

Kant's 'raw man' and the miming of primitivism

Spivak's *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*

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...we read [in Herder's text]: 'It would be an *easy* principle, but an *evil* one, to maintain in the philosophy of human history than man is an animal who needs a master, and who expects from this master, or from his association with him, the happiness of his ultimate destiny.' ... [We read further that] 'each human individual has the measure of his happiness within him', and that he does not yield in the enjoyment of this happiness to any of those who come after him; but as far as the value of their existence itself is concerned – i.e. the reason why they are there in the first place, as distinct from the conditions in which they exist – it is in this alone that a wise intention might be discernible in the whole. Does the author really mean that, if the happy inhabitants of Tahiti, never visited by more civilized nations, were destined to live in their peaceful indolence for thousands of centuries, it would be possible to give a satisfactory answer to the question of why they should exist at all, and of whether it would not have been just as good if this island had been occupied by happy sheep and cattle as by happy human beings who merely enjoy themselves? The above principle is therefore not as *evil* as the author believes – although it may well have been stated by an *evil man*.¹

In the first part of *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*,* Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak traces the necessity for and foreclosure of what she calls the 'Native Informant' in inaugurating 'the name of Man' in those key texts of German philosophy (Kant, Hegel, Marx) which were to found the ethical, political subject of European Enlightenment. The Native Informant, on rent from anthropological fieldwork, comprises many theoretical gestures. It will consume the many postcolonial theorists who are both maintained by Spivak's work

and unsystematically abjured within it. Spivak claims that the foreclosure of the (imaginary, '(im)possible') Native Informant is the condition of possibility for the encrypting of the 'Name of Man' that launches foundational humanism and rationalism. The Native Informant is imagined atemporally. It is also a prosopopoeia, a strategic 'personification' as well as a 'character' that substitutes for an imaginary or absent figure (*OED*), which allows Spivak to undertake a reading of both the 'great texts' of Enlightenment humanism and those of elite Hinduisms. The Native Informant is also 'a blank' that only 'the Northwestern European' tradition and its 'Western-model disciplines' commencing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could inscribe. However, she argues, today various other figures such as 'benevolent cultural nativists', 'self-marginalizing migrants', and 'postcolonials' are masquerading as native informants. The Native Informant is, like Spivak's other sophical figures, an unrestrained accumulation of theoretical consequences that drives forward the claims of postcolonial theory, even as she pushes away from a fairly extensive cross- and sub-institutional discipline of postcolonialism, excoriating its academic practitioners, whom she brackets as a transnational group, often diasporic. Instead of postcolonial discourse studies, she proposes a kind of transnational cultural studies or transnational cultural literacy as discipline.

Spivak found 'a colonial subject' detaching itself from the Native Informant which she sought to investigate in various humanities disciplines. Later she sensed that

* Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Routledge, London and New York, 1999. 448 pp., £34.50 hb., £16.95 pb., 0 67417 763 0 hb., 0 67417 764 9 pb. All references in the body of the text are to this book.

a certain postcolonial subject had, in turn, been recoding the colonial subject and appropriating the Native Informant's position. Today, with globalization in full swing, telecommunicative informatics taps the Native Informant directly in the name of indigenous knowledges and advances biopiracy. (ix)

For Spivak 'the typecase of the foreclosed native informant today is the poorest *woman* of the South', foreclosed by the neo-imperialism of the financialization of the globe. Similarly, the contemporary planetary humanism derived from the European ethical philosophical traditions of Kant, Hegel and Marx has foreclosed, while still needing, the Native Informant that is its condition of existence. In two suggestive passages on Kant and one longer section on Hegel, the Native Informant is also (of) us, Spivak's readers. The Native Informant is the necessary 'complicity' in any strategy of academic reading since the culture which has produced her readers has already accommodated 'these three fellows'. The diverse virtual referents that accompany Spivak's discussions of the Native Informant characteristically parallel those used in her previous elaborations of 'the subaltern'. However, if the Native Informant seems to exist in its complicities with the project of the knowing, willing and judging subject of enlightened reason that forecloses it, the genuinely subaltern became a vanishing horizon at the moment of its similar complicity with humanism.

In this book, deconstruction faces the humanities and excavates our complicities with imperialism and (post)colonialism. Spivak leaves little or no space, indeed, outside of 'complicity' with 'imperialism'. (The language of deception and duplicity pervades the book; must Spivak's *universalizing*, flattening use of the term 'complicity', and its adverse term 'ruse', be supplementary to an unusual rectitude and fidelity within imperialism?) The book as a whole performs an important methodological claim that is not simply about the privileged reach of deconstruction in interrogating the texts of philosophy, history, literature and culture but also about its exclusive capacity to ascertain the imperializing ruses by which universal humanism sustains its disciplines and its subjects. Spivak's repetitive performance of her position as a kind of *littérateur* and not a proper historian, or as providing what might be conceived a 'mistaken' reading, is overblown, as are her frequently awkward self-referential performances. But they provide the appropriate radical *frisson* that comes from reading 'complicity with imperialism'. The middle two sections of the book are modified and updated amalgamations of earlier essays.² This article focuses on her critique

of Kant (and marginally Hegel) because these frame the key lineaments of her critique of humanism, her valorization of a fictive figure of 'primitivism' and indeed the horizons of the political imaginary of her deconstruction.

Civilizing education

In his third *Critique*, Kant attempted to provide the grounds for the faculty of judgement through an analytics of beauty, the sublime and teleological judgement. Kant expounded 'reflective' judgement as an (indeterminate) relation between 'sensibility' and the cognitive faculties of reason and the understanding. This provided a route of sorts in Kant's project from intuition, through issues of universality and necessity, to what seem to be unrelated questions of autonomy, morality and the possibility and limits of freedom. Kant also substantially valorized beauty in nature above socially produced art, though he also, paradoxically, placed Art as the primary object of the faculty of judgement. In the introduction to *Critique of Judgement*, Kant also dictated a place for the faculty of judgement in relation to reason and understanding, and thus for this third *Critique* in relation to his previous two.³ In the last, often neglected, part of the third *Critique* devoted to teleological judgement, Kant formulates the idea of purposiveness in nature without purpose, and of 'ultimate' or 'final' purposes, paralleling and extending his discussion in the second *Critique* of the necessity of freedom and its absolute cognitive limits. At several points throughout the *Critique of Judgement* Kant relates the judgements of taste (beauty) and sublimity to the ground from which questions of (especially) practical as well as perhaps theoretical reason arise. He had famously stated that beauty was symbolic of morality and of 'the morally good'. The problems with Kant's indeterminate, allusive projection of aesthetic judgement of beauty or nature on to statements about morality, freedom and the good are well known. Equally problematic is the ground of the supersensible substratum that is brought into play in his discussion of the limits of teleological judgement (as well as during earlier discussions of beauty in the third *Critique*). This can be seen to parallel the noumenal realm that guarantees an unknowable freedom in the second *Critique*, and the noumenon of theoretical reason in the first *Critique*.

Spivak's essay appears to take for granted not only that Kant had unproblematically paved the way from aesthetics to morality ('our access to morality is operated by rhetoric and clandestinity'), but also that the acceptance of the truth of the relation

between aesthetics and practical reason is foundational to post-Kantian humanist philosophical disciplines. Rather than focusing on the internal substance of Kant's discussions of the beautiful and the sublime themselves, Spivak's main targets are the ways in which the structure of Kant's writings about aesthetic and teleological judgement provide access to practical reason (she ignores the important ambiguities regarding theoretical reason), and hence force the compulsions of will and moral law and therefore the demands of freedom. It should come as no surprise that she claims that the unacknowledged field on which the Kantian architectonic becomes possible is imperialism, based on moral education and a repudiation of the 'savage', and she makes this argument at two distinct points in her reading of Kant.

Spivak reads Kant's judgement of the sublime as a compliance with what she frames as 'rational will', as well as betraying the programmed nature of subjectivity such that imagination is always subordinate to (a supersensible determination of) reason: 'It is not too excessive to say that we are programmed, or better, tuned, to feel the inadequacy of the imagination ... through the pain incited by the Sublime' (10–11). If, from Spivak's argument, practical reason is thus 'programmed' or based on a 'blueprint', so also must be freedom: freedom, then, can only be a 'trope of freedom'. Moreover, as reason becomes available to us because it has in some way leapt across (or papered over) the pain felt at the inadequacy of the imagination in the face of magnitude, our access to reason is, according to Spivak, 'structured like the programmed supplementation of a structurally necessary lack'. Kant had called the imputation of our feeling of sublimity onto nature a 'subreption'; naming nature 'sublime' is improper and strictly speaking 'that' which we name nature cannot 'be' sublime. Spivak first rearticulates Kant in deconstructionist terms: 'The structure of the sublime is a troping. The sublime in nature is operated by a subreptitious impropriety.' She concludes: 'Our access to morality is operated by rhetoric and clandestinity.'

Now, Kant had argued that

although the judgement upon the sublime in nature needs culture (more than the judgement upon the beautiful), it is not therefore primarily produced by culture and introduced in a merely conventional way into society. Rather it has its root in human nature, even in that which, alike with common understanding, we can impute to and expect of everyone, viz. in the tendency to the feeling for (practical) ideas, i.e. to what is moral.⁴

Spivak argues 'It is not possible to *become* cultured in this culture, if you are *naturally* alien to it.' Kant did argue that it is primarily cultivated and educated men who can make judgements of taste and sublimity, and indeed the capacity for aesthetic judgement was the key to entry into 'society' (as conceived in eighteenth-century usage), a ground for cultivated intersubjective communicability. Kant's use of 'culture' (which Spivak dehistoricizes) is also differentiable among the elites and oppressed.⁵ However, the critique of Kant as a philosophical underlabourer for bourgeois society, or as providing philosophical legitimation for the elite scientist, legislator or aesthete, is strictly irrelevant to Spivak's argument.

For Kant, what a cultivated faculty may apprehend as the sublime is for the uneducated man simply terrible or terrifying. Kant's example of the 'uneducated' was 'the good, and indeed intelligent Savoyard peasant' who could not feel the sublimity of the snow-capped Alps.⁶ Spivak renders the term 'uneducated' as 'man in the raw', which she rapidly transposes as 'raw man'. She claims that the 'raw man' can 'in its signifying reach' accommodate the 'savage' and the 'primitive'. Kant's uneducated south-eastern French peasant is, perhaps startlingly, transmuted by Spivak into the 'savage' and 'primitive' of imperialist discourse. Hence, having to assume the solidity of connection in Kant between the sublime, practical reason and the architectonic, Spivak generalizes:

The raw man has not yet achieved or does not possess a subject whose *Anlage* or programming includes the structure of feeling for the moral. He is not yet the subject divided and perspectivized among the three critiques. In other words, he is not yet or simply not the subject as such, the hero of the *Critiques*, the only example of a natural yet rational being. (14)

This is the rehearsal of a familiar theoretical structure, various formal versions of which have animated Spivak's work for a couple of decades and precede her interest in the colonial or postcolonial (though the recent significant shift into the territory of philosophical *naturalism* needs noting). One can see this structure as primarily about her enfolding of the figure of the 'primitive' into Derrida's powerful deconstruction of the *Phaedrus*, while moving the lessons of the latter into a different time frame of high Enlightenment imperialism. This has been differently rehearsed in Spivak's earlier work as the argument that Reason is *necessarily* Eurocentric. Hence, one of Kant's most potent formulations, the sublime, upon which (from *some* arguments at least) the totality of

the Kantian architectonic of knowledge, morality and aesthetics rests, and which can also be conceived as the foundation for a route into reason and the natural and cultural constitution of humanist subjectivity, is based on an unrecognized expulsion of the 'primitive' and the 'savage'. This, Spivak argues, is the original commission of imperialism as such and is essential for the operation of Kant's text.

Finality and 'primitive' existence

The 'primitive' is named in the next stage of Spivak's argument, which is based on a reading of Kant's 'Critique of Teleological Judgement' and its relation to his architectonic. Spivak imposes an irreducibly rationalist reading of the relation between the aesthetic and practical reason such that the importance of sensibility and intuition for Kant's architectonic is elided. This is important precisely because sensibility, as both differentiated from the understanding and as the balancing of the form and matter of sensibility, allows a pathway to the world of things, and the formal way they are made available as intuition. While this cannot, in Kant's philosophy, be an 'empiricism', Kant's judgement as mediating between sensible intuitions and the concepts of the understanding becomes in Spivak's reading an exclusively idealist rendering in which, paradoxically, Spivak can only write a strong rationalism over a far more complex relation between the understanding, reason and sensible intuition. This is perhaps a consequence of the limited power of her deconstructionist paradigm to provide a ground for the 'empirical' unless the latter is arbitrarily collapsed (amphibolously?) as a kind of idealist rationalism. This has consequences, which are explored later.⁷

However, the crux of Spivak's argument relates to Kant's concept of freedom as a condition of the freedom to desire (one of the faculties of mind.) For Spivak, this freedom is repeatedly operated as a *compulsion* in Kant's text to assume both an intelligent being and a moral being as author of the world. Her argument appears to be that in the Kantian schema, only the philosopher can recognize, having already accepted as necessary, that practical reason is already primed *to do so*, that 'the compulsion to be free operates through an obligation to supplement', though the philosopher knows that we *cannot* cognize this supplementarity and that whatever we are compelled to name it must necessarily be an impropriety. Spivak thus seems to be highlighting how Kant is obliged, systematically, to expose his text on freedom to its own deconstruction in the process of establishing that the concept of freedom we are obliged to believe is

'a lie'. Kant tells us that the concept of freedom can only be a trope of freedom, but in then analogizing judgement with freedom, and further arguing that its recognition as a trope must carry with it an obligation or compulsion (of desire) to overwrite the absences that operate it if we are to be moral beings, his own text becomes susceptible to its own excavations.

Using Paul de Man's practice of deconstruction, Spivak argues that Kant, having discovered that the truth of freedom is a mere trope of freedom, has now to perform a second 'lie' in order to 'establish it as the corrected version of the truth', the latter related to 'Man' as a 'final purpose' of nature. For Spivak, this is based on an unrecognized repudiation of a differentiated subject whose conditions of possibility are the axiomatics of imperialism. Kant argued that we cannot know the final purpose of something because of any external purposiveness for which it is used or needed since that refers, regressively, to ever more distant conditions. That grass is needed by an ox which is needed by men for their survival cannot tell us why men should exist. Kant then made an aside in parenthesis: if thinking of the (Australian) Aborigine or the inhabitant of Tierra del Fuego, we would find no easy answer to the question of why men should exist.⁸

Spivak claims that this is the only example of a 'legally grounded and determinant judgement' in Kant's discussion of final purposes in nature and of the supersensible. She claims further that it is central to establishing the heteronomy of the geographically differentiated non-subject that is necessary for inaugurating the autonomy of the Kantian subject of reason, judgement and speech. In Spivak's argument, Kant, through a 'casual rhetorical gesture', operates the foreclosure of what is conceived as the non- or part-human to launch 'Man' as a final (natural, moral) purpose under the name of God, just as he had previously foreclosed the 'primitive' and 'savage' to establish the cultural and natural foundation for access to reason and subjecthood. Kant's own advocacy of the duty of the philosopher and his own deconstruction of freedom are 'corrected' by establishing a 'lie' that may claim to presuppose an equality in all men, but that repudiates a founding partial-human as its condition of possibility.

Spivak identifies this figure as the Native Informant whose access to being human is limited, dependent upon imperialism as the moral educator of the world, and reflected today in the position of the postcolonial as the poorest woman of the 'Third World' subject to the programmes of 'gender and development'. Spivak

introduces a crucial ambiguity (again, an amphiboly?) here by her *own* erasure of the historical and empirical differentiability between the heuristic 'Native Informant', 'the primitive' as the deconstructionist supplement to Kant's moral humanism, and what either of these may be in a historical or empirical world of peoples and groups. This *temporal* annihilation becomes, in essence, her own epistemology of time. This is arguably the only one that her paradigm of deconstruction can make available or perform. The elision of both deep historicity and a critical 'empiricism' makes unavailable the real 'tribal' people of South Asia whose struggles she would otherwise claim to foreground.

The unreachable anthropos

One consequence of Spivak's reading is that the *Critique of Judgement* is seen as having resolved the problem of the relationship between aesthetics and morality that it intended to elaborate. Under an overarching critique of humanism and the 'primitive' as its supplement, Spivak appears to give away the ground as fully elaborated and completed, rather than as both problematized and problematic. There are also difficulties with Spivak's analogizing of 'the primitive' with determinant judgement, with heteronomy and thus with differentiability, and the contrast of these with reflective judgement, autonomy and a unified subject of practical reason. This is because what becomes determinate judgement in the third *Critique* is arguably the pedestal on which the first *Critique* is founded: what might this imply about a different reading of the 'primitive' as enfolded in Kant's all-important *theoretical* reason? Furthermore, the regressive problems within the text, and consequently those of the Kantian architectonic itself, that have preoccupied Kant's commentators disappear under a hermeticism as seen from the 'perspective' of the Native Informant.

These are, however, lesser issues in comparison with Spivak's main argument that deconstruction has found Kant's imperialism in a central text of his critical philosophy, rather than as emergent in one of his relatively peripheral *empirical* texts. Spivak is right in maintaining that disciplinary philosophy may well dismiss Kant's gestures as marginal asides, unrelated to the majesty of his project. In stressing the universality, liberalism and cosmopolitanism of the Kantian subject, Kant's uncritical followers can elide consistently his *formal* racism, forbidding xenologies and European cultural and elite supremacy.⁹

Spivak poses the Native Informant as the '(im)possible' site from which Kant could be read, but also

appears to position herself adjacently to the Native Informant, reading what the Native Informant might read of Kant. The Native Informant can (only) read but has no agency. *We* might read this as an interesting or necessary literary strategy¹⁰ or perhaps as the conceit of postcolonial deconstruction. What might it mean to name 'the' victim of imperialism a *Native Informant*? Similarly, by identifying imperialism as the foreclosure of a native informant, and by precisely seeking the displacement of moral humanism through a reading of its margins, Spivak both understates the case against Kant that pre-existed her critique and mitigates imperialism as but a trope (her conception of imperialism is precisely tropological, symbolic rather than substantive). In dismissing Kant's anthropological and political writings and his writings on 'race' and species, her deconstruction can both concede an absolute division between pure philosophy and its outside and can unnecessarily problematize for itself the inveigling of the latter by the former. Spivak is at pains, for example, to situate the 'anthropological moment' in Kant's philosophy, and performs something like an apologia for assuming that the 'primitive' can have 'a proper name', can be identified with the actual world of peoples and groups.

Now, one can grant that Spivak's reading is precisely preoccupied with a critique of the historicity and temporality within Kant's ostensibly philosophical writings. It can also be granted that her reading can be seen to historicize Kant's universal philosophy. Similarly, by focusing on his philosophical rather than anthropological – and therefore in some way 'empirical' – writings, Spivak's reading can be seen as demonstrating precisely how the empirical moment in Kant intrudes upon, and disrupts, an ostensibly 'pure' philosophical discourse. However, this also has sharp consequences for Spivak's own deconstruction as a paradigmatic method for the critique of both 'historicity' and the 'empirical'. This is because, first, in allowing Kant's privileging of *philosophical* time, Spivak's critique can be seen to do the same. Conversely, her method cannot conceive of an altogether different temporality outside of its location within the strictly philosophical texts arising from Western Enlightenment traditions. Similarly, her critique can elide the distinctions between the time within the philosophical texts she deconstructs, the time *of* those texts and the consequent epistemologies of time available to her text. This is most apparent in her criticism of Hegel's critique of the *Bhagavadgita*.

There are other important questions about precisely what claims are being made about the relationship

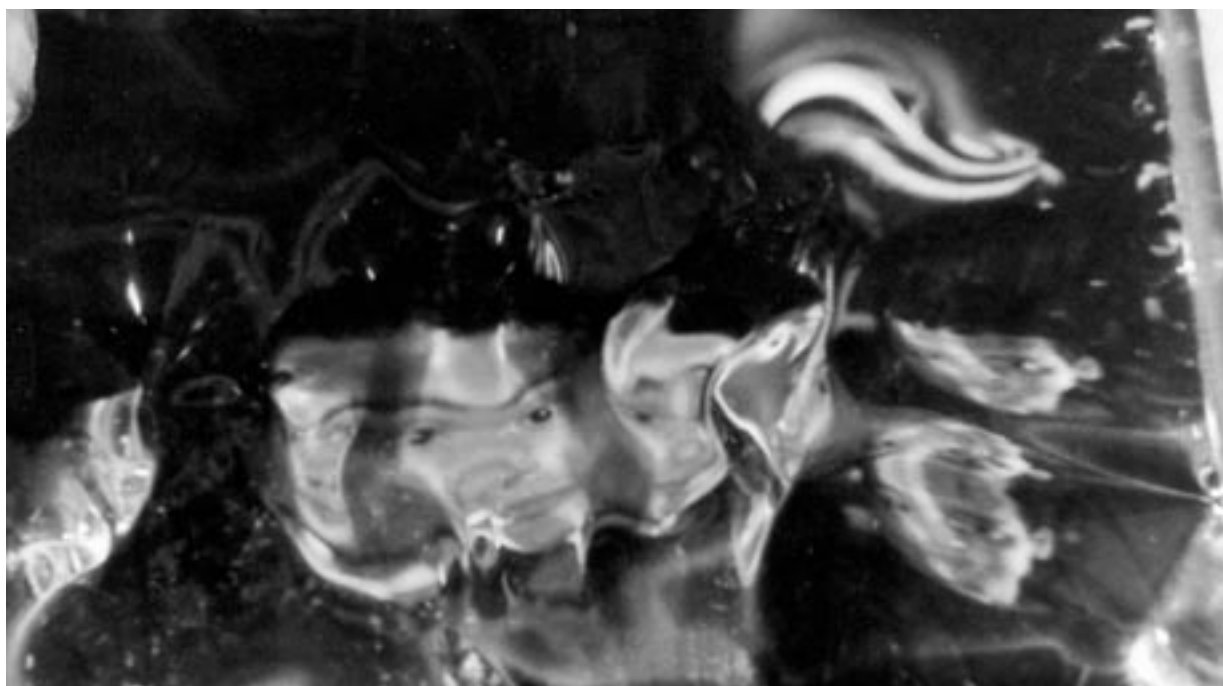
between Hegel's conception of Indian time and the *Hindu* time she reads, however critically; or indeed why it may be considered necessary to undertake a critique of Hegel by marshalling another reading of the *Gita*, one that is presumably intended to convey a more compelling veracity. But the point here is that Spivak can dismiss Hegel's temporality of the *Gita* by displacing the latter with another uncovered through a broadly psychoanalytic reading of Krishna's 'revelation' to Arjuna. The philosophical 'temporalities' available here are precisely located in, and oscillate between, those of the nineteenth century and those of the twentieth; in other words, aside from a consequent flattening of times, it is not clear that her particular method can provide a different or more useful imagination of time or historicity. Furthermore, while dismissing Hegel's collapsing of millennia of the 'epic' period of Indian history into a metaphor that locates Indian history outside of and prior to his *philosophical* history (conceived as epochs in the development of Spirit), Spivak's presentist deployment of psychoanalytic metaphors presumably to say something else about Indian history opens her reading to a similar charge.

A parallel argument concerns the empirical-anthropological moment in Kant's text. Because Spivak has already elided the importance of sensibility for Kant, 'the empirical', as anthropology, is the intrusion into a philosophical text that her radical deconstruction can only secure in primarily rationalist registers. Conversely, her deconstruction cannot then easily allow a ground for 'the empirical', however conceived, though we shall see that it does privilege something

like a conception of 'the empirical' once the latter is fictionalized.

The novelty of Spivak's reading also does not lie in establishing either Kant's imperial-civilizing mission, or in Kant's despising view that the humans of the 'New World' were not ends in themselves. These were precisely established in Kant's time. In fact Kant rather ferociously criticized *another* universal humanism founded on reason, justice, nature and aesthetics precisely because it could only fail in trying to explain the existence of the people of the 'New World', would not propose for them a European master, and could at best celebrate them in their 'native' happiness. We are not obliged to sanction Herder's universalizing or ecological *Humanität*, or his aesthetics of 'Man', against Kant's differentiated 'races' of humanity under imperial guidance. Nor, conversely, are we obliged to accept a 'non-racialized' version of Kant's strong warning that Herder's conception of a happy humanity cannot account for the presence of that which is other than the simply good. But neither can we subsume both under a simple determination of the humanist subject underwritten by a deconstructionist rule.

Spivak's pursuit of her claims about Kant's imperialism through a privileged reading of marginalia and periphery, itself a claim about the methodological sovereignty of her kind of deconstruction, is analogous to other difficulties. As much as Spivak's work is known precisely for its critique of the marginalization of the non-West, the larger agenda (Spivak asks her readers to judge what her agenda is) is not only that deconstruction has to discover the non-Western subject at the margins of the West, but that this is the only



place where its presence can ever be prescribed. This is a difficult argument which deserves longer treatment, but concerns the way in which the critical theorization of periphery contains a regressive logic, has its own unintended consequences and is analogized in a way that is strictly unwarranted with the real world of the exploited and oppressed peripheries of the West. The consequent fetishism of periphery, justified as an evacuation of essentialism, shares considerable space with several other contemporary theoretical projects that are founded on the inexorable theoretical production of objects of limit, abyss, occultation, ineffability that are performed as their interesting discoveries.

In Spivak's text, the persistent figure of the Aboriginal or 'tribal', curiously prefigured *primarily ecologically*, cannot of course be brought unproblematically into humanist subjecthood. The Indian 'tribal', to whom Spivak provides access (as gatekeeper?) mainly emerges through fiction, perhaps making apparent the assumption that postcolonial fiction must provide the most immediate, transparent access to the real, social world. The 'tribal' and the Aborigine in her text are characteristically Rousseau's *lone figure* and indeed seem to share the latter's temporal frame. Conversely, what might it mean politically to write today about what are named 'scheduled tribes' in India for a Western audience, diasporic or otherwise, in a manner that erases in its entirety the colonial and post-Independence history of 'animist' and 'tribal'-based political movements and federal states? One can be conscientiously puzzled about the implications for Spivak's non-specialist Western audiences about these absences: that some of the most important post-Independence 'secessionist' movements in India are based on 'animist' and 'tribal' affiliations, that Indian states (such as Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram) were formed in relation to demands for 'tribal' autonomy or indeed secession, that within several Indian states (including troubled Assam) the proliferation of differential 'animist' and 'tribal' identities and demands for autonomous homelands is a dominant contemporary political issue. In its most violent manifestations in recent years, the Hindu Right has precisely targeted 'tribal' populations, both 'animist' and 'Christian', in Dangs district (Gujarat), Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and elsewhere. The Hindu Right has also redesignated 'tribal' and 'animism'-affiliated populations as *vanavasi* ('forest-dweller', banished, rather than *adivasi* or the 'original people' or 'aborigines' of what is now India) under a grander primordialist project that claims to signal a 'non-Western' pathway to modernity which can only be authoritarian. (Instructively, the alarming essential-

ism of the Hindu Right has faced no challenges of any consequence, either in theory or in practice, from the setting to work of deconstruction as a safeguard against 'essentialism'.) From the mid-1990s, there emerged again in Indian national political debate, and very sharply within Indian anthropology, the issue of whether the existing cultures of 'tribal' Andaman Islanders be preserved, or whether the 'tribal' Islanders should be 'brought' into modernity. To prefigure these various examples (there are *substantially* more) as empiricism (or 'sensitivity') intruding on philosophy, or as irrelevant because articulated by Indian humanism miming either Kant or Herder, would be the ruse of postcolonial deconstruction seeking to preserve 'the conditional and hypothetical conjectures' that hallucinate the 'primitive' living out of time.¹¹

If the proliferation of metaphors of 'impossibility' must accompany every imagination of political futures in Spivak's text, Richard Rorty has been explicit about the *sociological* conditions of advanced Western bourgeois society that must situate a non-ideological, non-programmatic present as the only admissible persistent future. This by implication has to be the future of the 'Third World' *until* it accomplishes the stage where it can furnish an unmanifesto of impossible demands as an inadequate programme – as 'its' own 'history of the vanishing present'. The fiction performed by Spivak's deconstruction is the claim that her political language game must be a different one. The temporality within Spivak's project, which is not simply the residue that is available after her critique of the 'impossibility' of history (or at least the 'impossibility' of philosophical conceptions of history), seems to run as follows. Spivak's project is founded on an 'autochthony in time' as a strictly transcendental concept for which I cannot here find an adequate metaphor: 'we' all emerged irreducibly in the time of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; only those of us educated appropriately can look forward to an impossible primitivism to which we cannot return as the supplement to our persistent critique of the present that we cannot not want. In a curiously Hegelian turn, it conversely seems that those not recuperated within humanism or rationalism exist only as a *spatialized* supplement to this 'impossible' time.

Strands in an older argument symbolically represented by Kant, Herder and Rousseau articulate further the political prescriptions for postcolonial futurity. These emerge in Spivak's advocacy of 'a practical politics of living within the rhythm of the ecobiome', and of an 'animist liberation theology' (which she insists is not some generalized tribal mind) to 'girdle

the perhaps impossible vision of an ecologically just world.'

we must learn to learn from the original practical ecological philosophies of the world.... This learning can only be attempted through the supplementation of collective effort by love. What deserves the name of love is an effort – over which one has no control yet at which one must not strain – which is slow, attentive on both sides – how does one win the attention of the subaltern without coercion or crisis? – mindchanging on both sides, at the possibility of an unascertainable ethical singularity that is not ever a sustainable condition. (383)

These original practical ecological philosophies are articulated by Spivak as wishful generalities to be determined in some future; they cannot be convincingly demonstrated in their existing specificity. Do we elect to learn from the agricultural 'pastoral nomadism' imputed to 'the Tutsis' as their original *ecological* difference from the 'animist collectivism' attributed to 'the Hutus', and which led to the planned and systematic genocide of the former? The 'collective effort' Spivak urges is about changing laws, relations of production, education and health care, but 'without the mind-changing one-on-one responsible contact, nothing will stick'. Ethics for Spivak is 'the interpretation of narrative as ethical instantiation', as well as a kind of deconstructive embrace with the other, while 'unlearning one's privilege as one's loss'. We learn from the unknowable subaltern without appropriating it as other, just as 'it' must learn from us, a kind of mind-meld between the elite and the oppressed that seemingly can only advance a present condition. This *pedagogical* trope of learning is a striking re-emergence of Kantian education under moral tutelage, seen as central to an ethics founded on the imaginary figure of a lone 'primitive' happily preserving the ecology of its primordial nursery – a metaphor that has some uses for the overclasses of the West.

Notes

I would like to thank Peter Osborne, Kirsten Campbell and Stephen Cross for their comments. This article is a section from a longer assessment of the claims of post-colonial theory.

1. I. Kant, 'Reviews of Herder's Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind' [1785], in H. Reiss, ed., *Kant: Political Writings*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, pp. 219–220. In the first quotation, Herder is criticizing Kant's view that 'man is an animal who needs a master' (see Kant's sixth proposition in his 'Ideas for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose' [1784]); the 'evil man' is Kant referring to himself.
2. The Rani of Sirmur' with 'Can the Subaltern Speak?',

as well as an update of her discussion of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri's suicide, are part of her 'History' chapter; 'Three Women's Texts and a critique of Imperialism' and fragments of other texts are part of the 'Literature' chapter. These two chapters iterate many previous arguments about subalternity, gender, colonialism and post-colonialism within a framework that privileges the figure of the 'Native Informant'.

3. I. Kant *Critique of Judgement* [1790], trans. J.H. Bernard, Hafner Press, New York, 1951, pp. 12–15, pp. 32–4.
4. Ibid., p. 105.
5. Ibid., pp. 281–82.
6. Ibid., p. 105.
7. Spivak makes other points about the 'Critique of Teleological Judgement' that are both paradigmatically deconstructive and interesting. The 'Critique of Teleological Judgement' discusses purposes and purposiveness in natural and moral life, rather than Art, and hence, Spivak argues, falls outside of not just the application of judgement but seemingly also Kant's table, or at least occupies an indeterminate place in relation to it. It is also, she says, in the 'Critique of Teleological Judgement' that Kant argued that our thoughts of purposiveness occupy the site of the faculty of desire; however, final purposiveness is determined for the faculty of desire by the cognitive faculty of reason, and both these are foundational to Kant's architectonics. Spivak's own use of 'desire' may be read as allusive ('there is a quiet slippage between the capacity to desire and a good will'), but she seems to be arguing that in the movement within Kant's table from judgement to practical reason, Kant necessarily has to refer to the indeterminate place of teleological judgement outside the table in which this movement is knitted together. Indeed she seems to suggest that it may only be in this indeterminate, outside place of the 'Critique of Teleological Judgement' that freedom itself, in Kant, can become operative and subsequently re-enter, as it were, the architectonic.
8. Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 225.
9. I. Kant 'On the Different Races of Man' [1775], in E.W. Count ed., *This is Race*, H. Schuman, New York, 1950; 'Reviews of Herder's Ideas' [1785], pp. 214, 217; *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* [1764], trans. J.T. Goldthwait, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1991, pp. 107–14 and passim; *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* [1796–8], trans. V.L. Dowdell, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale and Edwardsville, pp. 236–7. There are also various references to the 'savage' in the second and third *Critiques*.
10. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1991, pp.78–80.
11. The history of the varieties of dalit and 'scheduled caste' anction, in full awareness of caste, a critique of 'Hegel' through a deconstructive performance of the *Gita*'s philosophy of temporality founded on phallocentrism? Some of the most compelling philosophical critiques of selfhood, race, identity, representation, primordialism, and the repudiation of futurity founded on the apparatuses of 'the political', labour and production, ecology and landedness have come from recent internal dalit intellectual critiques.