

Prefacing Spivak

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Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's importance as a postcolonial theorist committed to a politically engaged deconstructive practice was indicated on the occasion of the New Nation Writers Conference held in Johannesburg, 1991, where she was the only delegate invited as a scholar and not a writer. Spivak is seen by some as a theorist who effectively shuttles between the margins and the centre stressing the relation between race and capitalism, and the role of academics in the business of ideological production. From her own position teaching within the bosom of a superpower she claims to challenge the universalizing pretensions of the dehistoricising academy, and to foreground the production of philosophical writing and teaching. Her work is not primarily focused on colonial discourse but rather on the contemporary cultural politics of neocolonialism in the U.S. For Spivak Derrida is the intellectual *par excellence* who questions his own disciplinary production.

The reception of theory and theorists in South Africa raises many questions, some of which Spivak notes: the problem of 'institutional elitism', and the situation of the academic in 'mechanisms of certification, validation, and marketing' (De Kock 1992:39). In interview Spivak asserts that '[d]econstructive imperatives always come out of situations; it's not situationally relative but they always come out of situations' (De Kock 1992:39-40), and circumspectly acknowledges the importance of historical positionality and the need to contextualise migratory theory. When invited to comment on the South African situation she fastidiously reiterates 'that imperatives are situational' (De Kock 1992:41). The imperative of contextual constraint is again emphasised in the extended text of the thirteenth annual T.B. Davie Memorial lecture at the University of Cape Town, 1992, on the subject of 'Academic Freedom':

I have no taste for inspirational prose. And it is my habit to fit suggestions, as far as I can, to the limited contexts that I inhabit (Spivak 1995:126).

In what follows I shall argue that this declaration of responsibility to historical particularity sits uneasily alongside the theoretical insistence 'on

this general structural characteristic of postcoloniality' (Spivak 1995:127). There is a tension between theory and historical particularity.

In the Davies lecture Spivak tries to put some distance between her own work and Derrida's, in footnotes that are still 'indebted to Derrida' to be sure, but which also register a difference of 'emphasis', particularly regarding 'Derrida's words on ideology' (Spivak 1995:149, notes 6 & 10). Ironically Spivak (1995:146) ends up defending Derrida against Paul Taylor's

superficial knowledge of the Saussure section of *Of Grammatology*, a book written nearly thirty years ago, and of a polemical exchange with John Searle that took place a decade later.

Taylor (1995:158), who has read Derrida with about as much attention as Spivak appears to have read the South African academic-discursive situation, enlists the canonical philosophical authorities of Plato, Hume, and Wittgenstein to argue that 'deconstruction is not an appropriate basis for social criticism or for commentary on practical issues'. Spivak's rebuttal involves her adopting the position of epigone to Derrida the grand master theorist, despite her resistance to certain aspects of Derridean deconstruction, principally the aura of sequestered theoreticism that Taylor objects to. She has stated that she is not particularly interested in defending Derrida as a master figure on the grounds that any political program based on deconstruction quickly comes to resemble pluralism. Curiously, the text that Taylor clearly hasn't read, *Of Grammatology*, and Spivak's famous preface to that text, presents a good starting point for considering the questions of intellectual filiation and the potential of deconstruction for intervening in practical issues. The work of critically situating theory involves tracing the legitimating authority of texts in a way that demystifies them. After all, the opportunity to read texts is an important component of academic freedom, one which perhaps has precedence over the right to polemicise. Reviewing the texts is an obvious if unspectacular step towards uncovering the complex relationship between discursive institutions of authorization and the role of theory.

Introductions

The 1976 John Hopkins Paperbacks Edition of Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (*De la Grammatologie*, Copyright Les Editions de Minuit, 1967) has an eighty-seven page Translator's Preface in which Spivak assumes the formidable task of introducing Derrida to an Anglo-American

audience¹. The blurb on the back cover tells me of the importance of the Translator's Preface for putting the work of Derrida into a philosophical perspective, and for the benefit of an 'American' audience Derrida's deconstructive technique is mistakenly compared to Kant's critique as part of the 'most clear-sighted European intellectual tradition'.

The Acknowledgements thank J. Hillis Miller 'for having introduced me to Derrida himself' and expresses gratitude to *Of Grammatology* itself: 'I am grateful to *Grammatology* for having brought me the friendship of Marguerite and Jacques Derrida' (G vii). *Of Grammatology* is familiarised to *Grammatology*, the formality of the genitive indicating a discourse on its subject, a learned disquisition, is also the epistolary medium of friendship. Five years of work from July 1970 to October 1975 in Iowa City, (New Delhi-Dacca-Calcutta), Boston, Nice Providence, Iowa City overcome formality. The Translator's Preface continues this collegiate theme of the diaspora intellectual; Derrida has travelled from Algiers to America:

He has an affection for some of the intellectual centres of the Eastern seaboard—Cambridge, New York, Baltimore—in his vocabulary, 'America'. And it seems that at first these places and now more and more of the intellectual centres all over the United States are returning his affection' (G ix).

However, the colloquial warmth between translator and subject will not remain constant in the pages that follow.

Within these gestures of academic corporatism the translator notes that 'Derrida's first book was a translation of Edmund Husserl's "Origin of Geometry", with a long critical introduction' (G ix). Derrida is himself a translator. Spivak's Preface serves as 'a long critical introduction' to the 'method' embodied in these texts since 'Jacques Derrida is also this collection of texts' (G ix). Texts that were a medium of introduction are now constitutive of 'Jacques Derrida' as a sort of articulated corpus or corporate, institutionalised entity. Translation is an extension of the corpus, of the property of the corporate entity of the author, and Spivak wants to be more than a passive mediator, giving authority to Derrida. The problem with this goal of transformative translation is that Derrida has been there before—his translation of Husserl is, as Spivak remarks, exemplary from this point of view—and the Preface is torn between parricide and homage.

¹ Compare the preface with David B. Allison's too helpful 1972 introduction to *Speech and Phenomena*, Alan Bass's 1977 business-like and informative Translator's Introduction to *Writing and Difference*, the irascible and self-effacing introduction to their 1987 translation of *La Verité en Peinture* by Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod, and Alan Bass's ephemeral 1982 Translator's Note to *Margins of Philosophy*.

As interpreter Spivak attempts to master Derrida's text. This is the mastery that Derrida appears to have as the author of *Of Grammatology* and translator of Husserl, but which he says is part of the common desire for a stable centre that must be resisted. Spivak both accedes to and at the same time resists his injunction not to posit another centre, and so resists the recovery of the Preface father-text who then, ironically, justifies it. You the reader are implicated in this dilemma: 'Why must we worry over so simple a thing as preface making?' (*G* xiii). Confronted with the authority of a father-text who declares 'Disobey me' even when we disobey we are obeying, etc. Confronted with this *aporia*, dilemma, predicament, Spivak again resorts to quotation, this time a quite unnecessary one from Hegel on common sense. Will the anxiety with Derrida's strategics of mastery always be covered over and deflected by recourse to the authoritative words from the circuit of philosophical authorities? Quoting Derrida, Spivak considers the options of the sad, negative, guilty nostalgia of Rousseau for lost origins and the joyous affirmation of Nietzsche (*G* xii). Despite the rhetoric of affirmation, Spivak's unease at Derrida's pre-emption of her critical manoeuvres does not lead to Nietzschean affirmation, and stays firmly on the side of the negative. Perhaps this resistance to Derrida marks the problematic place from which to begin to assess the pedagogical scene of deconstructive practice.

Philosophical Families

The anxiety of influence in the Preface leads to a certain deeply serious humour, as when Spivak continually defers to Derrida to say that there is no origin. Quoting herself disclaiming that the origin of the preface is the father-text, Spivak defers her predicament to Derrida's philosophical elaboration of this dilemma: 'My predicament is an analogue for a certain philosophical exigency that drives Derrida to writing' (*G* xiv). In effect, her predicament is sublimated to the authority of philosophical discourse. The dilemma of homage-parricide is deferred to Derrida's response to philosophical exigency to which the predicament of the Preface stands in a relation of analogue or family resemblance. Analogue, while it implies resemblance and difference, also involves hierarchy and the philosophical problematic will always have the upper hand over 'My predicament'.

Philosophy will always have the last word over subjective predicaments, even when one's predicament is grounded in suspicion of philosophy's universalising imperialism. The origin that is never questioned but is rather deferred to throughout in paraphrase and quotation is the philosophical origin of this exigency: the one stable origin of the question of origin is the Western, or more precisely German, philosophical canon. Spivak simply erases the historical contexts of Hegel's, Nietzsche's, and Heidegger's

responses to their own predicaments, their own anxieties of influence, and their differences are amalgamated into a kind of Philosophy Inc., a limited company of mandarin philosophical directors with executive power to incorporate all predicaments. Derrida is then the legitimate, if parvenu, son/seed and heir to this Germano-European philosophical empire that recovers and justifies him. In this genealogy one wonders about the absence of other venerable European males; Kant and Aristotle, ur-precursors against which the modern philosophical masters struggled for their own space, and of course Marx too in his relationship with Hegel, perhaps the most obvious and promising analogue of Spivak's relation to Derrida.

Heidegger is the problem in this philosophical company and always Nietzsche is made to precede Heidegger, which is at most chronologically valid. But for Derrida Nietzsche is always read *through* Heidegger in accordance with a different take on chronological exigency. For Spivak 'Heidegger suggests, as does, of course, Nietzsche before him' (G xv), and this supercedence will be the motif of the Preface's reading of Heidegger. Heidegger, like Hegel, is caught in nostalgia for origin, a trap which Nietzsche escapes. Nostalgic, reactionary 'Heideggerian hope' (G xvi) is sidelined in favour of a future-oriented Nietzschean hope. The context or situation of Heidegger's 'misreading' of Nietzsche is ignored. Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche arose from a series of lectures delivered between 1936 and 1940, and some treatises written between 1940 and 1946. Heidegger wrote parts of the text in the context of a Nietzsche appropriated, via Elisabeth Forster-Nietzsche, by the Nazi ideologues. This was the text's decisive moment². Heidegger's distortion and misreading of Nietzsche as the last metaphysician can be (generously) read as the rejection of the ideology that had appropriated Nietzsche, Nazism, as itself metaphysical. So Heidegger is concerned both to jamb this appropriation (Nietzsche was no naïve biologist or voluntarist), and to criticise what in Nietzsche is susceptible to this appropriation (the subjectivism of the will to power). Derrida will later point out, in *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* (1989), that what is worrying about Nietzsche's thought—and, one might add, Heidegger's too—is that it does not rule out such an ideological appropriation. It isn't philosophical Nazism, but then neither does it rule out such use. Heidegger will continue to disrupt the philosophical genealogy

² In the 1988 "Can the Subaltern Speak?" the valuation of Heidegger is more positive: 'the most privileged discourse of modern Western philosophy Heidegger's meditation on Being' (Spivak 1988:305). Again the historical context of Heidegger's text is omitted. Spivak's note refers to Heidegger's *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, published in 1953 and delivered as lectures in 1935. This text and its subsequent editing have been the cause of bitter, if cloistered, dispute among Heideggerians, specifically regarding Heidegger's statements regarding his allegiance at this date to the possibilities of National Socialism.

throughout Spivak's Preface, possibly because with Heidegger the practical imperative of ethico-political questions, the ideological infiltration of philosophy and its historicity, press on the margins of the determinately philosophical Preface. Perhaps the relative absence of Derrida's direct dealing with such questions in *Of Grammatology*, their always looming presence, is a source of Spivak's 'predicament'. Rather than an analogue of philosophical exigency, could this predicament signal a suspicion of philosophy's abstraction from always already situated practical realities, from the exigencies of ethical-political choices?

Having evoked the gravitas of philosophical exigency there follows a confession or aside, a glimpse of the face of the prefacer; 'there also seems, I must admit, something ritually satisfying about beginning with the trace' (G xvi). *Ritual* is the right word here, and Spivak's commencing with Derrida's disruption of the notion of unitary origin remains within the conventionality of deferring to the authority of his philosophical engagement. She has earlier remarked upon 'Humankind's common desire for a stable centre, and for the assurance of mastery through knowing or possessing', and we can see the philosophical company of the masters of Western philosophy as satisfying that desire. The great patriarchal knowers and possessors of the philosophical exigency are inscribed into a hierarchy with a beginning, a middle, and an end: Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Freud, Derrida form a chronological teleology conveniently awarding the vantage point to the present. Analogy crops up again: 'Following an argument analogical to the argument on the sign, Derrida puts the word "experience" under erasure' (G xvii). Does Spivak's recourse to 'philosophical exigency' and the philosophical discourse also risk putting her own historically specific experience of (post)colonial predicament under erasure?

Bricolage and Agency

According to Levi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind* the *bricoleur* makes do with things that were intended for other ends, patches things together in a makeshift fashion with no overall design in mind, abandons all reference to a centre of mastery, an origin, a subject, and this is the model of the discourse of anthropology. The *bricoleur*, unlike the engineer, assumes no pose of mastery. The Preface's discussion of *bricolage* takes place within the shadow of Derrida's argument against the separation of the activity of the *bricoleur* and the engineer; they both posture control and mastery, despite Levi-Strauss's privileging of *bricolage* as the non-totalising. Referring to this argument Spivak concludes:

One can now begin to understand a rather cryptic sentence in the *Grammatology*. 'Without that track [of writing under erasure], the ultra-transcendental text

[*bricolage* under erasure] will so closely resemble the pre-critical text [*bricolage* plain and simple] as to be indistinguishable from it' (G xx).

I'm not sure how far Spivak's understanding here succeeds in decrypting Derrida's gnomic sentence. The cited statement from Derrida in fact comes from a discussion not of *bricolage* or Levi-Strauss, but from a critique of the linguistics, particularly the Hjelmslevian type, of the Copenhagen School. The cryptic sentence is part of the following sequence in Derrida's text:

Without that [the question of the transcendental origin of the system itself], the decisive progress accomplished by a formalism respectful of the originality of its object, of 'the immanent system of its objects', is plagued by a scientificist objectivism, that is to say by another unperceived or unconfessed metaphysics. This is often noticeable in the works of the Copenhagen School. It is to escape falling back into this naive objectivism that I refer here to a transcendental that I have elsewhere put into question. It is because I believe that there is a short-of and a beyond of transcendental criticism. To see to it that the beyond does not return to the within is to recognize in the contortion the necessity of a pathway [*parcours*]. That pathway must leave a track in the text. Without that track, abandoned to the simple content of its conclusions, the ultra-transcendental text will so closely resemble the precritical text as to be indistinguishable from it. We must now form and meditate upon the law of this resemblance (G 61).

This is certainly a key passage elaborating the deconstructive strategy of 'sewing' the border between the short-of and the beyond of transcendental criticism, aiming to avoid the idealist dogmatism of both particularity and generality. These strategies aim at avoiding the ritual installation of new transcendentals (trace, difference, etc.) in the place of the old transcendentals (truth, reason, God, etc.). But in the passage Derrida is warning against falling back into naive pre-critical objectivism, and clearly makes no mention of *bricolage*. What might explain Spivak's decontextualization of this passage and the invasive insertions, and what track does this intrusive interpretive pathway leave in the Preface?

The point of the Preface's digression into *bricolage* is to substantiate the claim that

[t]here is some similarity between this strategy [Derrida's letting go of each concept at the very moment he uses it] and what Levi-Strauss calls *bricolage* (G xviii).

The essay 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' in *Writing and Difference* is cited as the authority for this comparison of strategy. But in that essay Derrida sees *bricolage* as part of Levi-Strauss's 'structural ethnography' aiming at 'a new humanism'; 'even if one yields to the necessity of what Levi-Strauss has done, one cannot ignore its risks':

'ethnographic *bricolage* deliberately assumes its mythopoetic function' (Derrida 1982:287f). *Bricolage* aims at a unified, totalising structure of reintegration for a universal science of man. For Derrida structuralist mythopoetics tends towards the universalism associated with naive objectivism, or else limits itself to a positivistic anthropologism. As ethnographic and mythopoetic *bricolage* is not a trans-philosophical concept but rather intra-philosophical, determined through and through by the traditional exigencies of metaphysics. Derrida is certainly concerned with the value of *bricolage* as a critical procedure in contrast to other types of critique, but he opposes *bricolage* to the following type of critique:

To concern oneself with the founding concepts of the entire history of philosophy, to deconstitute them, is not to undertake the work of the philologist or of the classic historian of philosophy. Despite appearances, it is probably the most daring way of making the beginning of a step outside philosophy (Derrida 1982:284).

This, of course, is Derrida's historicising route which involves the historicisation of the concept of history itself. The other option is the route of Levi-Strauss:

The other choice (which I believe corresponds more closely to Levi-Strauss's manner), in order to avoid the possibly sterilizing effects of the first one, consists in conserving all these old concepts within the domain of empirical discovery while here and there denouncing their limits, treating them as tools which can still be used (Derrida 1982:284).

Why is *bricolage* for Derrida not 'the most daring way of making the beginning of a step outside of philosophy'? Because '[t]his is how the language of the social sciences criticizes *itself*' (Derrida 1982:284). This self-criticism of the social sciences remains *within* the historically constituted and conceptually regulated parameters of those sciences which seek to redraw or reconstitute, but not to 'step outside', the discourse of the human sciences. Such a discourse remains anthropocentric, and anthropology criticises but does not radically challenge this supervising centre. In short, *bricolage* under erasure and *bricolage* pure and simple are alike precritical; both fascinated by the transcendental figure of universal man and confined within the matrix of empiricism that governs the discourse of the human sciences, and certainly not ultra-transcendental. Attempting to salvage the role of the *bricoleur*, Spivak tries to make Derrida's deconstruction of it a methodological analogue:

This undoing yet preserving of the opposition between *bricolage* and engineering is an analogue for Derrida's attitude toward all oppositions—an attitude that

'erases' (in a special sense) all oppositions. I shall come back to this gesture again and again in this Preface (G xx)

Spivak wants the opposition—undone by Derrida's criticisms—between *bricolage* and engineer to leave a track in her text, and to preserve what Derrida is content to let the discourse of the human sciences keep to 'itself'. For his translator the role of the creative interpreter and the technically specialised and competent translator must be preserved. *Bricolage* resembles Spivak's own strategy in the Preface; the taking of bits of Derrida and others, 'making do with things that were perhaps meant for other ends', admitting to the impossibility of mastering the whole field of theory while at the same time attempting to totalise it. Clearly in trying to preserve the role of *bricoleur* as translator Spivak is in tension if not outright opposition to Derrida's deconstruction of *bricolage*. Derrida is awarded the role of arch-*bricoleur* (under erasure), and the Preface preserves a residual humanism, the 'need for power through anthropomorphic defining' (G xxiii), even if such a reading contradicts the anti-anthropomorphic argument of *Of Grammatology*. That is, the notion of agency necessary for critique to situate its object and assure the independence of the act of interpretation is bound up with the figure of the *bricoleur*.

Spivak argues that the strategy of *bricolage* facilitates a 'simple *bricoleur*'s take on the word [metaphysics] that permits Derrida to allow the possibility of a "Marxist" or "structuralist" metaphysics"' (G xxi). Later we learn that this consists in 'using a signifier not as a transcendental key that will unlock the way to truth but as a *bricoleur*'s or tinker's tool' (G lxxv). This whole phenomenological rhetoric of the *present-to-hand* as tool is the subject of Heidegger's analysis in *Being and Time* (1927). In both "The Ends of Man" (1972) and *Of Spirit* Derrida has expressed reservations that Heidegger is not critical enough of this powerful motif than in turn manipulates Heidegger's own analysis. But Spivak still wants to see Derrida as the skilled modernist artisan *using* his language as tool. This anthropologism is a strategy for keeping Derrida at the distance necessary for getting a perspective on his work since like the translator-interpreter-*bricoleur* he just uses what is ready to hand like the rest of us. The rather desperate claims to having invented the notion of 'sous rature', writing under erasure, will attempt to keep the translated at bay. Thus there is more to the following apologetic protocol than the usual rhetorical nicety:

I have lingered on the 'question of the preface' and the pervasive Derridean practice of the 'sous rature' to slip into the atmosphere of Derrida's thought (G xxi).

If anything, the atmosphere between translator and translated seems decided-

ly strained. The pedagogical itinerary of philosophical genealogy follows, an attempt to ease the atmosphere: 'Now I shall speak of his acknowledged "precursors"—Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, Husserl' (G xxi). This genealogical approach offers the pleasure, as we read in *Writing and Difference*, of allowing 'these destroyers to destroy each other reciprocally' (Derrida 1982:281). Of which Derrida (1982:282) remarks laconically: 'today no exercise is more widespread'. But, as I have noted, Heidegger creates problems in this family scene and he is shuffled and side-lined for never stated reasons. He is the awkward and embarrassing relative at the philosophical family gathering, very old fashioned in a quaint sort of way, let's just hope he doesn't mention politics Uncle Heidegger will be offered a threatening apology, a rain-check, as if both to assuage and to get rid of him: 'I reserve the occasion for a more thoroughgoing critique of the Heideggerian text on Nietzsche' (G xxiv).

Predicaments

Spivak's predicament is a question of authorisation and legitimisation, an iconoclastic impulse accompanied by the need to authorise that impulse. Derrida is consistently cited as the authority for the claim that there is no final authority, and is characterised in the following ways: the super-clever Derrida:

Derrida's reading of Descartes on folly is an elegant bit of deconstruction; he spots the moment of the forgetting of the trace in Descartes's text (G lx),

the intriguing Derrida: 'He practices his caution in an unemphatic way' (G lxxi); the nimble Derrida: 'Those acts of controlled acrobatics are difficult to match ... impressive' (G lxxviii); the poignant Derrida: 'a simple and moving exposition of the method of deconstruction as understood by the early Derrida' (G lxxxv); the precocious Derrida: 'the taste of a rather special early Derrida, the young scholar transforming the ground rules of scholarship' (G lxxxv). Inscrutable agility makes the multiplying Derridas difficult to pin-down:

On page xlv I bring the charge of 'prudence' against Derrida. The new Derrida shows us that this 'prudence' is also the greatest 'danger', the will to knowledge and the will to ignorance and vice versa (G lxxviii).

But Spivak does want to criticise Derrida without his pre-emptive sanction, and Foucault's incisive objections to Derrida's procedure pinpoint both the pedagogical attraction of Derrida, and his danger. She quotes the second

edition of the *History of Madness* where Foucault, responding to Derrida's critique in 'Cogito and the History of Madness', indicts

[a] pedagogy that conversely gives to the voice of the teacher that unlimited sovereignty which permits them to read the text indefinitely (quoted *G lx*).

She sides with Derrida—Foucault 'does not seem to have fully attended' to the 'sous rature'—and remarks the 'hostility' of Foucault's rebuttal. But is it too much to read tacit sympathy for Foucault into Spivak's solidarity with the ever victorious Derrida?

Towards the conclusion of the Preface Spivak's reservations begin to accumulate and these last pages are both the most interesting and the most useful. Derrida comes 'suspiciously' close to valorising writing in the narrow sense:

But he quietly drops the idea of being the authorized grammatological historian in the narrow sense ... In the *Grammatology*, then, we are at a specific and precarious moment in Derrida's career (*G lxxx*).

Spivak notes 'the changes and interpolations made in the text of the review articles as they were transformed into the book' (*G lxxx*). This is important historico-bibliographic information that undermines the pose of mastery created by the finished book as we glimpse Derrida's predicaments, decisions, and hesitations; the strategic, situational choices. Spivak is impatient with Derrida's prophetic tone, 'a slightly embarrassing messianic promise' (*G lxxxi*), the book is 'formally awkward' (*G lxxxiii*), and incredulous with his argument for historical necessity. But these salient criticisms that promise to deprive Derrida of omniscient mastery are again bundled away into another deferred action (*Nachträglichkeit*); 'This again is an undertaking for a future deconstructor' (*G lxxxii*). Then, finally, we get Spivak's real criticism of Derrida:

There is also the shadow of a geographical pattern that falls upon the first part of the book. The relationship between logocentrism and ethnocentrism is indirectly invoked in the very first sentence of the 'Exergue'. Yet, paradoxically, and almost by a reverse ethnocentrism, Derrida insists that logocentrism is a property of the *West*. He does this so frequently that a quotation would be superfluous. Although something of the Chinese prejudice of the West is discussed in Part I, the *East* is never seriously studied or deconstructed in the Derridean text. Why then must it remain, recalling Hegel and Nietzsche in their most cartological humors, as the name of the limits of the text's knowledge? (*G lxxxii*)

Derrida deconstructs the centre and Derridean discourse remains within this decentring. This is not to succumb to a spatial metaphor, but rather to note in

deconstruction a proximity of concern and idiom that strategically de-centres at the point of greatest leverage: the Euro-philosophical centre of the West's hegemony. Spivak decisively and significantly registers that the texts Derrida discusses, and the philosophical vocabulary of his discourse, work within the philosophical and literary canon of the West.

But even here the criticism is attenuated since its object becomes the 'early' Derrida, and the mature Derrida is still deferred to as the authority for 'ever-sustained word against all gestures of surrender to precursors' (G xlvi). Despite recognising beneath Derrida's invocations of radicality an undercurrent of conservatism in his work—'the rather endearing conservatism of Chapter 3, Section 1' (G lxxxv), and, one might add, 'The Violence of the Letter', Chapter 1, Section 2—such criticisms are simply noted rather than pursued. The role of the translator is that of 'informing my readers' (G lxxxvi), and this role seems to involve the suppression of criticism of the translated in favour of proselytising 'Derrida's master-concept' (G xliii): 'To repeat our catechism' (G lxv). Recognising that this procedure raises questions about translation itself, Spivak writes: 'I shall not launch my philosophy of translation here' (G lxxxvii). Such deferrals echo Derrida's omissions—usually the historical, political and economic dimensions of his deconstructions—that leave a lacunae in his itinerary. Perhaps this gap is to be welcomed as room for a future deconstructor but it is nonetheless troubling since this is the dimension he *chooses* to elide, and methodological caution can look like evasiveness. Despite a commitment to a deconstructive practice that must take place within an historical context, Spivak also mutes or elides the question of historical context in favour of a philosophical treatment of Derrida. This dehistoricising impulse ensures the installation of the authority of both the 'master-concept' and the European masters of the philosophical 'master-concept'.

Denied Spivak's philosophy of translation, an alternative is proposed: 'Instead I give you a glimpse of Derrida's' (G lxxxvii). We know from the first page of the Preface that the arch translator is none other than Derrida himself: 'Derrida's first book was a translation of Edmund Husserl's "Origin of Geometry", with a long critical introduction' (G ix). This hominein to Derrida the translator is far from the 'customary ... battles' (G lxxxv) of the translator, which normally focus on semantic incompatibility. Here it involves positing an ideal reader who happens to be the translator/translated himself, Jacques Derrida as the translator of 'the many nuanced Heideggerian German words': 'And all said and done, that is the sort of reader I would hope for' (G lxxxvii). Spivak's interpersonal *Grammatology*, the medium of her friendship with Jacques and Madeleine Derrida, returns via *Of Grammatology* to its authorising patronymic source, Jacques Derrida. The anthropocentric path is complete, the detour between origins is the act of

translative interpretation that 'assures the proximity to itself of the fixed and central being for which this circular reappropriation is produced': 'The name of man has always been inscribed in metaphysics between these two ends' (Derrida 1982a:121,123). '[T]he proper name and proper (literal) meaning, the proper in general' (G lxxxiv) remains secure: pedagogy works within and conserves the proper name and the politics of the signature.

Resistance and De Man

The 1980 *Diacritics* essay 'Revolutions That As Yet Have No Model: Derrida's *Limited Inc*' makes Spivak's disagreement with Derrida explicit. Here she is more wary of the academic context of her own discourse, and seems more attuned to the authorising institutional context of the U.S. reception of Derrida.

Referring to the 1977 dispute between Searle and Derrida, Spivak declares 'Derrida cancels Searle's objections' (Spivak 1980:29). Derrida the undisputed victor is seen to be involved in 'what I should call an ideology-critique (although Derrida would object to that phrase and call his critique ethico-political)' (Spivak 1980:30). Spivak (1980:39) suggests transferring deconstructive reading practices to 'the social text'. Part of Derrida's challenge to disciplinary codes is seen to be his non-seriousness (in *Limited Inc.*) even if some of his jokes are 'rather belaboured and elaborate' (Spivak 1980:46). Such an introduction of the marginalised non-serious forms part of a 'practically fractured yet persistent critique of the hidden agenda of ethico-political exclusion':

Thus it is (not) merely impertinent to acknowledge what generally remains tacit: that the academic game is played according to rules that might not pertain altogether to the disinterested intellect (Spivak 1980:46)

Although 'he is himself caught up in an international academic lifestyle, Derrida can behave as a non-serious marginal' (Spivak 1980:44). This sense of humour is a serious business: 'Where Derrida is strikingly different to Heidegger is in his entertainment of the "non-serious"' (Spivak 1980:44). (One recalls Derrida's aside, I think in *Of Spirit*, that he has come across only one attempt at a rather poor joke in Heidegger.) The treatment of Heidegger is again deferred:

What follows makes no pretense at figuring out the relationship between Heidegger and Derrida. It is simply yet another summary or checklist of certain moments in Heidegger that bring *Limited Inc.* to mind, followed by a few suggestions as to how Derrida might be different. To interpret the possibility of a metaphysical-oedipal disclaimer would call for a different strategy (Spivak 1980:40).

In this text some four years after the *Of Grammatology* Preface Heidegger still has to be put into his place aided by Nietzsche's hammer, and is distinguished by a 'pattern of a deconstructive insight recuperated by an idealist blindness' (Spivak 1980:42). Derrida is still the self-effacing authority for the claim that there is no unified origin of authorisation:

So much said, let me once again tabulate I should add, of course, that I cannot guarantee Derridean authorization for any of these meanings (Spivak 1980:46).

The conclusion to 'Revolutions' takes the form of a detour through Benjamin quoting Brecht on the citational quality of dramatic performance, and Spivak clearly wants to include Derrida in the company of Benjamin and Brecht. To do this she criticises Paul de Man as a practitioner of Romantic irony which lacks didactic purpose and is irresponsible with regard to the social text; exactly the charge Taylor levels at her. This is the same de Man referred to earlier with approval—'the permanent parabasis that Paul de Man calls "allegory"' (Spivak 1980:31)—and implicitly invoked in the reading of the 'social text':

Clear-cut oppositions between so-called material and ideological formations would be challenged as those between literal and allegorical uses of language (Spivak 1980:39f).

Now de Man is presented as the pied-piper of skepticism: 'Indeed, the genius of American deconstructivism finds in its Romanticism its privileged model' (Spivak 1980:48). This version of deconstruction leads 'critics from the left and the right ... to see in deconstruction nothing but this itinerary of skepticism' (Spivak 1980:48). If Heidegger is bedevilled by Romantic nostalgia, then de Man is the ironic romanticist unable to connect with reality. This characterisation of Romanticism is, of course, straight from Hegel's attack on the neo-Kantianism of Fichte and Schelling—an attack that both Heidegger and de Man subscribe to and engage with.

The source for the quote from de Man that justifies this defensive aggression is *Allegories of Reading* where the possibility of a history of Romanticism is being questioned. De Man is claiming that Romanticism undermines the geneticism of historiography, the kind of chronological geneticism that marks Spivak's Preface and is still in place four years later in 'Revolutions'. More precisely, de Man is discussing his privileging of Nietzsche; 'his work participates in the radical rejection of the genetic teleology associated with Romantic idealism' (De Man 1979:82). De Man, with Nietzsche as his guide, is writing about just those problems of a priori historicist genealogy as linear teleological succession that are part of

Spivak's predicament. Such an historical teleology is an invaluable means of putting Derrida into historical context, yet deconstruction continually questions the soundness of such a procedure. Seen in the light of de Man's suspicion of geneticism, Spivak's genetic approach to modern philosophy remains itself susceptible to deconstruction. The pedagogical need to historically contextualise rests uneasily with the deconstructive historicisation of history. I would suggest that this is the general predicament of deconstructive theorists that wish to engage politically.

A New Humanism?

In 'Revolutions that as Yet Have no Model' Spivak's moment of predicament is clarified when she refuses to relinquish anthropologism. If Derrida is seen to have cancelled Searle's objections, then Spivak wishes to salvage anthropologism from this cancellation and so conserve the rubric of humanism that calls for revolution in the name of liberating humanity. This is an anthropologism that exceeds the strategies of Althusserian subject positionality, and lays claim to a liberatory teleology. It is not anthropologism under erasure, but rather the anthropologism proper to the 'old language' of metaphysics. Despite Derrida's (1982a) critique of Heidegger's residual humanism in *The Letter on Humanism* (1947)—Derrida thinks Heidegger's humanism contributed to his political 'error'—Spivak will retain anthropologism. The anthropologism that contorts the 1976 Preface becomes decisive in the 1980 'Revolutions'. The metaphysical integuments of anthropologism are not to be placed under erasure, 'souse rature', since the *telos* of revolution is an end for a subject (humanity) that, in its Marxist form, is enabled by intersubjective class solidarity and the universalisation of the proletariat as subject:

Although I am attempting to show that Derridean practice would question 'the name of man as *Dasein*', my reading of Derrida might also seem anthropologicist. I think I must insist that a deconstructivist position cannot reduce out anthropologism *fully*. Like the paradox of minimal idealization the trace of anthropologism obstinately clings as *resistance* to the practice of deconstruction (Spivak 1980.40)

The *practice* of deconstruction cannot avoid anthropologism if the world is to be changed and not just interpreted. Anthropologism resists deconstruction, and deconstruction in the cause of resistance to hegemony clings to anthropologism. This despite the fact that, to put the argument of *Of Grammatology* bluntly, anthropocentrism is part of the logocentric catechism of the West. This is the driving thesis of *Of Grammatology*. I think such resistant intransigence on Spivak's part raises at least two crucial questions

for the potential of deconstructive theory to contribute to a counter-hegemonic discourse.

a) The question of *practice*. Spivak claims for the pedagogics of deconstructive practice the efficacy of inserting the marginalised into the academic institutional context. But this practice is liable to appropriation and containment by the liberal pluralism of the institution it aims to challenge. We have seen how in the Preface the practice of pedagogy secures the legitimating authority of the philosophical discourse, the proper name and the corpus. Deconstructive practice works within the broader juridico-legal system of property rights associated with possessive individualism. Anthropologism is interwoven with these socio-political realities and their particular histories. The academic institutional context of the university as the locus of ideological production is part of this wider systemic, and the *universitas* of the university is embedded within this historicisable nexus.

The problem with the practical decision to retain anthropologism is not simply that it stays within the terrain of humanism, since any outside is equally illusory, but rather that it risks working inadvertently to revive and restore an anthropocentrism that has always privileged *Western* man. This same privilege countersigns the *we* of Western philosophers and theorists. There is in the retention of anthropologism a complicity and a danger that is irreducible:

Whatever the breaks marked by this Hegelian-Husserlian-Heideggerian anthropology as concerns the classical anthropologies, there is an uninterrupted metaphysical familiarity with that which, so naturally, links the *we* of the philosopher to 'we men', to the *we* in the horizon of humanity (Derrida 1982a 116).

There is a linkage between the philosopher's *we* attempting to speak for humanity, and the *we* of collective action and political solidarity that Spivak wishes in some sense to retain, even as she attacks its Western, phallogocentric constitution. The price of this *restance* is that it is amenable to the logocentrism of the West. But without the anthropologicist residue, without the metaphysical familiarity of *humanitas*, how can deconstruction hope to engage in historical situations?

b) The question of *complicity and responsibility*. Spivak sees a use for deconstruction as part of '[a] practically fractured yet persistent critique of the hidden agenda of political exclusion', a critique that looks forward via 'political practice, pedagogy, or feminism—simply to mention *my* regional commitments', to 'revolutions with as yet no name' (Spivak 1980:46f).

These are enabling principles for more than a constant cleaning-up (or messing-up) of the languages of philosophy, although the importance of this latter is not to be underestimated (Spivak 1980:47).

But far from modifying or challenging the languages of philosophy, Spivak defers to their authority and objectivity, and looks to philosophers for guidance in messing-up other philosophers. I want to suggest that this deference to philosophy, and the reluctance to historicise it, limits the usefulness of deconstructive theory for the construction of a counter-hegemonic discourse.

The philosophical idiom does not transparently translate predicaments since the philosophical exigency places its own demands, in its own terms, and it operates out of historicisable institutional situations. Hegel used the term *Bildung* to describe the philosophical training of the mind that attempts to elevate to universality what is merely immediate and particular. The fact that one of the meanings of *Bildung* is education is not incidental. Derrida's deconstructions alert us to the universalization of Western interests by theory, but his analyses still work within the universalizing discourse of philosophy, its institutional and geopolitical setting. Part of the force of the demand to articulate rationally in the form of philosophical discourse is tied, *de facto* and *de jure*, to the dominance of the West that makes Western-European philosophical discourse the arbiter of reason. This dominance is not purely disinterested but is complicit with the economic, political, and cultural means of imposing Western superiority. The philosophical exigency that requires discourse in the language of philosophy achieves the appropriation of other discourses to itself. Noting 'those places—cultural, linguistic, political, etc.', Derrida is careful to point out that the *we* of the philosopher is formed within 'a certain group of languages and cultures ... certain societies':

Beyond these borders If I recall this obvious fact, it is [to draw attention to] the enclosure of Western collocation. The latter doubtless makes an effort to interiorize this difference, to master it, if we may put it thus, by affecting itself with it. The interest in the universality of the anthropos is doubtless sign of this effort (Derrida 1982a:112,113).

Such 'enclosure' is tied to the economic and ideological 'evil complicities' (Derrida 1982a:114) of the West which call for the kind of vigilance that Spivak displays in attacking the 'de-historicizing academy' (Spivak 1980:48). Derrida's response, on the other hand, is to simply note that 'political concepts [are] drawn from the metaphysical reserve' (Derrida 1982a:112), which is doubtless true but is it enough simply to note this obvious complicity? Isn't there some responsibility on the intellectual to do more than note in passing? Spivak clearly thinks it isn't enough, and her response to the practical imperative of producing a counter-hegemonic discourse is to retain anthropologism despite its complicity with logocentrism. Yet if we take the Translator's Preface as unable or unwilling

to escape anthropologism, then it is clear that anthropologism simply means replacing one authority with another (better) authority, leaving the institutional structure and geopolitical site in place and untroubled. In the Preface the early Derrida is replaced with a wiser later Derrida in the manner of a philosophical *Bildung*. Not only does this gradualism jar with Derrida's claims for deconstruction's radical solicitation of Western metaphysics, it also bolsters the same historical and material centre that, via institutional prestige (Editions de Minuit, John Hopkins University Press) and economic prowess (Paris, Cambridge, Baltimore, New York), universalises its concerns and essentially conserves its own centrality³. Because of the pedagogical need for a centre and an authority there is perhaps always going to be a privileged authority, and for Spivak this privilege goes to Derrida; the privilege of Western philosophy is assured, and the disruptive force of any catachrestic writing-back is diffused. Thus a declaredly counter-hegemonic postcolonial deconstruction risks amounting to no more than a renewal of the conventional hierarchy.

Conclusion

Spivak's failure to live up to the inspiring ideal of intellectual engagement in her Cape Town lecture raises questions beyond her inability to orientate herself to the particularities of the South African context, surely a necessary preliminary to aligning herself and/or antagonising the various ideological positions of her hosts. It opens for discussion an ideal of critical practice that aims to negotiate the tension between an intellectual filiation with a generalising philosophical discourse tied to the dehistoricising institutional role of theory, and a strategic alignment with a historicising Marxist analysis aiming at practical intervention. And it also highlights the contexts in which debates about academic freedom take place: what about the hierarchies of authority and credibility specific to the protocols of the South African academic context? What about the apparently profitable exchange between academics who want to be seen to move between the margins and the centre, and the value extracted in terms of institutional legitimation and certification by South African academics marketing super-star intellectuals? In short, what of the occluded role of the South African knowledge class in the

³ Derrida explicitly attempts, I think unsuccessfully, to unsettle this institutional and geopolitical centre in 'The Principle of Reason: the University in the Eyes of Its Pupils', *Diacritics* 13, 3 (1983), and *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe* (1992). John Guillory gives an incisive critique of the U.S. institutional and pedagogical function of deconstruction in his *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

business of ideological production: whose particular interests are being generalised here under the label 'theory'?

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