’s stance as a critic is interventionist in nature. There is implicit in her manner of argument a strategy of disruption, even combat. Her attacks on Western historiography and cultural processes are abrupt and deconstructive that challenge hegemony by unsettling it or approaching it from an unpredictable angle. She discovers gaps in the texts (or aporia) or deliberate catachrestic misreadings which she uses as sites to found her interventionist critique. She travels between disciplines—once commenting on French feminism and the next moment trying to discover the interconnectedness between events happening on Wall Street, in European or US universities and shopping malls, and in the factories or villages in the Third World. Suspicious of the conventional kinds of academic narrative, Spivak prefers the deconstructive strategy of ‘persistent critique’ which has a disruptive, fragmentary quality of immediacy and surprise.

This is in sharp contrast to Said’s technique of a totalizing vision, seeing the strategy of colonialism and discursive hegemony in perspective. Said attempts at system-building in texts such as *Orientalism*, to follow the entire trajectory toward the building up of imperial culture, to reveal the techniques of subterranean dominance in the project of colonialism. Said searches through the
disciplinary apparatus of history, geography, sociology, travel-writing, literature to understand and problematize the essentialist project of dominance and to bring out the structures of power-knowledge that constitutes the core of Western strategy. Thus, while Said looks into the architecture of discursive socio-cultural apparatus, Spivak sneaks into dead-ends to subvert the logic of dominant Western rhetoric.

**The Thematic Aspect**

At the thematic level there are major differences in the approaches of Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak. Said, in books such as *Orientalism* or *Culture and Imperialism*, looks into the processes of discursive domination which have helped the project of Western cultural hegemony. He has tried to locate the centres of power that have categorically sustained the ethos of Western domination through the creation of systematically biased paradigms of knowledge, and political and academic practices. His dependence on Foucauldian systems of analysis have given birth to an occasional despondency and frustration at not being able to shirk off these dominant socio-cultural patterns of subjugation. Said’s emergence as a public intellectual is, in a way, a desperate attempt to shirk off Foucauldian pessimism in the interests of social and political change, especially in the Third World.
As I have already stated, Spivak is less of an activist than an academic, and thus she would not have taken up activism as her method of protest, although she might have respect for Said and his enterprise. Spivak’s method of disrupting hegemonic dominance is markedly different. She approaches it the other way round, through the process of counter-discourse. The ruptures she attempts are through her associations with the Subaltern Studies collective in India and elsewhere, or her call for an exchange between metropolitan and decolonized feminisms in a collaborative work with the Algerian feminist Marie-Aimeé Hélie-Lucas, or her translation of the Bengali fiction of Mahasweta Devi. It is through such abrupt interventions that Spivak attempts a disruption of discursive practice.

It is through these interventions in the hegemonic apparatus that Spivak addresses the implicit Western agenda of assimilationist identitarianism. She opens up the debate about heterogeneity, something that Said seems to have neglected. In making forays into subaltern historiography, writing on international division of labour or addressing questions on the gendered subject, she harps on the ‘persistent recognition of heterogeneity’ of cultural and economic formations, issues that are generally neglected while talking about the postcolonial subject. She is interested in individual subject-positions, each having its own identity, and each capable of creating a deconstructive rupture in the homogeneity of Western discursive constructs. In such almost amateur attempts at intervention, I find much in common between Spivak and Antonio Gramsci, who too was not a
theorist as such, but who abruptly attacked forms of hegemony through sporadic and interventionist writings.  

**The Pedagogical Aspect**

The politics of pedagogy is one other area on which Spivak has thought and written extensively, and which is perhaps most topical to the argument of my thesis. She sees in the workings of the Western academy a tendency to homogenize the cultural formations of the Third World and address the entire problem of its representation as a monolithic and unitary construct. Although Said has cursorily addressed this problem of Western pedagogy he was never too keen to problematize the politics involved in this kind of representation.

Spivak undertakes the problematization of Western pedagogy most seriously in her writings on the Third-World woman. There are multiple anxieties in Spivak when she comes to address the problematic of the location of this gendered subject. The debate is indeed interesting in terms of its inclusivity. Who is Spivak talking about? Is it the Third-World subaltern woman—the margin of margins? Is it the educated, middle class, upper-caste woman in a metropolitan city in the Third World? Is it the Third-World woman intellectual located in the First World? And how does one address the locational dynamic of any one of these with the pedagogical tools of First-World feminism? This is precisely where
Spivak opens up the heterogeneity debate. Who addresses whom? What right has any one of them to address the problem of the other?

We shall come back to these questions about Western feminism in a moment. Talking about pedagogy, Spivak continues her argument about facilitating a trans-national study of culture. This would constitute a re-working of the syllabus in metropolitan First-World universities in terms of a more heterogeneous and a less discursive model. She suggests measures like the phasing out of single-author studies, broadening the range of language requirements to include non-Western languages, a greater attention to non-literary media and forms of popular culture and integrating critical theory more effectively into postcolonial studies. This, according to her, is a way of effectively disrupting the traditional assumptions of disciplinary formations in terms of their ideological framing. In terms of her location, such a continuous questioning of Western pedagogical paradigms has important implications. As the Third-World intellectual located in the First World, such disruptive technique is a singular way of representing herself at least (she has always been ambiguous while responding to questions about whether she represents the Third World, the Third-World woman, the gendered subaltern etc.) within the discursive set-up of the Western academy. This is, of course, singularly interesting. Her unfailing agenda of attacking the assimilationist politics of the Western academy through a consistent reminder of heterogeneity is a way of representing herself, consolidating her location; on the other hand, this consistent thwarting of any obvious, essential
identity is a way of frustrating the identitarianism that is so symptomatic of the hegemonic nature of the First World.

However, this continuous reminder about the essentialist techniques of disciplinarity within the Western academy and its socio-political formations does not predicate for Spivak a rejection of their theoretical tools. Rather, she is always trying to work towards a ‘negotiation’ between parameters of dominance and subjugation through which to reveal the implicit cultural politics of postcoloniality. Singularly aware of the pluralistic nature of postmodern cultural productions, Spivak argues against a sanitized, uncontaminated space inhabited by the postcolonial critic by virtue of his or her first hand experience or cultural origin, from which he or she can address the issues of class, race or gender. Rather, a dynamic of exchange, by no means uncritical of Western cultural institutions, is something that Spivak encourages the postcolonial intellectual to undertake. She finds such an approach logically sound as it engenders a participation in the self-same techniques of Western cultural hegemony that have been used for dominance and subjection, and subverting or fracturing them from inside.14 This enterprise of postcolonial counter-discourse is deliberately disruptive and becomes a ‘persistent critique of what you cannot not want’.15

Spivak is perhaps incited by this same tendency of ad-hoc disruption when she attempts a reading of Mahasweta Devi’s short story Stanadayini using the critical techniques of the Western academy, thereby attempting a new
representation of the subaltern from the subject-position of the teacher/reader.\textsuperscript{16} It is her way of unsettling the dominant ‘radical’ reader in the Anglo-US academy who tends to homogenize the Third World and sees all literary and theoretical attempts of the Third World in the context of nationalism and ethnicity:\textsuperscript{17}

The reading of Stanadayini presented here, assigning the subject-position to the teacher/reader, can be helpful in combating a certain tendency in literary pedagogy that still shapes, by remote control, the élite in the most prestigious Indian educational institutions: the so-called radical teaching of literary criticism and literature in the United States and perhaps also in Britain.\textsuperscript{18}

She adopts this radical mode of reading the Third-World text and by opening the text to multiple élite readings disrupts the supposed pedagogic superiority of the élite academic. But just before she extends such readings her sharp and acerbic wit interrupts parenthetically:

(Any reader nervous about the fact that Mahasweta Devi has probably not read much of the material critically illuminated by her text should stop here.)\textsuperscript{19}

Then she analyses Mahasweta Devi’s story from three élite critical approaches—namely, those of Marxist Feminism, Liberal Feminism, and Theory of Woman’s
Body, showing how *Stanadayini* (and, by extension, any other subaltern text) might be read in terms of complex critical discursive formations adhered to by the Western academy.\(^{20}\) It is the kind of serio-ironic mode of writing that she adopts which is disruptive and subversive. This is a typical example of what Spivak describes as ‘reconstellation’—a manoeuvre by which a text is taken out of its proper context and put through alien modes of analysis. Through her analysis of *Stanadayini* Spivak reveals the limitations and ‘absences’ within Western theoretical discourse.

One would not fail to note, however, how such readings of a Third-World text in the light of metropolitan culture theory is Spivak’s singular way of keeping the question of representation alive in the academy. The use of sophisticated theory is deliberate. It immediately frustrates the kind of identitarianism so characteristic of Western pedagogy. Nobody can call her ‘subaltern’—she uses all the tools of postmodern criticism; neither is she the Third-World elite—she lives in New York and teaches at Columbia University and wields considerable power within the academy;\(^ {21}\) and she is not comfortably First World either as her continuous critiques of Western academic policy suggest. She consistently defines herself or her location by parameters of ambiguity and reaps benefits:

…I don’t really think about the question of home or roots at all. I feel sometimes, when someone asks me the question, that I have roots in air. You know? I am at home everywhere and I am not at home anywhere. It
seems to me when one is at home, the place where one is at home has no name…²²

**Deconstruction—A Tactical Ploy**

Gayatri Spivak’s agenda of critiquing Western pedagogical discourse is deeply embedded within the politics of disruption. The anxiety of representation (who represents whom?) has been, by all means, the central problematic of the Third-World intellectual in the First. The necessity for opening up or creating a space for debate predicated an invention of techniques of reading that must violate the systems of binaries used by the dominant discourse to legitimize its power. It was essential to invent a form of ideology-critique that would reveal the implicit assumptions, strategies and rhetoric of the historical, political or theoretical narrative of the Western academy.

Spivak’s recourse to deconstruction was thus a deliberate and perhaps inevitable choice—it being a form of ‘negative critique’ that would instantly corrupt the discursive logic of canonical techniques of reading. She attempts a tangential kind of reading so that sub-plots or minor characters or implicit motifs are revealed in an alternative light—a touch-and-go method that reveals the essentialist, racialized nature of Western conceptual frameworks. Spivak’s deconstructive strategy of reading engenders an attempt to locate ‘interruptions’ or ‘discontinuities’ within a text, the gaps through which her kind of ad-hoc
criticism makes way. It is fragmentary but disturbing—a way of multiplying possibilities of interpretations to show the essentially pluralistic nature of experience. This pluralism is deliberately, or sometimes even unconsciously, hidden and one of the chief agenda of the postcolonial critique is a (re)discovery of these pluralisms through disruptive interventions into the text. Spivak points out how even radical critical schools in the West sometimes fail to locate such discontinuities and are hence innocently essentialized. It will be interesting to note Spivak’s reaction to Western feminism (particularly to the work of Julia Kristeva) in this context, but we shall come back to that a little later.

Spivak’s attempts at such pluralistic re-negotiations of Western modes of essentialist readings is brought forth in such techniques as ‘reconstellation’ and ‘catachresis’. Reconstellation initiates a subversive manoeuvre by which a whole text is de-contextualized and then re-contextualized within alien arguments. The entire agenda is to unravel the aporia or ‘absences’ that constitute ‘reading’ within discursive frameworks—and this Spivak sees as one of the primary enterprises of the teacher of literature:

The teacher of literature, because of her institutional subject-position, can and must ‘re-constellate’ the text to draw out its use. She can and must wrench it out of its proper context and put it within alien arguments.23
Catachresis is less complicated or elaborate. It is a local, tactical manoeuvre which constitutes an abrupt appropriation of certain ideas and rhetorical strategies from within a particular narrative and using them to open up new arenas of meaning. For example, Spivak appropriates Gramsci’s concept of the ‘subaltern’ and uses it in radical ways to deconstruct hegemonic formations. Spivak uses these disruptive negativities inherent in deconstruction as a kind of tangential or guerrilla mode of engagement, thereby also re-affirming her own radicalized subject-position within the academy.

However, it is not that Spivak is only interested in the negative aspects of deconstruction. It also has an affirmative value in its complicity with the liberationist moves of marginalized social constituencies. She insists on deconstruction’s ‘enabling violence’ through which it subverts the systems of binaries that legitimize the power/knowledge modes of dominance of the Western discourses. She warns however that a mere reversal or subversion of dominance would only initiate another supplementary movement towards appropriation. The logic of counter-hegemony would easily be eaten up by the aufhebung of more powerful hegemony—and this would constitute remaining within the paradigm defined and demarcated by the opponent. Reversal must necessarily involve displacement to avoid being cancelled out by the powerful opponent. Spivak suggests a politics of reading that would involve an opening up of the text toward newer horizons, ‘so that it can be of use without excuse’. This is precisely the
In spite of (or because of) the apparent denseness of her writing one must say that Spivak has indeed promised to reach her audience/readers through a unique deconstructive mode of ideology-critique. The kind of deconstruction I am talking about is affirmative in nature as it tries to establish a kind of dialogue, a sense of intimacy with the audience—an intimacy that provokes a kind of understanding beyond the hegemonic constructions of the power/knowledge equation, something that flows through a subterranean path and touches like electric current or an impulse. Time and again, while talking about affirmative deconstruction, Spivak emphasizes her role as a teacher or a public speaker. She insists on how, while addressing a class or a group, the audience is generally taken as a collection of selves. But such an assumption betrays the inevitable difference in the mental theatre of each one of them, something that Spivak calls ‘their intimate and inaccessible alterity’. Such a blatant generalization marks the limits of teaching or talking and opens up the text toward a radical uncertainty. This uncertainty enables the beginning of a dialogue between the speaker/author and the listener/reader and this consciousness of the immense plurality or heterogeneity helps in the ‘construction’ of meaning:
What is it to write for you? What is it to teach? What is it to learn? What is it to assume that one already knows the meaning of the words “something is taught by me and something is learned by others”?27

The grounding of such uncertainty within the academic institution automatically releases the tropes for a critique of ideology which is one basic task of deconstruction (affirmative) within the academy:

On the threshold I place a generalization about deconstructive reading to ward off uncertainty: it is unexcusing, unaccusing, attentive, and situationally productive through dismantling.28

**Feminism: A Differential Turn**

Indeed, feminism has played a very important role in the kind of disruptive intrusions that Gayatri Spivak has attempted into Western discursive paradigms. Feminism, for her, has constituted a primary method of protest against assimilationist techniques and essentialist enterprises of the West. However, it would be rather simplistic to call Spivak a feminist. While theoretically she has depended on feminism for discovering a voice for the woman, her extensive writings on feminism have really problematized ‘feminism’ as a means of protest. What has ultimately emerged out of her extensive forays into feminism, to locate
an alternative voice of protest, is the kind of pluralism that is inevitable in order that a true rupture of hegemonic patriarchy is possible.

One must notice how Spivak consistently brings the Third World into contention while discussing the possibilities of feminism. She is talking about marginality and the woman. The bringing in of the Third World further problematizes the debate. What about the Third-World woman—the gendered subaltern, the margin of margin! This is how she opens up the pluralisms inherent and implicit within feminism as a site for protest. Who speaks for whom? It is through this basic question that Spivak explores the very problematic subject-position of the woman, both in social history and literature. The individual subject-position qualified by class, location, economy, race, is continuously shifting, and it is the negotiation of the many possibilities and shifts that is, or should be the enterprise of feminism. What is interesting here is that while introducing the Third-World, gendered subaltern into the debate on feminism Spivak very intelligently incites the question of representation and representability once again. This is a subtle reminder of the importance of the Third-World intellectual, that too a woman, in this entire question of speaking up. The subaltern cannot speak. She might speak for them! Of course this is gross over-simplification, but one cannot completely do away with such an argument, what with her protracted and circuitous debate about the representational anxiety of Jashoda, the gendered subaltern Third-World protagonist of Mahasweta Devi’s short story *Stanadayini*. We have seen how Spivak has shown the gaps in
understanding or perhaps a strategic incomprehension in much of West-European feminism while she puts Stanadayini through Western feminist theorizations, and thus re-emphasizes the presence of Third-World women like her in the First World to critique such theorizations. Thus, she sees the mobilization of strategy by initiating an attack against theory, in this case, feminism:

Strategy works through a persistent (de)constructive critique of the theoretical. “Strategy” is an embattled concept-metaphor and unlike “theory”, its antecedents are not disinterested and universal.

Once again, this is affirmative deconstruction at work which gives birth to many feminisms, and opens up the entire woman question to multiple pluralisms. The ad-hoc interventionist kind of critiquing, which is so symptomatic of Spivak, is her way of discovering the aporia within institutional feminism, thereby confirming the voice or presence of the gendered subaltern. This, it seems, is her chief agenda and thus she is more of an alternative kind of presence within the politics of the woman question, who uses deconstruction as a tool to upset academic essentialism. This is why I insist she is not a feminist in the manner in which, let us say, Julia Kristeva is a feminist.
Kristeva’s Feminism: Avant Garde and Benevolent!

In at least two of her essays Gayatri Spivak comments in detail about French feminism, and to put it simply, her reaction towards it is mixed. But the one thing that can be said for certain about Spivak’s views on the French feminists is that she definitely has strong issues with Julia Kristeva and her brand of feminism. Very few have put their opinion about a fellow critic so bluntly on the printed page: ‘I’m repelled by Kristeva’s politics’.

On the face of it, however, the not so discerning reader would be at a loss to grasp the reason for such a strong distaste. Kristeva’s theory is less about ‘femininity’ or ‘femaleness’ and more about marginality, subversion and dissidence. She refuses to define or represent the woman—apparently the same kind of disruptive politics that Spivak is advocating. By ‘woman’ she understands ‘that which cannot be represented, that which is not spoken, that which remains outside naming and ideologies’. Spivak is also generally speaking about marginality and representability of the woman in her writings. Like Spivak, Kristeva is also anti-essentialist in her approach, and talks of the feminine more in terms of positionality than in terms of essences. The intriguing question then is why Spivak launches such an invective against Kristeva.

The answer lies in the fact that Spivak primarily locates herself as the postcolonial intellectual one of whose chief concerns remains the Third World.
She sees Kristeva’s critique as embedded essentially in Western cultural practice. This she discovers in much of Kristeva’s work, but most predominantly in her book *About Chinese Women*.³⁴ The solution that Kristeva offers to her French female comrades against male essentialist practice in the beginning of her book is too sophisticated and theoretical:

We cannot get access to the temporal scene, i.e., to political affairs, except by identifying with the values considered to be masculine (dominance, superego, the endorsed communicative word that institutes stable social exchange)...[We must] achieve this identification in order to escape a smug polymorphism where it is so easy and comfortable for a woman here to remain; and by this identification [we must] gain entry to social experience.³⁵

Spivak is livid at Kristeva’s avant garde politics and systematic sophistication, something that she sees as the natural tendency of the First-World feminist, and who she thinks ‘must learn to stop feeling privileged as a woman’.³⁶ The solution that Kristeva offers against male essentialist politics certainly cannot be offered to the nameless, faceless, marginal women of the Third World, and this is what frustrates Spivak:

This is a set of directives for class- and race-privileged literary women who can ignore the seductive effects of identifying with the values of the
other side while rejecting their validity; and, by identifying the political
with the temporal and linguistic, ignore as well the micrology of political
economy. 37

Spivak goes on to note how Kristeva’s study of the Chinese women makes
no attempt at dissolving the discursive paradigms so symptomatic of Orientalism.
Her method of looking at the Chinese women is self-centred and never attempts to
transcend the I-Thou (West-East) barriers. Spivak is also irritated at how
Kristeva’s speculation about traces of matrilocal societies in ancient China
becomes a historical fact a few pages later. Thus Kristeva is automatically
succumbing to the Orientalist tropes of monolithic historicity and cannot reach the
pluralism so central to postcolonial historical constructions. Spivak accuses her of
a ‘wishful use of history that brings Kristeva close to the Eighteenth century
Sinophiles whom she criticizes…’. 38 Spivak discovers in the entire text
stupendous generalizations about Chinese writing and the typical Western
imperialist habit of valorising the past glory of the colonized nation at the expense
of ridiculing the present:

Kristeva prefers [the] misty past to the present. Most of her account of the
latter is dates, legislations, important people, important places. There is no
transition between the two accounts. Reflecting a broader Western cultural
practice, the “classical” East is studied with primitivistic reverence, even
as the “contemporary” East is treated with realpolitikal contempt. 39
Spivak also accuses Kristeva of gathering most of her information from flimsy or sparse accounts, none of which might be used for comprehensive research work.\textsuperscript{40} Thus, while admitting Kristeva’s wide knowledge and theoretical capabilities, Spivak finds in her work a pervading West Europeanism, a sense of being privileged as the Occidental woman, someone who speaks for a generalized West, and when examining the East, doing it from a certain discursive distance. Spivak does not forget to jibe at her Bulgarian past which is ‘not even a shadow under the harsh light of the Parisian voice’.\textsuperscript{41} Compared to this is her own ideological position as the Third-World intellectual working in a First-World university and trying to grapple with the heterogeneity of a complex locational dynamic. Indeed it is challenging to negotiate the pluralism of her location—decolonized Third-World woman trying to rupture the discursive paradigms of the Western metropolitan university. No wonder, she considers herself more honest in Kristeva’s light when she tries to look into the representability of the gendered subaltern.\textsuperscript{42}

**Hélène Cixous: Emancipatory Pluralism**

Spivak is much happier in the company of Hélène Cixous than in that of Kristeva. Most of her praise for French feminism is reserved for the likes of Cixous or Monique Wittig and the reason for this is not difficult to discover.\textsuperscript{43} Their
technique, which Spivak describes as ‘familiar-essay-cum-prose-poem’ is similar to the kind of interventionist critique that Spivak attempts. It is interesting to note how Cixous’ technique is markedly different from Kristeva’s, although their agenda is similar. Whereas there is a clear discursive distance between Kristeva’s high French feminism and the Chinese women, for example, who she talks about, Cixous’ approach is less theoretically hegemonic, although not theoretically weak. There is a kind of metaphoric transcendental style of reading in Cixous primarily due to the fact that she approaches theory as a writer, and not as a philosopher, and this is the chief reason for Spivak’s being so attracted to her.

Cixous has thought extensively about locating the woman out of the system of binary oppositions laid down by patriarchy. Her belief in poetry (and not philosophy) incites her to search for a metaphorical kind of motherhood that connects two women beyond the reaches of patriarchal hegemony:

It is necessary and sufficient that the best be given to woman by another woman for her to be able to love herself and return in love the body that was ‘born’ to her.

This reads more like a poetic than a theoretical text—born of a transcendental need of one woman to be able to touch another. Such deliberate abstractions, almost a going against the precision of theory, has helped her to evade essentialisms. The systematic use of academic tools inevitably starts a movement
toward a conscious creation of concept-metaphors thereby reducing movement into theory. The figure of the mother that Cixous evokes in her writings need not necessarily have the experience of being a mother, but be infused by a general sense of mothering. Thus the woman-woman relationship is established arbitrarily and pervasively, and this can be clearly distinguished from being motherly or maternal—concept-metaphors that are qualified by hegemonic knowledge systems. It is through such a tactical manoeuvre that a relationship between any two women might be forged, and Spivak immediately appropriates this technique to establish a relationship between the metropolitan woman (Third-World or otherwise) and the gendered subaltern. No wonder, it is through Cixous’ fluid dynamic of reaching out to the other woman that Spivak tries to assume a responsibility for, and try a representation of Jashoda in Mahasweta Devi’s short story Stanadayini:

Try to think of what Cixous is actually asking you to do and you will begin to see what an amazing formulation of responsibility this is, especially since the dimension is inaccessible and therefore the responsibility is effortful.47

Spivak continuously emphasizes the dispersed and differential identity that Cixous gives to the woman, an identity beyond the definitive implications of post-structuralist nominalism or paleonymy. This is also one kind of affirmative deconstruction that tries to raise the questions of pluralism and heterogeneity.
Woman And The Question Of History

Woman un-thinks or squanders the unifying ordering history that homogenizes and channels forces, herding contradictions into the practice of a single battlefield. In woman, the history of all women blends together with her personal history, national and international history.\(^{48}\)

Here is the disruptive function of the woman in history—the pluralization, the heterogenization of agenda, a deliberate dis-ordering of history. The entrance of the woman in history is a questioning of the consensual paradigms of historical representation in terms of generalization, homogeneity, singularity et cetera. The woman in question is the ‘fighter’ woman—one who demands a well-defined subject-position that has all the necessary implications of pluralism as well as individuality. And the kind of responsibility that Spivak talks about involves a subsuming of multiple agenda into the woman question—that of class struggle, that of the subaltern Third World, or that of the international division of labour. All of these are individual questions in themselves and are also summarily linked with the woman question. The assumption of this responsibility entails a direct confrontation with the discursive paradigms of institutional historiography and a critique of intention:
If the manifold, irreducibly plural, and incessantly shifting strategic exclusions required by a coherent systematic account of history are incessantly attended to, power/knowledge (pouvoir/savoir) relations are thoroughly displaced and productively disrupted, framing in undecidability the sure ground of decision. This feminism is a persistent critique of history. 49

The kind of feminism that Cixous attempts, something that Spivak finds inviting and powerful, is this search for a heterogeneous historicity through the disruption of definitives. The kind of history that they are attempting is this blend of personal, national and international history that is indeed ambitious and arbitrary, and in a sense poetic. The storying of history becomes an important tool here. It is almost a kind of New Historicist anecdotal mode that Spivak attempts in her critique. We cannot miss her strategy behind choosing the Jashoda narrative. Not only does she talk about the socio-literary aspect of the narrative, but also gives it a historical identity with her minute analysis of the socio-historical mores explored in the story. It thus becomes both an examination of the Third-World marginal woman, as well as an attempt at a storying of history—thereby dismantling the monolithic pattern of Western history. This is how Spivak attempts to address the strategic exclusions so symptomatic of hegemonic reading, thereby clearing a space of ‘undecidability’ within the fixed discursive pattern, and creating fissures of discontinuity. 50 Thus the bulk of Spivak’s feminist project is really a part of her strategy of affirmative deconstruction which is really
a method of disruption and anti-essentialism. The Third-World woman intellectual is still addressing the problematic of positionality. In due course she is also maintaining her position of ambiguity, an imperative perhaps to develop a critique of hegemonic historiography from her rather complex location.

**Deconstructive Feminism: Spivak’s Unique Use of Theory**

The reader of Gayatri Spivak cannot but notice that she has used the strategies offered by deconstruction very cleverly in her theorizations on feminism. From her Third-World perspective (at least in the sense in which she writes about the Third World), from her perspective of trying to address the agenda of the gendered subaltern, Spivak has used deconstruction to good effect. In fact, while she is speaking about the issues of feminism and the question of the woman, the way she uses deconstruction as a tool of intervention is unique, and markedly different from the general trends of American deconstructive practice.

In an essay where she tries to execute a negotiation between feminism and deconstruction, she makes a loaded claim at the very outset. Deconstruction, she insists, is not a politics that tends towards any kind of foundationalism. On the contrary, it is a critique of foundations, merely a tool (and not a fixed theoretical position) to be used to unsettle the claims of any foundational discursivity:
It is not just that deconstruction cannot found a politics, while other ways of thinking can. It is that deconstruction can make founded political programs more useful by making their in-built problems more visible. To act is therefore not to ignore deconstruction, but actively to transgress it without giving it up. (A slightly tougher formulation which clarity-fetishists can ignore: deconstruction does not aim at praxis or theoretical practice but lives in the persistent crisis or unease of the moment of techne or crafting.).

The strategies of feminist intervention have generally looked to subvert the claims of patriarchy, to posit the claim of the ‘woman’ as the politics of selfhood. That is to say there was, generally, embedded within the claims of feminism the sense of binary opposition, a game of one against the other, where either side might win contingent upon the political space where the interaction occurs.

Spivak wants to address this question of the identity of the woman entirely out of the paradigm of any possibility of opposition or binary politics. Here she talks about the project undertaken by Jacqueline Rose, and how she has tried to do the same without the help of deconstruction. Rose goes the psychological way and tries to determine the subjectivity of the woman as the ‘right to an impasse at the point of sexual identity’. It is at this point of intense subjectivity that the woman claims her identity, where the man/patriarchy is devoid of the parameters necessary to play the game. The impasse is a point of impossibility, the doldrums,
a no-movement zone, where the woman catastrophically snatches a momentary identity without any ‘nostalgia whatsoever for its possible or future integration into a norm’.

Spivak, no wonder, is all praise for Rose, for attempting such a unique moment of identity. But her own strategy, she says, is distinctly different:

The difference between Rose and myself here is that what she feels is a right to be claimed, I am obliged to recognize as a bind to be watched.

Thus the movement from the psychological to the deconstructive is from the one of assumption to the one of non-assumption of a position. Spivak has taken her postmodern dynamic of representation to an extreme point of sophistication, where even the assumption of a momentary positionality is seen with scepticism. Indeed, such a position is difficult to formulate within the set structure of a socio-theoretical framework—and this is where Spivak’s politics can hardly be essentialized. Where is the moment of identity when the woman can be branded? Of course this is ultra-sophistication, but Spivak seems to have made her point. The focus on non-representation, the emphasis on reaching beyond the ontological seems to be the moot point of this politics.

The success or failure of this kind of politics can be debated, particularly when we are talking once again about the margin of margin—the location of the
Third-World woman. Critics can see in such sophistication almost the same assumptions that Spivak herself had critiqued in Kristeva. What we need to understand, however, is that, in trying to avoid essentialist agenda Spivak is continuously making multiple and quantum shifts across the socio-theoretical framework. In this case she is talking purely from the perspective of the practitioner of deconstruction. She is theorizing, purely to make the possible patriarchal formations of the moment non-functional. By refusing to define either this ‘woman’ or the moment, Spivak is trying to resist the conception of deconstruction as a narrative. This is where she tries to locate the difference between Jacqueline Rose and herself:

I think the difference between us…comes from Rose’s understanding of deconstruction as only a narrative of the fully dispersed and decentred subject. I am not myself suggesting a strict opposition between structure and narrative, or morphology and narrative. But I do want to insist that when it is understood only as a narrative, deconstruction is only the picture of an impossibility that cannot help any political position. Or perhaps it can, only too easily.  

This is not to say that Spivak has not herself seen deconstruction as a narrative. But there are interesting fractures (too many to be counted) embedded within that narrative. Spivak formulates how the human subject might see oneself or the ‘story’ of one’s life as ‘an instantiation of historical and psychosexual
narratives that one can piece together…When one represents oneself in such a way, it becomes, curiously enough, a deidentification of oneself, a claiming of an identity from a text that comes from somewhere else." This ‘deidentification’ is possible because the breaking up into fragments resists possible discursive formations within the narrative. The discursive formations that Spivak talks about are not, however, the doing of this subject, but those that are always/already present before the formation of the subject, and will remain as such even after his or her death. The subject is automatically inserted into what one might call a kind of a capsular narrative. It is not possible to escape this narrative; the only possibility that remains is one of deconstruction. Here Spivak aptly uses the example of the trope of the mother-tongue: one is born into it and dies leaving it for the use of future generations. But all articulation automatically takes place within the semiotic system created by the mother-tongue:

We intend within it; we critique intentions within it; we play with it through signification as well as reference; and then we leave it, as much without intent, for the use of others after our deaths. To an extent, the way in which one conceives of oneself as representative or as an example of something is this awareness that what is one’s own, one’s identity, what is proper to one, is also a biography, and has a history. That history is unmotivated but capricious and is larger in outline than we are."
These then are narratives that always/already exist to qualify the subject-position of the individual. Spivak calls them *miraculating agencies*—‘as if by a miracle one speaks as an agent of a culture or an agent of a sex or an agent of an ethnos et cetera…’.

The function of deconstruction then is to manoeuvre the subject towards a position (always contingent, ever vacillating) where these agents of miraculation cannot overwhelm him/her. Deconstruction works not from the outside, but from the inside, breaking the narrative of history or life or culture into differential pieces that tend towards a narrative but never become narrativized:

Deconstruction considers that the subject always tends toward centering and looks at the mechanism of centering among randomness; it doesn’t say there is something called the decentred subject…The real in deconstruction is neither essentialist nor antiessentialist. It invites us to think through the counterintuitive position that there might be essences and there might not be essences…Deconstruction is not an essence. It is not a school of thought; it is a way of rereading.

Coming back then to the difference between Jacqueline Rose and Gayatri Spivak regarding their conceptions about the politics of the woman. For Rose the project of psychoanalysis is crucial to feminism as it properly locates the difference (in sexual terms) between the man and the woman. The analysis of this
basic ontological difference is not simplistic, defined within the set paradigms of male-ness or female-ness. It is about trying to define the woman in psychoanalytic terms—that is to say in terms of her cognitive male-ness or female-ness, her recognition of herself as the kind of (wo)man that she is. Rose clearly notes the reason why feminism must depend on psychoanalysis:

Feminism must depend on psychoanalysis because the issue of how individuals recognize themselves as male or female, the demand that they do so, seems to stand in such fundamental relation to the forms of inequality and subordination which it is feminism’s objective to change.61

It is the last part of this statement that Spivak latches on to for her critique of Rose on the one hand, and to emphasize the necessity of her project of deconstruction on the other. The ‘inequality’ and ‘subordination’ which Rose feels is feminism’s objective to change, engenders, according to Spivak, a shift of the project from epistemology or ontology to the ethicopolitical. It is then not only the sexual difference (between man and woman) that needs to be emphasized, argues Spivak, but it is also ‘no less crucial to admit the irreducible difference between the subject (woman) of that epistemology, and the subject (feminist) of this ethicopolitics’.62

It is at this point that Spivak intervenes with her deconstructive project. She writes:
If one looks at the deconstructive morphology (rather than simply reading it as the narrative of the decentred subject), then one is obliged to notice that deconstruction has always been about the limits of epistemology.\textsuperscript{63}

She thus visualizes the woman at the emancipating moment of emergence, woman as a ‘catachresis’. At this catachrestic moment the woman is, even if it is for a differential moment, released from the clutches of a concept-metaphor and exists without a literal referent. She stands in for ‘a concept that is the condition of conceptuality’.\textsuperscript{64} Once again, deconstruction at its differential limit makes it possible to talk about the woman from without the politics of essentialism. What needs to be emphasized is that this entire logic of location (or non-location) of the woman takes place within the given socius or reference frame supplied by the discourse of history or culture or sexuality. There is neither opposition nor resentment, rather there is a symptom of complicity in not trying to formulate a strategy of difference that, for example, Jacqueline Rose has done. This is the kind of affirmative deconstruction that Spivak prefers. In her re-reading of Derrida into the question of the woman Spivak has seen both the disciplines of deconstruction and feminism in a new light.

Spivak lucidly explains this strategy of reading in her example of Derrida’s study of Friedrich Nietzsche in \textit{The Ear of the Other}.\textsuperscript{65} The fact that many of Nietzsche’s texts were used by the Nazis for a consolidation of their
ideals is sometimes excused by his readers as a situational or deliberate misreading. Derrida insists that these texts should not be excused for such misreadings. There must have been some implicit elements in his texts that allowed appropriation by the Nazis. That is to say, that all possible or probable or visible readings are integrated within the text so that the moments that lend themselves to the so-called misappropriation are understood in the text’s own terms. It is in this manner that a politics of reading can be developed which opens up the text towards unknown possibilities of interpretation so that ‘it can be of use without excuse’. This is how Spivak sees the project of deconstruction as a process of negotiation, a map of (mis)readings produced by critical intimacy that open up unforeseen possibilities.

It needs to be noted in this context that it is at this point that Spivak herself is also re-writing the project of deconstruction on her own terms. There is a marked movement away from the general trend of American deconstruction—which is generally used to look at the project of deconstruction as a narrative of the decentred subject. The success of the deconstructive strategy, she insists, lies not in its narrative structure but rather in its graphematic structure. She writes:

Deconstruction is not an exposure of error, nor a tabulation of error; logocentrism is not a pathology, nor is the metaphysical closure a prison to overthrow by violent means.
The adjective ‘graphematic’ comes from Derrida’s analysis that writing is historically the structure that is supposed necessarily to operate in the presumed absence of its origin. That is to say that the natural development of a structure of narrative at the origin is undercut by this graphematic structure. It is akin to the act of ‘writing’ in the Barthesian sense, where there is the possibility of writing without the author. Thus the graphematic structure develops in the limit of difference, and the originary discursive presence of the author becomes automatically irrelevant, although the act of writing continues. It thus becomes ‘something that looks more like the mark of an absent presence’ where writing takes place without the author, or differentially with many authors at the same time.

The general pattern of deconstruction in the American academy was more or less satisfied in the discovery of the decentred subject, or the supposed breakdown of the discursive logic of meaning at the point of origin. What Spivak tries to show, however, is that even if the subject of writing or the process of writing has been successfully decentred by deconstructive practise, the development of the originary narrative could not be stalled. What she has done is, therefore, interesting. She has posited her subject within the general pattern of the social, or historical, or political milieu—but catachrestically, at the differential moment. The limit of this difference becomes so miniscule that a narrative cannot be formulated at the origin. This is what she means by the graphematic structure that successfully undercuts the development of the origin.
What I intend to emphasize yet again is the strategy that Spivak has assumed. Never for once in her formulation of the deconstructive practice has she attempted to move out of the patterned humanist structure of epistemological or ontological development. At least apparently this seems to be the case. She has inhabited the structures and turned them inside out. This is what Derrida also seems to have said in his by now famous discourse:

The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take active aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them in a certain way, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it.\textsuperscript{70}

One might thus say with some assertiveness that Spivak has really gone beyond the school of American deconstruction. One might also daresay that Spivak has made use of the strategies of deconstruction much better than her American colleagues and contemporaries. It is in the ever-evanescent moment of politics that she has formulated the death of originary narratives. Almost the same kind of politics was also used successfully by Homi Bhabha in his pronouncements on the predicament of the colonized subject, but more about that in the next chapter.
The Subaltern Historians: Re-Inforcing Patriarchy?

It is Spivak’s easy fluidity between agenda and discipline that has brought her close to the Subaltern school of historians. Her concern for women and their location in history has also led her to a study of history as a discursive paradigm, and one of her main critiques against Julia Kristeva and for Hélène Cixous concerned her engagement with the pattern of hegemonic historiography. The hegemonic nature of the discipline was patterned by colonial and patriarchal knowledge formations and Spivak, as a postcolonial Third-World woman intellectual, had to react.

One must note, however, that Spivak did not choose the most obvious method of protest—nationalism, something that was easy for her to hang on to and capitalize on from her First-World location. A scepticism about the efficiency of such ideas as the nation-state, nationhood, citizenship et cetera as modes of producing a methodology of protest had already pervaded the intelligentsia:

The political claims over which battles are being fought are to nationhood, sovereignty, citizenship, secularism. Those claims are catachrestic claims in the sense that the so-called adequate narratives of the concept-metaphors were supposedly not written in the spaces that have decolonized themselves, but rather in the spaces of the colonizers. 71
Thus movements that tried to counter hegemonic historiography rejected nationalism as a class-biased method, confined within parameters of elitism, something that would be immediately essentialized by Western knowledge systems. This is where the debate around essentialism and anti-essentialism, traditional and radical textuality started, which saw the birth of the Subaltern Studies school.

Immediately, Spivak became much interested in the work of the Subaltern School of historians. They saw the moments of change in history not as moments of transformation, but as moments of confrontation between narratives and counter-narratives within the paradigm of domination and exploitation. In a bid to re-discover subaltern consciousness (a term very important for these historians), they tried to bring hegemonic historiography to crisis. Spivak is all praise for the group as it tries to show the deliberate cognitive failure of elite historiography in terms of textual representations of marginal history. In a New Historicist mode they examined the production of evidence, and themselves produced myriad anecdotal evidence to counter discursive historical formations and subvert the logic of hegemony:

…[Ranajit] Guha seems to radicalize the historiography of colonial India through a combination of Soviet and Bathesian semiotic analysis. The discursivity (cognitive failure) of disinterested (successful and therefore
true) historiography is revealed. The Muse of History and

counterinsurgency are shown to be complicit.72

What is all the more interesting, however, is that the tactical tools they employ are
all the strategic resources of elite humanism or bourgeois nationalism. They use
and critique these tools at the same time. This is deconstructive practice and close
to Spivak’s heart. The Subaltern historians talk about the marginal or the deprived
in the same breath in which they reveal the discursivity of their approach, their
apparent failure to reach out to the heterogeneity, diversity and complexity of the
subaltern subject-position. This acknowledgement has the implications of an
attempt to displace discursive fields and consistently refuse an objectification (and
hence essentialization) of the subaltern question. A continuous vacillation
between the use of sophisticated theoretical tools and a participation in the
heterogeneity of the subaltern is the kind of affirmative deconstruction that they
practise, and Spivak congratulates them for this unique enterprise. In her essay
‘Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography’, Spivak has minutely
observed and praised the manner in which these historians have tried to show
subaltern consciousness as an emergent collective consciousness. In spite of
finding their enterprise novel, Spivak’s praise for the Subaltern historians is
however qualified. She has tried to locate some strategic gaps in their technique in
terms of their use of the tropes of rumour or historiography as strategy.73
But the one aspect on which she comes down most heavily is the group’s treatment of women. It is here that Spivak discovers them as unable to strike a deconstructive mode, and revolve within the same discursive paradigms of bourgeois humanism. She discovers in them a collective (and perhaps) deliberate ignorance or oversight of the female subject and retorts angrily:

Indeed, in a collective where so much attention is rightly paid to the subjectivity or subject-positioning of the subaltern, it should be surprising to encounter such indifference to the subjectivity, not to mention the indispensable presence, of the woman as crucial instrument.

The consistent neglect or exploitation of the sexed subaltern is rarely noticed and generally neglected by these historians. In this Spivak sees a failure of the group’s subversive, deconstructive discourse, and the kind of exhilaration with which she had proceeded to be a part of this theoretical project dissipated with time, this being one of the major reasons. Their intense examination of caste or class solidarity, the search for micro-histories of protest and resistance have only been negatively qualified by the total silence on the question of cruelty towards or neglect of the gendered subaltern. As Spivak comments in a tone of regret:

Male subaltern and historian are here united in the common assumption that the procreative sex is a species apart, scarcely if at all to be considered a part of civil society.
The Final Question: Negotiating Her Location

The question that crops up at the end of this discussion is how Spivak locates herself within this vast dynamic of negotiation and counter-negotiation, the acceptance or eschewal of positions staying within the bounds of the metropolitan university. As a matter of fact, there is little doubt now about the power that people such as Spivak wield within the First-World university, and many are of the opinion that this is because of cultivated politics of problematizing one’s own location, in the choice of a counter-essentialist postcolonial subject-position. Arif Dirlik puts this interestingly:

Postcolonial intellectuals in their First World institutional location are ensconced in positions of power not only vis-à-vis the ‘native’ intellectuals back at home but also vis-à-vis their First world neighbours here. My neighbours in Farmville, Virginia, are no match in power for the highly paid, highly prestigious postcolonial intellectuals at Columbia, Princeton, or Duke; some of them may even be willing to swap positions and take the anguish that comes with hybridity so long as it brings with it the power and the prestige it seems to command.77

This might seem to be a little too harsh, but the almost deliberate evasiveness and complexity of Spivak’s work leads to such a sense of exasperation at the strategy that she is really up to.
However, I presume, that more than the location of her origin (that is to say the Third World), Spivak is perhaps more interested in the problematic of her sex, primarily the gendered subaltern. The relentless attacks on metropolitan feminism and its underlying strategies of implicit Eurocentrism reveal a deep disturbance within her about the intentions of people such as Julia Kristeva. She has gradually, and carefully come out of her position of the ethnic minority, the Third-World intellectual, and taken up the resistant reader’s subject-position as she defines it repeatedly in her writings on feminism and the questions of the woman. The tangential, ad-hoc nature of her work emerges out of a sense of insecurity about the manner in which Third-World feminism is being slowly, but surely devoured by white European feminism. She has, in a way, moved out of the problematic of her location as the ‘Third World’ intellectual in the First World, to the more theoretical as well as the less addressed and less understood problematic of the negotiation between postcolonial and metropolitan feminisms. The consolidation of her position within the metropolitan academy has somehow made irrelevant the question of anxiety about her location as an intellectual and this has helped her move on to the more complicated issue of trying to theorize, if not represent, the gendered subaltern—so that she (the gendered subaltern) may be spoken of at least, if not heard. The ultimate distancing from the Subaltern Studies collective is perhaps thus a question of choice, of the decision as to what she ultimately wants to talk about, or who she wants to represent (or speak for). There are people to talk about historiography, but women like Jashoda (in *Stanadayini*) also need a voice. No wonder, she remains primarily a feminist, a
postcolonial feminist; however, the pluralism implicit within this problematic of representation (who represents whom?) will continue to incite debates about her purpose.
NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. Bart Moore-Gilbert, ‘Gayatri Spivak: The Deconstructive Twist’ in

2. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘French Feminism in an International Frame’, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (London: Routledge, 1988), p.135. She has perhaps been influenced by the unorthodox mode of some French feminist writing, particularly those by Helene Cixous and Monique Wittig. She describes their work typically as ‘familiar-essay-cum-prose-poem’ (p.141) in her essay. However, the influence is confined to the ‘unorthodox’ mode of their writings only.


4. For a discussion of Edward Said’s strategy of ‘worldliness’ see the previous chapter. A detailed discussion on this can be found in Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, *Edward Said*, pp.32-5.


7. Spivak delineates the architectonics of French feminism as an apparatus of disruption and its influence on the anecdotal, broken quality of her writing. See ‘French Feminism in an International Frame’ in *In Other Worlds*.

8. See ‘Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value’ in Spivak, *Selected Works*. This is a rather obtuse essay composed from scattered lecture notes on global capitalism, international division of labour, and the questions of labour politics.

9. I have already noted that Gayatri Spivak’s association with the Subaltern Studies Group is problematic. There have been bondings and differences which I shall discuss later. For Spivak’s critique of the Group see ‘Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography’ in Spivak, *Selected Works*, pp.203-35.


13. Edward Said has discussed how Antonio Gramsci was ‘interested in everything’ (p.88), and that he was ‘able to experience a fantastic number of things’ (p.88). Even then he calls Gramsci an ‘inveterate note writer’
and that it was ‘very hard to derive from Gramsci’s work a consistent political and philosophical position’ (p.214). See Gauri Viswanathan, ed., *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said* (New York: Vintage, 2001). This is where I find much similarity in the methodology of Spivak and Gramsci.

14. See a detailed discussion on how opponents have to be fought on their own grounds with their own methods being used against them in, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Neocolonialism and the Secret Agent of Knowledge’ in *Oxford Literary Review*, 13.1 (1991), pp.220-51.

15. Ibid., p.234.


17. Spivak distinguishes between two kinds of readers—the radical and the orthodox. The postmodern/anti-humanist Anglo-U.S. reader and his counterpart in the elite Indian institutions are the radical readers who tend to homogenize the Third World and read literature politically. The orthodox reader is resistant to such homogenizations. He is the dominant reader in India, influenced by a post-colonial, humanist education who considers this orthodox position to be the ‘natural’ way to read literature, and sees the literary text as a site for apolitical or non-political interaction between the author and the reader. See ‘A Literary Representation of the
Subaltern: A Woman’s Text from the Third World’ in *In Other Worlds*, pp.246-47.

18. Ibid., p.246.


20. It is interesting (and entertaining) to note how the qualifier ‘elite’ is used in different ways for the different critical schools. While Marxist Feminism is (Elite), Liberal Feminism is Elite, and the Theory of Woman’s Body is “Elite”, by which Spivak tries to show the kind of fetishistic sophistication that Western culture theory tries to simulate.


suggests how the appropriation of certain texts of Nietzsche by the Nazis was not a ‘misreading’ of Nietzsche, but that there is something in his texts that has led on to this kind of appropriation. Thus her phrase ‘use without excuse’.

25. Ibid., p.130.


27. Ibid., p.143.

28. Ibid., p.146.

29. See Spivak’s critique of three ‘elite’ kinds of Western feminism in ‘A Literary Representation of the Subaltern’ in *In Other Worlds*, pp.241-68.


35. Ibid., p.38.

37. Ibid., p.136.

38. Ibid., p.138.


40. Spivak claims that Kristeva’s source of literary information are a few simple statistics that she collected from a single article by Ai-Li S. Chin, ‘Family Relations in Modern Chinese Fiction’, in M. Freedman, ed., *Family and Kinship in Chinese Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970), pp.87-120. This was another callously essentialist attempt, Spivak thinks, coming from the white feminist located in the First World.

41. Spivak, ‘French Feminism in an International Frame’ in *In Other Worlds*, p.140.

42. Two of Spivak’s most celebrated forays into the locational dynamic and unrepresentability of the subaltern are, of course, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, ed., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp.271-316, and ‘A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: A Woman’s Text from the Third World’ in *In Other Worlds*, pp.241-68.

43. In her essay ‘French Feminism in an International Frame’ Spivak seems to be particularly interested in certain works of both Cixous and Wittig, and talks about the influence of their kind of feminism on her work. She specifically mentions: Helene Cixous, ‘Préparatifs de noces au delá de

44. Spivak, ‘French Feminism in an International Frame’ in *In Other Worlds*, p.141.

45. An interesting discussion on this might be found in Spivak, ‘French Feminism in an International Frame’ in *In Other Worlds*.


50. Spivak is considerably elated at attempts of radical discontinuity that the works of Kalpana Bardhan constitute, particularly her consistent thwarting of all essentialisms. Spivak goes back to one essay in particular and seems to have been much impressed by it: Kalpana Bardhan, ‘Women’s Work, Welfare and Status: Forces of Tradition and Change in India’, *South Asia Bulletin*, 6:1 (1986), pp.3-16.
51. Spivak, ‘Feminism and Deconstruction, Again’ in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, p.121.


53. Ibid., p.15.

54. Ibid., p.15.

55. Spivak, ‘Feminism and Deconstruction, Again’ in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, p.124

56. Ibid., p.124.


58. Ibid., p.6.

59. Ibid., p.6.

60. Ibid., p.10.


63. Ibid., p.125.

64. Ibid., p.127.


66. Spivak, ‘Feminism and Deconstruction, Again’ in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, p.129.
67. Ibid., p.130.


69. Spivak, ‘Feminism and Deconstruction, Again’ in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, p.131.


73. See, ibid., pp.216-26.

74. Ibid., p.227.

75. It is interesting to note, however, that one of the primary reasons that Sumit Sarkar provides for the failure of the Subaltern historians to be able to create an alternative discourse that cannot be hegemonically essentialized, is due to its over-enthusiasm in trying to accommodate these Third-World intellectuals located in the First World, such as Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. He finds them too metropolitan, too much located at the centre, to effectively dislodge the hegemonic enterprise of the Western academy. He makes the following incisive remark in ‘The Decline of the Subaltern in Subaltern Studies’ in *Writing Social History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997; rpt.2005):

…[With] the publication in the United States of *Selected Subaltern*
Studies, with a foreword by Edward Said and an editorial note by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, subaltern historiography was launched on a successful international, and more specifically metropolitan and US-academic, career. The intellectual formation of which its currently most prominent practitioners are now part…has gone through two phases: Third World cultural nationalism, followed by postmodernistic valorizations of ‘fragments’…The mark of late Subaltern Studies therefore became not a succession of phases, but the counterposing of reified notions of ‘community’ or ‘fragment’, alternatively or sometimes in unison, against [the] highly generalized category of the ‘modern’ nation-state as the embodiment of Western cultural domination. The original separation of the domains of power and autonomy culminates here in an oscillation between the ‘rhetorical absolutism’ of structure and the ‘fragmented fetishism’ of the subject…(p.93)
