margin of margin
In Honor of Richard Wolff

margin of margin: Profile of an Unrepentant Postcolonial Collaborator

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Acknowledgements

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Preface

I

This book is about globalization and local identity: how the *global* colonizes the *local* and the latter resists it. It talks about *colonialism as a process without a subject* — the moment of colonialism that inheres in the globalization of capital.

One immediate effect of globalization is the denigration of the *local*. We are just beginning to realize its consequences in academics. The smarter guys flying across nation states now define the rules of academic games. The locals tied to nation states have been reduced, metaphorically, to feudal serfs. The high-flying counterparts appropriate and usurp the surplus labor and surplus meanings that the locals produce. The local voices get displaced, suppressed and silenced.

In the face of this global onslaught, one immediate (self-preserving) and ready response of the *local* would be to withdraw from the outside into itself: into one hundred years of solitude. We appreciate this gesture on the part of a few of our colleagues, but cannot quite join hands with them. For that would mean an intercourse only among the locals — an *incest* — and pagan incest, Marquez tells us, produces children with pig-tails.

We will rather choose to be bastards, the illegitimate children of the West, in order to enter into a communication with it.

What follows is the meditations of unrepentant postcolonial collaborators: the *Children of Virgin Mary*. We, who have seen through colonialism on the postcolonial scene, must discover its laws and lawlessness. And communicate it to the Avant-garde Westernized intellectuals (and not to their mechanical vulgar counterparts producing tons of shits a week *salebrated* — *both in a sale and a celebration* — as 'papers') from our unique standpoint, that of the *colonized*. We cannot wish away colonialism here and now, for that would mean a suppression of it and not surpassing it. We need to know ourselves that we can be and remain colonized at the level of physical reality in a postcolonial age — in order not to be colonized in the terrain of thought. The guardians of current postcolonial cultural studies take for granted freedom further on the plane of thought. One ends up with a whole lot of colonized wise minds that are unaware of their colonial chains.

This book is an encounter with this postcolonized wise mind. It problematizes the postcolonial scene — operates at two distinct levels: on the plane of *economic* and in the context of *cultural*. We take to task the current postcolonial cultural studies for their undertheorized discursive

stances and interrogate the notion of cultural hybridity in it to mark out the moment of colonialism, at this fag-end of the 20th century. In this context, we explore strategies of collaboration with and resistance against postcolonial power on part of the colonized.

Our concept of *colonialism without a colonizer* is an encounter of postmodernism with the specter of essentialism. Postmodernist discourse claims for itself a specific space by claiming to have flayed the modernist dragon of essentialism. Much of that which were associated with the epistemological standing of essentialism — essence, unidirectional causality, mirroring, objectivity, logocentrism and so on — were considered as being illogically grounded and, under different circumstances, unethical and unjust. Postmodernism, on the other hand, celebrates the aspects of differences, otherness, decentering, multisided causality, context, differentiation of logos, etc.

Our critical encounter will be principally with one such postmodernist discourse — the neo-Althusserian school — which embraced most of the postmodernist aspects via the epistemological concept of overdetermination. Overdetermination gives a space to *other* but only as equal: capital constitutes and is constituted by its *other*: non-capital.

We announce: *equal but not quite*. In our scheme, *other* is displayed as a *mimicry of overdetermination*. There is a field where the mutual constitution turns asymmetric, and in extreme cases is relegated to unidirectional determination. The anti-essentialist field of overdetermination gives way to the essentialist mode of determination in disguise. The play of *sameness in differences* gives way to a *hierarchy in differences*. This displacement, relegation, fall, constitutes a *mimicry of overdetermination* (and postmodernism) paraded, in our scheme, by the metaphoric, metonymic (more particularly) and rarefacted transformations that are creating and re-creating the postcolonial field in many different looks and colors.

We bring out one such form: *postcolonialism without a colonizer*.

The key concept of the book is this *mimicry of overdetermination* of the processes occurring at different *sites*. *Colonialism without a colonizer* as a concept follows from this mimicry. It derives from asymmetric accesses of the agents to the sites of occurrence of the processes. The boundaries of the nation states are, of course, the most important factors responsible for this asymmetric access. But, there are other factors as well.

It is as if the center of power (or, if you like, the *surrogate* center of power, for one never knows if the center does exist at all) subdivides the space around it by way of a whole range of concentric circles. These concentric circles privilege a few mediums and the people closer to these mediums. The instance that immediately comes to mind is the case of language. A few languages — for example, the European languages in general and English in particular — have always dominated over other languages.

But globalization of capital turns this domination into a colonial one.

While literary practices in the mother tongue earned greater prestige during British India and in the early years of post-independence, current globalization has turned the scale in favor of English — globalization colonizes the local languages.

But we cannot just wish away this globalization that colonizes us, the locals: globalization is *upon* us. We, too, must make our voices heard — the voices of the scattered heterogeneous tiny locals. The new sociology of *local*, therefore, has to be local and global simultaneously, in one coherent and divided manner. This in-built tension has taken a new turn as a result of the postmodern counterrevolution. On the one hand, a dominant global intellectual discourse under the rubrics of poststructuralism and postmodernism validates the subjectivity of *local* as producer of knowledge. On the other, the unstated imagination of a specific *global* — formed within and propagated by the dominant intellectual discourse — denies the locals the power to imagine their own *global* and fashion its locality.

This book — our book — presents *our* vision of *global* and *our* visages of *local*. This book is a bid to interfere with, meddle in, and change the postmodern order of discourses. The protagonist of the book, the *colonized without a colonizer* — its single-most important concept — resists being integrated at the level of postmodern discourse. While postmodernism valorizes on *difference*, this *colonized without a colonizer* talks about a *postmodern difference* — the moment of colonialism (essentialism) within postcolonialism (postmodernism). Something that postmodernism would like to turn into a *differend*, for it is a violence to its morality.

This book is an appeal to the postmodern mind to look the global reality in its face and accept it — *colonized without a colonizer* — as an *entry-point concept* to a hitherto unknown discourse that is struggling to announce itself. Then, if not in reality, we will at least be in a position to contest and contain colonialism working at the level of discourses.

This requires, firstly, that we bring back political economy in the terrain of postcolonial studies. What follows, then, is a dialogue between postmodernism, postcolonial cultural studies (couched in terms of speculative philosophy) and re-thought Marxian political economy (running in terms of school level algebra) — all at their highest level of development.

It makes this book methodologically distinct and distances it from a whole lot of current and ongoing cultural studies. If *colonialism on the postcolonial scene* marks the book's distinctiveness at the level of formation of an *entry-point* concept, a supplementation of formal logic (algebra) to speculative philosophy is its point of intervention on the plane of methodology.

Many will find the book hard to grasp at places, particularly at the end, where it deploys tools of algebra. Not many people in our shared capitalist reality are at home in postmodernism as well as in school algebra.

It is unfortunate, but a fact — a legacy of capitalist division of labor, celebrated as *specialization*.

We, who know neither roots nor home, who are not specialists but jack-of-all-trades, and feel equally uncomfortable with French poststructuralism and British political economy, are indifferent between philosophy and mathematics. It hardly matters to us — the colonized cannot be choosers.

"What are you doing, guys, political economy, or, cultural studies?" wise women, moving around, ask us. We better keep mum. Postmoderns have interpreted the order of discourse. The point is to change it.

And that sets the tone of the book: how *local* can interfere with the global order of discourse. The two beginning chapters of the book deal precisely with this question: the writing strategy of the savage. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak says that the *subaltern* — here, the *local* — can never speak, that is, make its voice heard. In order to speak, it must look for a benevolent Western intellectual, make the latter's inaudible rebellious voice loud, and deconstruct out of it a surrogate voice standing for its own.

And of course, it is hard to speak for us who are tied to the soil of what is popularly called the Third World. One stream of third world writing (mostly by third world intellectuals living/ residing in the West) posits a negative essence in relation to the West. Perhaps this is one important way the oppressed minority in the West can express itself. But the grievances of the minority in the West get sold in the market as sentiments of the third world. This displaces the third world, effaces the many heterogeneous identities in it. People who produce this 'third-worldism' have better access to resources (books/ journals/ conferences) and therefore can sell their products more efficiently. Thus get suppressed the many other voices of the third world.

If the nationalist discourse in India represents the negative identity of the Indian upper class intellectuals during the British rule, there are reasons to believe that third-worldism today is a direct continuity of this tradition. And thus, *a third world perspective*, as it is often called, carries this tradition too.

And so, we will not be speaking from a third world perspective. The world, the one that includes both the first and third, and the second, and all other worlds, has become too fragmented for a position like that to remain unaffected. The recent spate of globalization has fragmented the third world, dispersed and distributed it over the entire global space: liquidated it, rendering its people refugees. The third world is everywhere on the globe, that is, nowhere. The refugees from the third world can only search for *third world*, theoretically, and reconstitute it, as a discursive space. *Third world* can no longer be a point of departure: it can only be a theoretical point of arrival.

Instead, we speak from the standpoint of the local intellectual, who inheres the *here* and hears the rest of the world as the voice of its other. She

knows, immediately, only the tiny space around her, for she is immobile, a non-immigrant non-frequent flying local intellectual — a metaphor of a serf tied to the tiny subdivided ancestral plot of land. Or, better still, an epitome of a human being in a *village community* of the forgotten Asiatic mode of production with a distant center, that is, without a center. She is born into a decentered postmodern totality, as you can see.

Look: we are not lamenting over our fate. If a global intellectual is Muhammad, we constitute the mountain. The mythical mountain, as local intellectual, will invaginate this book. She cannot enter the rest of the world; the rest of the world enters into her. So, remember the point once again: third-worldism can no longer be a point of departure — *third world* as a discursive site invites us to arrive at.

We are pleased to see that our immigrant friends in the West have come up and out with a unique position of their own that jettisons the earlier brand of third-worldism. The discursive stance of cultural hybridity articulating itself as a positive moral position is an important contribution made by our immigrant friends in the West to cultural studies. As such, we appreciate it.

But we do not feel pleased as we see this *hybrid space* being *salebrated* as a close totality without any gaps — the postmodernist pretensions of their architects notwithstanding. What ideological fantasies *quilt* this hybrid space? How does one distinguish between *their* hybridity and *our* hybridity? These are the questions that promote and prompt us to write.

We device *our* own writing strategy, set up *our* parallel anti-establishment platforms, turn *their* voices into a noise in order to smuggle *our* voices into it. Chapter One of this book records precisely the method — *how* we do it.

Postmoderns do away with the concept of *other* and valorize on that of *difference*. We announce — constitute — that *erased other* beyond modern man's *negation* and postmodern *negotiation*. This *erased other* moves like a flicker of light, or, perhaps, a shadow, leaving no footprints behind to be retraced, that is, deconstructed, ever following that which is capital, the West, the elite — whispering to its ears, but eluding its gaze and mimicking it, from behind.

Then, comes the moment of drama when the one that is followed gets shocked by an intuition and suddenly becomes aware that there is someone behind. The followed one now swings around and spots the follower. And then the hunter gets hunted — and is pushed out of the terrain of academic discourse only to be encountered in its altered forms. Yes, altered forms, remember it. As *symptoms*, offshoots of uncertainty in the stable and certain, and may be a bit macho, stance of the discourse that is the West, capital, elite.

We call this ineluctable other *margin of margin*: that which resists being integrated into the discourse — the *mimicry of discourse*.

Take note: *margin of margin*, and *not* simply *margin*, because the terrain of discourse is always already punctuated by hierarchical sites and subject positions from which its utterances are made. Margins are internal to discourses — Derrida's *Margins of Philosophy*, for instance.

Margin of margin is a gaze upon discourses, from the outside — a surveillance. And as such, it defies integration into a discourse. Neither can it always be rejected out of hand, because it follows the rules of discourse quite often to catch the guardians of discourse unguarded to entice them into a conversation with it, that, then, ironically, backfires on them.

Our point of departure is the postcolonial studies done by Spivak. And then comes Bhabha. We might add that Spivak, Said and Bhabha are celebrated in textbooks (Young, 1990; Guilbert, 1997) as the *holy trinity* of postcolonial cultural studies. No surprise, then, that we take off from one of them (here, Spivak) whose viewpoint we share most. (One might say that we are Spivak fans — Spivak is our mother.) That is not to say that we will not register our reservations when and where we differ. And like all usual underdogs we put our voice of dissent loudly. (Underdogs must bark.) But, the point is that, this question of Spivak — Can the subaltern speak? — motivates us, prompts and promotes us to speak.

Chapter One of this book is a search for an answer to Spivak's question. Our answer, to this particular question of Spivak, is: "Yes, but with qualifications, in disguise, by smuggling our voices into the dominant discourse read (that is, distorted) through our eyes". Anything and everything is possible in *our* world. Here Derrida goes with Lyotard. Deconstruction with Differend. Spivak with Bhabha. And (mind it, charming guys appear last) Marx goes with everything and everyone else.

And, thus, in this process of meddling with and in everyone, we join (with) all of them.

But, we have made a small alteration in the composition of the *holy trinity*, swapping Said by Guha, who is more pertinent to our concerns, which, we must admit, are parochial (because local). We speak as Guha-Spivak-Bhabha's *other*. And therefore, as the *other* of Foucault-Derrida-Lacan on which they build. Guha on Foucault, Spivak on Derrida, Bhabha on Lacan. If Foucault-Derrida-Lacan's postmodernism has liberated a discursive postcolonial space for Guha-Spivak-Bhabha etc, then the latter's discourse on postcolonialism ushers in a yet new discursive space for us. That we articulate here, in and through this book.

Ironically, a hitherto unknown margin can inscribe its mark in social space only by speaking against its adjacent margin, at least in its formative stage, for the center (Kafka's 'Castle', Tarkovsky's 'Room') is a long way off from Calcutta: in the United States? (We can imagine a postmodern decentered totality only in the image of a far-off center in a pre-modern Asiatic mode.)

How far it is — the Castle, the Room? They asked it, the same question. It seems so near, the music, you can hear the music, coming from there, so near it is, you can almost touch it by your hands. "No". The stalker said. Whatever may seem, it is far far away. So far that maybe you don't reach it in one lifetime. You have to stalk unto there, the labyrinth is so intricate, the streets of insidious intents. Hush, keep silent. We have to proceed stealthily, surreptitiously, under cover. If you let yourself be known from the start, you do never reach there. I know the path. In my room, where I return after every journey, to my woman and my child, there, in the silence of unknownness, voodoo and specters and magic loom, around my child, without anyone knowing about it, in the darkness of third world. I live with this magic. And I, me only, know the path to go there. Let me show you. The stalker said.

Another figure that comes up in our book is Partha Chatterjee, repeatedly, because of our primarily local interest. Unlike others (Spivak, Bhabha), he lives in Calcutta (with, of course, frequent trips abroad) and writes transparently. His strong point is to translate the local discourse of Bengal in colonial India into English, in terms of a given and very familiar Western theoretical framework. This has served to turn the local discourse here into some prestigious entity in the Westernized academic world preparing the background for our writing. Without Chatterjee's success, it would have been much more difficult for us to write. If we make a critique of his writings that is often harsh and seek to dismantle his system — as in Chapter Three and a Half — that is our own way of showing respect to his works; not all deserve to be critiqued, that is, noticed. And remember: we have no ready academic platform, no steady publishers and no visa into international academics. So, often we need to do a little bit shouting in order to break through a silence that is sometimes a bit of a conspiracy.

Two other pairs of names that figure prominently in our book are Laclau-Mouffe and Resnick-Wolff. Laclau and Mouffe are quite familiar in Calcutta's intellectual circles for their reformulation of the Gramscian idea of hegemony, though we find little reference to their works in postcolonial cultural studies done by the established Indian academicians frequenting or staying in the West. In this book, we have sought to mobilize and push forward their ideas of hegemony to bring out the moment of postcolonial hegemony that current postcolonial cultural studies seek to hide, suppress and wish away. We render a thorough critique of Guha and Bhabha in this context. Chapter Three and Chapter Five deal at length with such issues concerning postcolonial hegemony.

While Laclau and Mouffe abjure Marxism — Marxian political economy, to be precise — Resnick-Wolff's ground-breaking works offer a rethought Marxian political economy on a postmodern line. Their principal achievement is to offer a version of strategic essentialism — a combine of epistemological *openness* and discursive *closure*. It is interesting to note that this is also one of Spivak's overriding concerns. We must say that Resnick and Wolff do this job more succinctly, rigorously and transparently because

of their anchor in Marxian political economy. A postmodern Marxian political economy is anything but an easy genre. No chance of cheating here, of escaping into the ivory tower of the misunderstood. Chapter Two of this book engages with a dialogue between Spivak and Resnick-Wolff.

As far as this book goes, our principal task is to reformulate the problematic of postcolonial cultural studies (that talks about an ever-open hybrid space) in the light of theories of closure rendered by Resnick-Wolff and Laclau-Mouffe. That sets the stage for raising our kinds of questions: what are the *limits* of such discursive *closure*? In other words: what, precisely, are the *symptoms* of a discourse? An answer to this question in the area of cultural studies will be book, another book that we will definitely write. For now, we only raise the question — and answer it in terms of postmodern political economy by way of a supplement to this book that involves a little bit of school algebra. Let us hope that there are people in our shared Westernized world who know both postmodernism and school algebra. Chapter Four of our book answers this question in non-algebraic terms.

II

Borges has told us a story about globalization — in his usual style, in terms of metaphors that would turn real. The name of the story is: *The Aleph*.

A first world guy saw the whole of the universe compressed into a tiny space in his own house which he named as *Aleph*. The *Aleph* is the counterpart in space of what *eternity* is in time-axis: instead of all time meeting into one *moment*, all space concentrates into one *point* that *Aleph* is. Let us pretend that the name of the first world guy is Edward Soja.

Soja, like all great men, wished to share his experience with another guy, his *other*. So he invited a third world guy to his house and took him to the basement where the *Aleph* was.

And then he put out the candle, left the basement and closed its doors, leaving his friend alone. So that the third world guy could see it for himself all alone. And the third world guy did see it, the *Aleph*. But the *Aleph* could not bear with his sight. It exploded into pieces.

Did they see the same *Aleph*, both of them — the first world guy and the third world one? Now that the *Aleph* has exploded, there is no way we could verify it.

But that begs the question: why did the *Aleph* explode after the third world guy had seen it?

Answer: because they did not see quite the same *Aleph*.

The third world guy saw the *Aleph*, same but not quite. He saw its mimicry: a *third world* made in the image of the *first world* — a dwindled substitute. *A third world Aleph made in the image of the first world Aleph, albeit with postcolonial differences* — as its *(post)colonized other*. Hegel's master turns his *other* into a servant and thereby liquidates this *other* that could serve as a mirror of

the master. But the refined postcolonial *first world* does preserve it, its *other* — *third world* — its postcolony.

This is, of course, a third world way of reading the story by Borges. As the first world guy and the third world guy saw the *Aleph* differently, their readings of the story are, as a result, different. Edward Soja would read the story in a first world way and third world in its own way.

Current mainline cultural studies, developed mostly by our immigrant sistren and brethren in the West, are mainly extensions of the story by Borges on a first world line. Homi Bhabha is its principal architect. And there are many others to follow him, improvise upon him and re-discover him.

They all talk about a *hybrid Aleph*. Everything on this globe is hybrid, therefore the same and therefore fused into one — the *Aleph*. For them, the globe is made in the image of an immigrant. The philosophy of hybridity negates *negation* that marks Hegelian dialectics: the *thesis* negating the *anti-thesis* — Capitalism negating Feudalism.

They say that, instead of binary opposites, there are only *differences* — things understood as what they are *not*, red as not-blue not-yellow not-green etc. *Differences* that do not negate themselves but negotiate with one another. Consequently, what emerges is a *hybrid space*. Bhabha gives it a cute name: *third space*. He, of course, names it after a lot of philosophization.

Hybrid space is a world of people with nomadic identities. Neither they have roots nor they are rootless. And so they have no nation states — and therefore are *citizens* of the world that is hybrid. There is neither a *first world* nor a *third world*, but only a *hybrid world*.

That, in a nutshell, is the story of the *Aleph* told by a first world guy — here, a first world immigrant guy: the story of hybrid *Aleph*. And the book that follows here will also tell a story of hybrid *Aleph*, but as viewed by the third world guy in the mirror — the Lacanian mirror — as a *mimicry* of this *Aleph*.

The Lacanian baby looks at the mirror and knows itself: as erect, upright and full-grown. This is actually a fantasy. For the baby is held by its mother from behind, unseen. The baby has a lack — it cannot stand on its own feet. The mirror provides the baby with an object to fulfill its desire to be erect like the grown ups. Complete woman — here a self-contained complete hybrid *Aleph* — is an image of a baby in the mirror supplemented by its fantasy.

The image of the baby in the mirror is simultaneously its mimicry: its dwindled two-dimensional substitute which behaves the way the baby does, but not quite.

The baby hybrid *Aleph* produces its image in the mirror — and, *third world* is born.

The agent of the third world does what the babies in the first world do. First world rational baby maximizes utility. So does its image in the

mirror. First world talks about equality and freedom; its image parrots them. But the image does all these a little, but differently, in implicit forms, by way of a whole set of metonymic transformations. With their hidden laws of formation that need to be discovered. *Third world* is a discursive site produced out of such transformations. In short, *third world* is a mimicry of first world discourses. To put it the other way round, first world discourses produce their own mimicries — such as development studies and cultural studies — which map a discursive space called *third world*. And as in Borges stories — mimicries and fantasies turn real and acquire a life of their own, this discursive space too would not remain a paper-space for an indefinite period. Gradually, the paper-space becomes proper, concrete, real: corporeal. And that way, postcolonial first world produces its postcolony and the postcolonized minds that help to reproduce, sustain and extend it. Our knowledge object is this postcolonized wise-mind. So, what follows is a dialogue with the wise — the wisest — people far removed from the reach of lay-women, as it stands now. But we firmly believe that what is at stake in this book concerns common people around us. And our story can be written in a much simpler way accessible to average educated women. But for now, we have to fly high — and strike high — for that which is involved here is *Star War*.

We can as well tell our readers how we weave the story. The idea of the story has already been told.

The reader will have noticed that *mimicry* is an important concept that we deploy. Originally a Lacanian category, we lift it from Homi Bhabha who makes use of the concept in the context of characterizing colonial difference (Bhabha, 1994). Colonial ideal woman, for Bhabha, is a re-presentation of bourgeois woman in its dwindled and dwarfed form. Both are the same — subject to laws of equality, freedom etc — but not quite. The colonized woman has partial right of representation in the administration in the government, not to speak of the legislature. Partha Chatterjee (1993) enumerates quite at length such differences. It is Bhabha's merit that he comes up with a rendition of colonial differences in distinct theoretical terms: *colonial difference is one flowing from a metonymic transformation of a parent body leading to a mimicry of the parent body* (1994, 1989).

It is our belief that Chatterjee's empiricist bent of mind misses this specificity of *colonial difference* entirely. Which in turn would have fatal consequences for the later part of his narration in the book (1993). For instance, he is quite right in claiming postcolonial difference as colonial difference. But inasmuch as he loses from view colonial difference as an enactment of mimicry, he simultaneously misses that postcolonial difference would also be such — leaving little room for his concept of *ideal community* and *Swadeshi modernism*. Our book is a theorization of postcolonial difference as one marked by a mimicry of the parent body.

That way, we are Bhabha's students. But we are struck by his forgetfulness of this point as he proceeds to problematize the postcolonial scene. In Bhabha, it turns out to be a version of what we have called a *hybrid space* devoid of *traces* and mutations of colonial mimicries. We appreciate Bhabha's theorization of hybrid space (which he calls *third space*). He has come up with a specific theoretical position — that of an immigrant — which deserves elaboration. Instead of being repelled (like many of our colleagues) by its loud immigrant stance, we feel drawn to him because he is one of the rarest of thinkers who come up with specific positions of their own. A lot of people have propositions, but not many can announce a position. But we fear that Bhabha is too innocent to comprehend the specificity of his concept of hybrid space: how it produces its own mimicries reminding one of those following from colonial differences.

We bring out this point in the last chapter of the book and in the supplement to it that follows. All that precedes it is a preparation for an articulation of this point at a theoretical level.

Indeed, a lot of spadework is necessary to arrive at this point. The innocent world-outlook of Bhabha and followers flow, fundamentally from their *undertheorization* of hybrid space. Our book supplies these missing theoretical details. And the cat comes out of the bag: we learn that the postcolonial world is a variant of and variation upon the theme of the colonial world.

We appreciate Bhabha's and his followers' epistemological commitment to postmodernist premises of variableness and contingency. Frequent uses of such terms as *difference* (as distinct from *diversity*), *negotiation* (instead of *negation*), '*relocation, realignment, and translation of categories*' reaffirm this faith. In spite of this merit, they have not been able to devise, theoretically, a method to differentiate among differences. And the philosophy of hybrid space stumbles upon this limit: it knows no theoretical strategy to distinguish between the hybrid and the hybrid. It is here that we intervene in the discourse on hybrid space and relocate post*colonial difference* as one of its *instances*.

One can conceptualize hybrid space as a kind of overdetermined totality understood in neo-Althusserian sense of the term (that is, marked by *contingency* and *gaps*). It is our general criticism of the neo-Althusserian school (that applies with equal force to the notion of *cultural hybridity*) that it cannot differentiate among transformations that follow owing to *overdetermination*. We invoke the Lacanian concept of *symbolic space* (a kind of *overdetermined* space) to illustrate the specificities of such transformations. For instance, a *metaphoric* transformation and a *metonymic* one, both following from overdetermination, are not quite the same thing.

When Edward Soja says that LA (Los Angeles) contains also *third world*, he means the metaphors for *third world*. *Third world* is metaphorically present in *first world*. But, in Calcutta, we encounter metonyms of LA (its

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part objects standing for the whole). And when Calcutta adores and is adorned by the metonyms of LA, we understand Calcutta as a postcolony of LA.

Note: Ravishankar goes to LA, but Michael Jackson never comes to Calcutta. Our academicians rush to American universities, but their professors do not crowd this place. Still they all are present here — represented by their part-objects — their ideas.

The discourse on cultural hybridity — indeed all that goes by the name of postmodernism — suppresses this instance of postcolonial difference. It is against this background that we are writing. In order to have freedom to say that we are not free but colonized. Hegel's *servant* was fortunate enough. He had the freedom to be stoic and skeptic: he was free to understand and represent himself as *servant* in order to be free to write a *servant's discourse.* He was free to have his unhappy consciousness.

Postmodernism forces on us a happy consciousness. It celebrates *difference*, universalizes it and thereby *writes off* the *specificity* of our being different, our colonized existence. Postmodernist *difference* — in our context, *overdetermination* — reduces, for us, to become and be its *mimicry.*

And that sets for us our epistemological *entry-point* concept: *mimicry of overdetermination.* Or, more specifically, *colonialism without a colonizer.* Let us, then, *pretend to be colonized on a postcolonial scene* and re-view all that is going on earth and heaven, in real life and discourses. It is only on this term that we can meet our colleagues in the Western world and the guardians of academic discourses nearer home. That is, on *our* terms, in terms of *our* jargons and nomenclature, from *our* perspective of the colonized, involving *our* style and tonality — in savage English picked up and taught in the lanes and by-lanes of postcolonial India that cares neither for Grammar nor for editors' etiquette. It's a game. Ice-hockey, baseball, American football and neo-classical economics are not the only games being played in God's space.

III

Let us quickly restate the bottom line of the book. Its theoretical cutting edge derives from the concept of mimicry of overdetermination. Another concept, margin of margin, lays down the philosophical foundation. The other concepts — such as synthetic space, symptom, sinthome, overdetermination — come along the way to build up the above two concepts. Mimicry of overdetermination designates a space of dominance (or, hegemony) in the context of overdetermination. This unhooks the concept of dominance from its essentialist mooring and re-articulates it as a discursive formation deriving from a closure done to an overdetermined field. We claim this to be a novel concept that has significant theoretical potential. A significant portion of the book (Chapter Two, Chapter Three, and Chapter Four) brings out its explosive possibilities in the context of works of Resnick-Wolff and Laclau-Mouffe on postcolonial cultural studies.

Margin of margin, on the other hand, is a *constituency* that exceeds attempts to embrace it within such limiting concepts as dominance and subordination. The concept builds on the Lacanian concept of symptom (as distinct from its Freudian counter-part) modified to fit in with the context of strategic essentialism. It is a surrogate outside that allows us to have a gaze on the workings of society and discourses from the inside. It embodies a distinct moral position that calls into question the existing moral values associated with concepts such as nationalism, collaboration with the master, servitude and so on. The protagonist of the book — its anti-hero, an unrepentant postcolonial collaborator — striding from the pages of the *Ramayana* to those of Marx's *Capital* embodies these moral values. This book is a recordation of this unrepentant collaborator's concept of time, space and of people that inhabit this time and space.

Our encounter with the *Ramayana* is brief but revealing. It prises open the limit of *Ramrajya* — the concept of ideal state in the *Ramayana*. It unravels moments that allow for no righteous actions: whatever the agent chooses would turn out to be immoral at the twilight zone between right and wrong. The *Ramayana* is the itinerary of its hero, Lord Rama, through these critical moments signaling the symptoms of an ideal state.

What will the anti-hero (Anti-Christ/Anti-Rama) do when God must traverse through the travesty of truth? How will he deal with the symptom of *Ramrajya*? The anti-hero embodies, then, margin of margin, whose codes of conduct resist being captured in terms of our familiar moral science.

The book then moves from Ram to Marx, from the *Ramayana* to Marx's *Capital*. We bring out the same story from Marx's *Capital*: of symptom, mimicry of overdetermination and margin of margin. While our discourse on the *Ramayana* intends to be westernized, our reading of Marx's *Capital* seeks to Indianize it in that it is a rendition on *Capital* from the perspective of Asiatic society (Asiatic Mode of Production). It embodies a desperate attempt by a local '*village intellectual*' to image the distant center. That way, it is an intervention in Western *readings* of Capital.

Postmodern Marxian political economy has also become, entirely, one of their games. It is a discourse of the West by the West for the West.

An outsider — a non-immigrant non-frequent-flying third world reader tied to her/his soil — gets stunned by its forgetfulness of and indifference towards the third world issues and its people. The current Marxian discourse, dominated mostly by post-1968 Western Marxian intellectuals, no longer finds third world wine to be intoxicating enough: Emmanuel's theory of unequal exchange is no longer in fashion. North-South models are fast becoming anachronistic in the new-born global village. And third world's Mao, like the Beatles and Godard in the West, represents only a vanishing moment of the sixties. Third world Marxian voices remain absent, unrepresented: third world rethinking of Marxian political economy is now condemned to be a *differend*.

But, nature abhors vacuum. So, mainstream political economy — neoclassical economics — fills in the gap, displaces its Marxian counterpart and becomes the mouthpiece for a new *third world* struggling to problematize itself in the language of mainstream political economy, in terms of game-theoretic tools and the theory of industrial organization. While globalization of capital serves to put the last nail on third world Marxian political economy's coffin, mainstream development economics is becoming more and more youthful, vibrant, vivacious and seductive. Day after day. It took the wind out of the sails of third world radical economics and added riches and varieties to it and involved a whole lot of third world intellectuals. So much so that its hegemony in the third world at present is unquestionable. Another feather of Nobel Prize to Professor Sen's cap epitomizes this process.

There is a growing feeling in the third world that only the postcolonial power would listen to *us* — because it has to rule *us* and therefore it recognizes *us*. Rank and file radical Western intellectuals who mind business and hate non-sense (rhetoric, expressions of emotion and high-thinking on part of the plain living) have no business with *third world*. And therefore, they can remain indifferent to it: *third world* settles down on the television screen, a scene to be observed whenever and if it is bombed — as a moment in foreplay — before one goes to bed. But the ruling class just cannot afford to be that myopic; it must be larger than itself and overflow into its outside — its *other* — *third world*.

But that is not enough to explain the giddy height of development of development economics. There has to be a truth-content in it. Actually, it represents the truth of the postcolonial economic: *third world* is a site of mimicry of rational woman. Mainstream rational individual *explicitly* maximizes utility. And its third world counterpart does the same maximization in an *implicit* fashion whose rules need to be dis-covered — mainstream development economics is a collection of these discoveries. That way, development economics articulates the truth of the postcolonial world: all women are the same, but not quite. Some have their rationality complete and full; and others have it bounded.

It is here that Marxian political economy stumbles. It wishes away the *moment of mimicry* on the postcolonial scene, and thus, remains blind to it. Marxian political economy does not dare to face the consequences of its own discourse: that, whatever get articulated in the dominant Marxian discourse — equal exchange, class, overdetermination — in their turn, must have their mimicry elsewhere, in the mirror. And *third world* is what this mirror shows. Marxian political economy cannot see, and therefore discover itself in this mirror that *third world* is: its *symptom*. Lacan says that a human child learns to discover himself through the mirror, as a site of its *mimicry*. A monkey cannot. And that is what distinguishes a human child from a monkey.

Our interrogation of the Western discourse on Marxian political economy foregrounds this *moment of mimicry* constituting *third world*. *Third world* is a discursive field where the categories of the dominant discourse undergo metonymic transformations. In mainstream development economics, one observes this metonymic transformation for the assumption of rationality: the agents in the third world too does their quota of utility maximization, but only *implicitly*. The corresponding metonymic transformations in Marxian political economy are: mimicry of equal exchange, mimicry of overdetermination — mimicry of *North* as a whole.

A whole series of inflows and outflows occur in the terrain of exchange of goods and services in an economy. And overdetermined economic field is that which is marked by the mutual constitutivity of these inflows and outflows. Our interrogation of Western Marxian political economy adds a qualifying clause to this statement: the inflows and outflows get constituted by each other, but not quite in the same (equivalent) manner. While in one economic field, the constitutive moment is *contingent and accidental*, for the other it is *logically necessary*. This asymmetric mode of mutual constitutivity is what we call mimicry of overdetermination in the economic field. The dominant discourse on Marxian political economy is silent on this theoretical field, deferring forever its announcement and discursive articulation. Our discourse on political economy is about this suppression, trauma and denial.

Our focus is on a certain school of Western Marxism epistemologically committed to the concept of overdetermination. Our intervention points to its *other*: mimicry of overdetermination — the concept as formulated by the overdeterministic Marxian school. This intervention starts off postmodern Marxism. Our discourse signals that theoretical field where all shades of modernism and postmodernism stumble — err — yeah — f-fumble and stutter.

This particular Marxian school we focus upon is, of course, one among many contending Marxian schools. The reason for our choice seems obvious enough. This particular Marxian school embraces the basic premises of postmodernism — such as *difference*, absence of *logos*, impossibility of a closed totality etc. And, our prime objective is to push a postmodern totality to its limit in order to bring to light its other: *third world* as a discursive space constituted by mimicries.

One merit of the overdeterministic Marxian school is that it is the only interdisciplinary school of thought in the West we know of that endeavors to link up cultural studies and political economy, speculative philosophy and formal logic, literature and science. Western wise women, in general, are victims of capitalist division of labor. The gaping gaps between cultural studies and political economy is alarming, and doubly alarming is that gap for that political economy which deploys, among others, tools of algebra. In this respect, overdeterministic Marxian school is a rare

exception. We who are jack of all trades and master of none need to be the servant of some master. We choose overdeterministic Marxian school to be our master as an *entry-point* into the Western discourse.

So, that is one of our projects: to push a postmodern Marxian school of thought in the West (here, the overdeterministic Marxian school) to discover another suppressed discursive space on its margin. We might call this discursive space *margin of margin*, or, *third world*, or, *postcolonial* (post)colonized *economic*. It is a matter of *naming* a theoretical space. And, Saussure said, naming is *arbitrary*.

Instead of interrogating a postAlthusserian reading of capital, we might have well contested a Derridean reading of capital. In that case, we would end up with a scene of *mimicry of supplementation*, instead of *mimicry of overdetermination*. Unfortunately, we do not yet know of any Derridean reading of *Capital* dealing in depth its politico-economic counterparts — that we can put to an interrogation. We find Spivak's reading of capital very stimulating. But that is far removed from the core of political economy.

We can well say in advance why we feel uneasy with all these postmodern readings of capital. For us *third world* as a discursive space is a product of the encounter of *Reason* with the *Unreason* inherent in it. As far as we understand, the project of *deconstruction* — at least, that of the practice of carrying it out — presumes *reason*: supplementation is reason's discovery of traces of something in a text such that this something can be supplemented. We believe that this is a very challenging project, this project of *supplementation*, or more generally, that of *deconstruction*.

But sometimes we might stumble upon a few traces in a text that resist supplementation when they are blown up. This typically happens when one encounters traces of unreason in a text; we would be happy if we could accommodate this instance in terms of another Derridean concept: *spectrality*. But we fear *spectrality* is not the best term to designate this situation.

In our opinion, Lacan-Žižek's concept of *symptom* will be the most appropriate concept that can be deployed in order to conceptualize this predicament. *Symptom*, as Žižek puts it, is *unreason implicit in reason*. What supplements to the gap emanating from *symptom* is not *supplement* in the Derridean sense of term, but something else: *mimicry* and *fantasy*. Žižek's focus is on the instance of *fantasy*. But in the context of conceptualizing *third world* we find the concept of *mimicry* to be more useful. Confronted with *unreason, reason* produces that, which is neither reason nor unreason, but something intermediary: *mimicry of* un*reason*. We call this discursive space informed by unreason *third world*. Something intermediate and midway between God and Demon — that is, woman.

This, in nutshell, is the story of our discovery of *third world*. We needed a few master-minds in order to weave our story and tell it. Žižek has been of the greatest help in the last lap, though we differ on many counts

from Žižek. Particularly where the details of Marxian political economy are involved. One problem with Žižek is that he deploys his very refined Lacanian tools to deal with a very orthodox reading of capital. For instance, he identifies the simultaneous existence of freedom in the terrain of the market and lack of it in the interior of the workshop for the laborer as *symptom*, *reason revealing its unreason.*

We do not find this argument to be very persuasive. In our opinion, the interior of the workshop represents the *limit* of the market, and not of its *unreason.* The site of a factory signals a space where the market *ceases.* Inasmuch as exchange of labor power does not violate the law of value — the rule of equal exchange — the market for labor power itself never shows any sign of unreason. *In order to locate the symptom in a market economy, we need to point to the space in it where the law of equal exchange abrogates itself, or, at least, undergoes a mutation.*

It is our impression that one can never locate this *symptom* on the pages of *Capital* in its present form. We need to move beyond it.

We extend, first of all, the scope — the domain — of Marxian political economy. As it stands now, Marxian political economy is a prisoner of *Capital.* One is used to reading Marx's *Capital* only in the context of a capitalist market economy. We never were happy with this conflation of market economy with capitalist market economy, that is, of commodity and capital. Although it is our proposition that the story of a self-exploitative market economy is a myth, one can conceptualize it on the margin of capital.

We, actually, do it. And doing this necessitates deployment of the conceptual tools of political economy that requires, among others, use of algebra. We cannot help making use of it. Our philosophy begins where the algebra of political economy ends.

We are aware of the seriousness of our project: weaving Hegel, Althusser, Derrida, Lacan-Žižek, cultural studies and a political economy running in mathematical terms is no easy job. The gap that prevails between postmodernism and political economy and that between cultural studies and development studies is alarming for *us*.

The culture of division of labor in the core of the Westernized academia is a hindrance for such a beginning to be initiated. More: the dominant order of discourse will perhaps not encourage such a project. Many guardians of discourse will find the new discourse of the margin of *margin* incomprehensible — and, therefore, absurd. In all probability, they will remain silent, lofty silence of tall gods — no, more than that — they will give a million dollar smile. A silence everywhere and a smile in their private circles.

But we believe, deep in our hearts.

We have a deep conviction that we will have many mails — responses from many quarters that include our friends in the West, our immigrant and quasi-immigrant brothers and sisters there, and our colleagues nearer home.

Like all totality, this book too has its gaps that can only be filled in by fantasy. Fantasy of *ours*. Fantasy of the naked fakir reaching at stars. A time will come when there will be takers for this fantasy, and for many such others, produced in the lesser known quarters of *third world*. The half-starved people with their gaping mouths and hanging jaws will no more strive to produce H-bombs and missiles to make believe an unbelieving Westernized world that they too can think — that they are women too. The world will then see the other side of the coin: ideas that explode like bombs and hit like missiles.

One
Can the sa*va*ge speak?[1]

I. A local discourse that can speak globally

This book is an encounter of the Lacanian Unsaid with itself, in its bodily form, as that which has always already been said, on distant solar stations of the universe. Somewhere there the Lacanian Real turns corporeal.

We record the voice of the Other within the margins — our adjacent ones — in the West (read: Western Europe and the United States) in and through this book. The question that concerns us is: can the savage speak? That is, can the local speak globally?

Let us be a bit more specific here, at least at this starting point of our journey and specify a specific context, in the form of two quotations, plucked and distorted to suit our purpose.

> **It (the project of provincializing Europe) therefore looks to a history (writing) that embodies this politics of despair…I ask for a history (writing) that deliberately makes visible, within the very structure of its narrative forms, its own repressive strategies and practices, the part it plays in collusion with the narratives of citizenship in assimilating to the projects of the modern state all other possibilities of human solidarity. The politics of despair will require such history (writing) that it lays bare to its readers the reasons why such a predicament is necessarily inescapable (Dipesh Chakrabarty, 1992).**

> **The subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with "woman" as a pious item (Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak, 1988).**

As the margin in the West speaks, another discordant voice from deep within itself often subverts its speech, sometimes speaking out loud to inscribe itself in Western academic discourses. Then follows a life-and-death struggle between the domesticated margin seeking comfort and the Other within it that does not comport well. The rebellious Other chasing the conforming margin and the latter desperately attempting at retreats to retrieve that which it had inadvertently uttered.

The margin that is an immigrant then flees into its homeland. Where it finds, to its utter bewilderment, those utterances (and many such which it only thought but never dared to utter) taking non-conforming bodily forms — confronting him, encircling him, threatening to throw him away into nowhere, as a nobody.

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[1] This Chapter builds on a portion of the on-going Ph.D. thesis of Dipankar Das, the second author of this book.

From where do the repressed return? From the future. As the recalcitrant Other within the margin of the West speaks, it raises the repressed dead from their graves in distant solar stations, assassinated ideas, essays and books rise as if from a long slumber and the *differend* turns *referrend* clamoring for referendum.

Andrey Tarkovsky has shown us such figures invading the margin, in his movie: *Solaris*.[2] He has called them 'visitors'. We might call the same MOM — that is, margin of margin.

We have heard such voices of the margin in the West. In Dipesh Chakrabarty's 'Who Speaks for Indian Pasts?' and Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak's 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'. We have quoted from both of them in specifying our frame of reference. We are eagerly waiting to see how Dipesh Chakrabarty would negotiate with his dissenting voices in his later writings. Will he pursue his project and follow through its consequences? Or, is it only a mock masochistic self-congratulatory gesture of self-flagellation?

As for Spivak, we are less optimistic. We have recently seen how Spivak (1999) flies away from her initial non-conformist stance that it is hard for the subaltern to speak. That if she speaks at all, the voice will either be appropriated by the powers that be or never heard at all.

As a native informant Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak overheard from her kinswomen what might have been a good story. She did not have to look for the story-line. She found it. She just bent down and picked it up at her native home.

Bhubaneshwari Bhaduri, an activist in a terrorist organization in British India fighting for freedom, committed suicide to register her voice of protest against terrorism. The time of suicide coincided with her menstrual period.

Bhaduri's kinswomen read the whole thing as the tragic end of a love-story. The heroine killed herself to avoid a scandal, to save a loss of face because she was pregnant. Mind it: the non-feasibility of this possibility was announced from the very start through the moment of her suicide.

The message got lost that the suicide was a stamp of protest, against terrorism. From this basis Spivak (1988) concluded that the subaltern cannot speak. Her voice will either be appropriated, or, never heard at all. And she explored for writing strategies that would masquerade the subaltern, simultaneously enabling her to embody the voice of dissent.

A decade later, we find Spivak (1997) retreating from this position — that it is hard for the subaltern to speak. She does it on the pretext that

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[2] Never mind, please, if Tarkovsky's Solaris is, well, a bit different from the Solaris that we are discussing.

Bhubaneshwari Devi was not a subaltern, but a middle class lady. Spivak misses that Bhubaneshwari Devi was not just another middle class lady, but a figure embodying a subaltern agency speaking against what is popularly held as manly qualities (heroism, terrorism) that is condemned to fall flat into deaf ears. And the project of exploring strategies for subaltern writing becomes a part of Spivak's benign forgetfulness. She chooses to settle down as a native informant to the United States, peddling Indian Devi-s (goddesses) that include, among others, Mahashweta Devi. Once the non-conforming *other* in Spivak asked 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'. Now her conscious self seeks to take flight from such questions.

Perhaps, she was never aware of this Other's voice within her and confused, conflated and collapsed it with the inaudible plural conflictual others within the Western texts seeking outlets by way of a deconstructive reading strategy. Consequently, she has been engaging herself with the project of constructing a whole lot of surrogate subaltern voices that serve to displace many subaltern voices looking for their surrogate (does not matter, if a bit counterfeit) counterparts. Resultantly, once the project of deconstruction receives a lower priority on her research agenda, the issue of *differend* and the conjoining issue of how to embody it slip from her mind so that she can sleep peacefully as a native informant in the US academics.

Implicit in this move on her part is the gesture that views *differend* and *deconstruction* as two self-contained unambiguous complete categories that never intersect. Spivak colors the difference between being heard (through *deconstruction*) and non-heard (as a *differend*) in black and white, forgetting the over ten million shades of gray-scaling that an up-to-date graphics can handle. Now, let us recall what *differend* is.

One instance of Lyotard's *differend* works in the problem of the masterpiece. A writer has written a masterpiece. No editor agrees to publish it. Now, how can she prove that it is a masterpiece? We want to extend the question into the zone of the future that is coming but is still unknown. How the writer can sustain as a writer — who knows that she is writing masterpieces and it is the very knowledge that confines her/him to a solitary cell — no one else is there who knows it too, because the works just do not get published? Her/his masterpieces do not get known as masterpieces due to the very quality of being masterpieces.

Differend resides in those confrontations where the ends can never meet, by definition. It is just the situation in case of savage, the protagonist of our model. She can never make heard what she is saying.

So, here, the strategy should be speaking through the text. She will not speak because savage cannot speak. The text will speak on her behalf. The strategy consists of these steps:

1. The savage suppresses his voice and speaks through textual intervention.
2. In spite of everything the savage must speak — may be like a specter — to unite, at a later point of time, *deconstruction* and *differend*(s).

The problem for us actually resides here: in conjoining differend and deconstruction: in tracing this spectrality in the voice of the Other. In an obvious and simple sense it is an impossible task, differend and deconstruction cannot be united, if we consider deconstruction in its elitist (Kantian) version. So, in this process of tracing the spectrality of savage, we are going to vulgarize Derrida and his deconstruction. This subverted deconstruction, away from deconstruction pure, can serve us a way out. In a sense, we are going to deconstruct deconstruction and distort it, saying many things of our own in the (holy) name of Derrida.

II. Two Derridas

Comprehending and thus constructing a precise and to-the-point text on Derrida is in no way the game of ours. We are going to create and configure a Derrida of our own from the myth called Derrida, from the legend that is being *salebrated* under the name.

Let us define our point of departure. A bit of Marx: that is all we know. And it is more or less the same for both Hegel and Althusser, too. Husserl, Heidegger, Levinas et al, the contexts that Derrida builds upon, are indeed a domain removed from us, the savage Marxists of the third world, and we do have no wish at all to wade into the unknown waves. Actually we are going to construct a Derrida that is already known to us: *always already within us*, expounding the Derrida of deconstructive practice.

For our purposes, there can be three methods of building into Derrida:

1. Constructing Derrida from the popular discourse (gossip) on him.
2. Constructing Derrida from the practice of deconstruction.
3. Comprehending and configuring the Derrida proper.

But, the *very* Derridean discourse has already lent us the confidence (once again) to *reject* the third method on the ground that there exists nothing like the Derrida proper. Therefore, ours will be a drive through a combine of the first and the second way. We begin with a popular discourse on Derrida (Dipesh Chakrabarty, 1997). We shall soon hear what Chakrabarty says.

And, the second method that remains in our hand is expounding the Derrida of deconstructive practice. That exposition, which we will elaborate

in the next section of this essay, in its very start, must clarify the connectedness between Saussure and Derrida.

Now, back to Chakrabarty.

We are citing here, a small article by Dipesh Chakrabarty, published in a popular Bengali newspaper. To forestall any possible miscommunication we are translating the complete article from Bengali.[3] Later on we will interrogate the guardian-like tonality of this article and contest it with another tonality that underwrites, and in turn, is underpinned by, "Who speaks for Indian Pasts?".

> Various versions of 'deconstruction' circulate in the market. The most popular one resides in conceiving 'deconstruction' as the inverse of 'construction'. As a result, a large number of people think that 'deconstruction' is just the name of anatomizing and analyzing something by breaking it down into its parts. Alternatively, through unfolding layers after layers of thought to proceed into the innermost core (in English, which is called 'unpacking'). But, these are not moments of 'deconstruction' in the sense that the French philosopher Jacques Derrida has used. 'Deconstruction', as invented by Derrida, is a reading strategy and deep in its womb lingers a complex philosophical truth. This is the content that I would now seek to convey in a sketchy and simple manner.

> In historical, sociological or political descriptions, we work with a particular concept of truth. Say, this statement: "democracy has come in India", or, "capitalism has established itself in India" is a regular thing on part of the social analysts. Now, there may very well be many contentions concerning the arrival or awaiting of democracy (or, capitalism) in India, among the social scientists. The arguments, predictably, may even proceed to include the true significance of the democracy or capitalism that has come. But, usually, the concept that the social scientists would never argue upon is the notion: 'arrival' of democracy or capitalism. It is our theoretical presumption that it is possible for a particular society *to be* feudal or capitalist. This possibility *to be* — is the basis on which resides the philosophy of politics, and even — Marxism.

> So, in social science, or, in the construction of history, a total correspondence between 'name' and 'thing' is already assumed. 'Capitalism' is a name or a category, and again, we assume it to be a successful description of a particular historical social system. If some significant odds emerge between a particular name and a particular thing, we search for another name, like, say, 'semi-feudalism', or, 'colonial mode of production'. The analysis of the social scientist, ipso facto, is determined by the one-ness of the 'name' and the 'thing'. The identity of the thing, which resides in a name, is assumed to be a complete and self-sufficient identity. The man that sees and the world that is seen are supposed to be partitioned by a clean glass — that is, language.

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[3] This translation intends to be as close as possible to the original article, acquiring a higher degree of awkwardness in the sentences, as a by-product. Truthfulness, at least in translation, is not always very aesthetic.

Derrida has named this noumenon, this particular construction of truth, as 'logocentrism', or 'metaphysics of presence'. Derrida considers this as an important lineament of western philosophy: the powerful German philosopher Edmund Husserl in this century through Plato. Truth implies, as if, a presence unbound, original and self-contained. Language is programmed to record this presence, unadulterated, in a name. Derrida does not intend to transcend this notion of truth through the workings of thought and arrive at an alternative, and obviously truer, notion of truth. In this context, he has invented a reading strategy that plays up the theme of the unsurpassable machinations of 'logocentrism' in a narration, any narration — a reading strategy that dissects and discusses these machinations. The name of this Derridean reading strategy is de-construction.

In scores of books, essays and interviews, Derrida has elaborated this strategy — elaboration that elaborated the Philosophy of Derrida himself. In his earlier book 'Of Grammatology', Derrida is reading in his own method Rousseau on Language, Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, and French social-anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss to demonstrate that all of them are considering oral language as closer to the presence of truth than the written one. The written language generates the meaning or significance through the difference between symbolic signs. Never a meaning reaches its completeness in the resort of a single sign. The oral language is regarded as something close to human experience. But, in the process of reading these texts minutely through the deconstructive procedures, Derrida is showing that this discrimination cannot be maintained for good. The process that generates meaning in the oral language is characteristically the very one with that in the written language. And if this is true, why these great thinkers are so much prejudiced towards the oral one? Why it is prescribed as near to truth in the writings of these western intellectuals? Derrida suggests that the cause is 'logocentrism': allegiance towards a particular construction of truth in western tradition. 'Truth' as a term calls to our mind a self-contained identity that has brought the 'name' and the 'thing' completely together.

Derrida says that reading any text in the deconstructive way would bring forth two other contradictions within the realization of any significance, definition, identity or meaning. The first contradiction resides in the process of combination of various differences into the generation of a particular meaning or significance. And the second one is that due to all these differences and oppositions the 'meaning' seems never to reach a singular self-sufficiency —some other pull from behind elongates and slows down the process of becoming of 'truth' or meaning — Deferral. Combining 'Difference' and 'Deferral' together, Derrida names this as 'Différance'. That means meaning itself carries the trace of counter meaning. Meaning cannot transcend the collection of differences.

You can grasp the significance of Derrida's theory if the popularly circulating notions are tallied with it. In our consideration of political unity, in many cases, we assume that a third entity would come up through the differences within two different things — towards which strive the political

struggles. Say, I am Bengali and you are Tamil: we presume that the identity of 'Indian' or 'Man' will hold all the differences between us and again surpass it into a lease of a newer and a self-contained identity. The concepts of 'Man' or 'India' are assumed here as higher and self-contained categories in a Hegelian way. Reading through the deconstructive strategy demonstrates that 'truth' and 'meaning' can never reach a pure and original completeness. The words: 'Man' or 'India' carry within themselves the pulls of their counter-meanings — which hold up the presence of their present meanings.

Ignoring all the uncombined contradictions within various implicit oppositions —running up a resolution in a situation that actually cannot be resolved— we construct categories like 'India' or 'Man'. And, this is logocentrism. Derrida does not consider it a mistake. And positing some truer and more correct 'truth' in place of it is never an in-thing, because that presupposes another form of logocentrism. The project of deconstruction is to face this moment of 'Undecidable' in the realm of thought.

It would be Derrida to preach that even a text full of philosophical contents can very well be read due to its literary quality (or, the lack of it). That is why he objects to the tradition of writing down the ideas in their composed form of formal or scientific models. This objection actualizes in his writing strategy. His writings are not centered on contents. The moment any definition comes to light he breaks it away by constructing new and newer words. It is the form of his writing that involves so much of experimentation. As he chisels out the limits of language, some have named his texts as 'philosophy of the limit'.

No-nonsense, busy and democratic people would rise to ask, what is the use of it all? It has already been said before that in the realm of political and practical thought a particular figure of truth is always assumed. We presume that all the 'name'-s that we are using do invariably 'be'. So we point our fingers and pronounce, that one is Bengali, this one is capitalist, and voilà — the working class. This way of thought is not 'wrong'. But, it is the product of pushing into a resolution, unconditionally rejecting all the uncombined contradictions within thought. Derrida reminds us about the process of reaching into the resolution. As we engage in auto-critique, once again the issues of morality confront us.

This is the way Dipesh Chakrabarty formulates Derrida and his deconstruction. Let us intervene in Chakrabarty. Fair is foul and foul is fair — let us dance and hover through filthy air. What is foul for Chakrabarty is fair for us — as far as the deconstruction of deconstruction is concerned.

What is foul for Chakrabarty?

To understand deconstruction as a (mere) technique of reading a text differently — this is one popular and practicing way of *salebrating* Derrida that Chakrabarty is not ready to buy. Chakrabarty does not name the villains — nor he gives a visage of them — but that is unimportant. This

article of Chakrabarty emits the signal that there is another Derrida … moving around and around and … in academic practices.

Moving around in the form of a sophisticated way of reading a text that contests, subverts, destabilizes — turns upside down — all the established meanings of a text. A is here — with *a* meaning of the text. Now, B presents another, a radically different one, and equally demanding. *But*, and this is important, *without dismantling* A, through some outlandish reading strategy that invokes the gray jargons of Derrida. Possibly, A and B are reading the text from different perspectives. They have different focuses. And, obviously, they have different sets of indifferent slips, omissions and commissions specific to each. The different pulls and pushes within and from outside the text combine, confront and confirm the two contending meanings of the text.

Chakrabarty will preach that the subjective biases of the readers are, here, vulgarizing Derridean deconstruction. Chakrabarty's sole focus is on bringing out the unreason working within the reason of the text — so that, one gets to the *philosophy* of Derrida: Madness of Reason *salebrating* self-contained self-certain truths.

Therefore, Chakrabarty would say that, actually, it is the text that deconstructs itself. The business of the deconstructionist is passive: to make this process of auto-unfolding in deconstruction, always already within the text, visible, legible, and accessible.

Chakrabarty vouches for the *unreason* of reason and thereby re-affirms reason, and hence, its tyranny. What has been recorded will be replayed, even though together with the remakes and the re-mixes of the old records. But, how and where can the unrecorded put its stamp on the discourse? *How far the subaltern can make its voice heard?*

So, adieux, to you (and you and you — all Nordic purists, elitist Kantians, forefathers on all the four directions, goodbye papa, don't preach), Chakrabarty. Farewell to Chakrabarty's pure Derrida. We opt for a vulgar version, giving voice to the dumb and ear to the deaf.

Let us invoke the spirit of this vulgar Derrida and give flesh and blood to it. We will problematize a vulgar version of Derrida that teaches us techniques to read a text differently. We need some concept of Derrida established in discourse so that we, the subalterns, who are condemned to be dumb, can speak through him. It matters little if that Derrida is vulgar or pure. The choice is ours. We choose to theorize the vulgar Derrida so that we can smuggle our voices into it. So that we can speak through this Derrida.

Let us now start anew, begin from the beginning — the starting point of the whole discourse — Ferdinand de Saussure.

III. Derrida vulgarized

Saussure put forward the postulate that *naming* of the words carries no in-built logic. It is *arbitrary*. Thus, the very classification of the referent-space, that is embodied in the process of *naming*, becomes arbitrary in the same movement, rendering the *names/words/concepts* relational in the process of signification, in the mode of *generation of meaning*. These signs can convey a meaning because of these relations between them. And these relations between the signs are all defined negatively, that is in terms of negation. The sign of a chair veils behind it a referent that is *not a table/not a stool/not...* ad infinitum. All these negatively defined relations unify through the system of signs into a *totality* in the form of a text that conveys a meaning.

In other words, Saussure wants to establish that the sole demonstration of the color red would never enable a baby to recognize 'red'. He/she can apprehend red only through the non-*recognition* of the other colors like blue, green, or yellow. Saussure's totality is a kind of closed totality, where the difference that plays within the totality is a *difference-in-relation*.

Here we can recall Hegel or Althusser to cross-compare the respective antagonistic and over-determined difference-in-relation in the Hegelian and Althusserian totalities[4]. The notion in-built within the Saussurian system is one of equal status within the elements of totality, that is, the words. Saussurian *difference-in-relation* presupposes equal status of the words or concepts. There is an absence of any hierarchy in the sense that this equality or the equal status is not constructed: or in other words, it does not flow from a postulated definition. This equality is *exogenous* and *given* to the system. This is the point of contention where our concept of Derrida intervenes to proclaim the very existence of a hierarchy within the elements of totality.

By the *Book of Derrida* there are and remain hierarchies within the concepts/words, some of them are dominant, and others are pushed into dormancy. These dominant key concepts, which are the principal and privileged ones within the totality of *text*, put together and bring forth a structure, through which the other concepts are derived. These derived concepts are garnered up in the background. Creating of this partitioned space of a *background* and a *foreground* is crucially linked up with a *context*: *context* of reading *text*. And in fact, the dormancy of the background concepts is very much an abeyance — lying in wait just for a change of

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[4] Hegel's logic gives us the very definition of a category through a leap. A leap which brings into its inclusion both the *reality* and its *negation* and thus avoids the epistemological trap of being caught into the *bad infinity*. This bad infinity proceeds through an endless negation, indefinitely, and indeterminately, to reach absolutely nowhere. And an Althusserian category ,in the last but other instances emerges through the (inter)play of three complexes, thus rendering all categories carriers of some epistemological mythologies on their spinal chords, in the last instance controlled by the economic, thus opening the gateway for an ontological intervention.

context, *deconstruction* being another name of this process if and when the change is gestated deliberately.

Thus, the Derridean reading of text involves a text-context complex that brings about a quest of the nature of relationship between text and context, concerning which, strangely enough, Derrida keeps mum. Absolutely no theory is there, in the *Book of Derrida*, about the *choice* of context or how a *particular* context is *constructed* and, in its turn, is built upon. Strangely, the whole of Derrida crucially lacks a comprehensive theory on the correlation between text and context. Even any hint about any overdetermination, if there is any, between text and context is absent from Derrida. The whole theory is confined to the very domain of text and the power politics between the principal and derivative concepts within text. Derrida is intervening into the reading of text, the Saussurian reading, in the pretext of context, and then all of a sudden, he becomes silent. But many things are there, in both the heaven of epistemology and the earth of ontology, which can be said and done about the very politics between text and context.[5]

It is here that we enter into Derrida.

As a sum up, the position of Saussure accepts that a unique meaning exists but it is relational. It operates through a structure of names and their inter-relationships and never operates outside this structure. In contrast, Derrida says that no *true meaning*, as one, does exist. Only do exist meanings.[6]

The journey from Saussure to Derrida consists of the following steps.

1. Naming is arbitrary.
2. Classification of space implied by naming is arbitrary.

We accept the two above assumptions and add a third of our own.

3. Context is always already contrived — contrived by the subject: the reader.

By this additional assumption, we focus the living role of context in vesting the words with a hierarchy:

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[5] Thus spake Derrida about the hierarchy of privilege within the words/concepts in a text and prescribed a deconstructive tactics of inverting these hierarchies among words/concepts by shifting the context of reading text. The Derridean process of deconstruction, in that sense, can be called a *production of meanings by means of inversions of hierarchies of meanings*. But this needs attention. This whole fabric lacks and looks towards a more rigorous theory. A theory of words/concepts as parts of a *rhetoric* in the forms of *metaphors* and *metonyms*. Derridean literature deals *words* as *metonyms*. These metonyms as generations and r/degenerations of the *prior presence*, as dual of the primal, represent a *colony* and a *colonization*, a rule by *metonyms*, through which the whole meaning is being *colonized*. The fear of death (and old-age) is a *metonym of death* that rules the youth and exorcises her/him into exercises, and thus builds her/him into a carrier and a *colony of death*. So, the rule by *words* as *metonyms* is a colonization of meaning — where text/discourse plays a colonizer's role and creates the effects of colonizing. The Derridean deconstruction can be viewed as an anti-colonial move against this colonization of meanings.

[6] In fact, we are imagining that, this is the way Derrida intervenes in Saussure. This is *our* interpretation, *our* construction.

1. *Primary*, or, *elite* words.
2. *Derived*, or, *subaltern* words.
3. *Forgotten* words.[7]

The alternative context contests the primal context by coming up from the working of the logic of the text itself, independent of the subject: the reader. Contexts and newer contexts are thrown off and thrown up by the logic of text, leaving little or no space for the *subject*. But it is the object of our distortion to smuggle in the *subject* in the disguise of logic — a subject capable of creating newer contexts. A question may be asked here, that, how is it possible to view the logical dysfunction within logic through the apparatus of logic?

As a solution of this problem, we add the assumption that text and context are mutually constituting, that is, overdetermining each other. And, in this chapter on the writing strategy of savage in a global context, we want to deal with only *one* aspect of the two-way mutual overdetermination — the journey from context to text.

So, our focus is the process through which context overdetermines text. The consequences of this assumption follow easily. Our concept of Derrida deliberately breaks down the symmetric spaces of the words. Context determines the uneven stature of the words — their relative position in the hierarchy of the words. Thus, the meaning of the derivative words that flow from the primary words gets constituted by the context. So the context opens up a whole space of interplay between the primary and the derivative words — the elite and the subaltern words — and this play begets supplements to text by way of the Derridean concept of supplement. Now, let us explore what *supplement* is. We will read Derridean supplement in the form of an intervention in Hegel's logic.

IV. Derrida's Supplement.

Through the concept of *différance,* Derrida delineates a departure — at the level of unity. He carries a fight to the Hegelian camp. At the level of difference he has another fight that distinguishes him aside from the other postmoderns. Derrida is the first one to walk out the bandwagon of totalitarian points of view just to stand abreast the underworld: to understand the world of small beings—to understand them not apart from but together with their trace and alterity. Be it the concept of *différance* or that of trace or spacing-alterity or supplement — all these are just

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[7] The forgotten words vest the discourse with their footprints — traces that in their interpellation give us astounding shocks. Take the word *motherland* — every one conceives the motherland in the image of her mother. Place the discourse on motherland before a reader of a son of a sex-worker. Does the flexibility of the discourse allow it to be carried away into the unknown quarters — the *pros-quarter* — the semi-lit ante-chamber, where the son of a sex-worker, recently brought under the literacy program, goes on constructing his own image of the motherland — in the image of his mother? Here the mother in the form of a sex-worker *is* the forgotten word.

instruments of Derrida in the journey towards reaching the ever-expanding universe of beings growing of themselves. Let us frame a cross-comparison in a Marxly way of this concept of ever-expansion with the autoerotic-procreativity of capital giving rise to the celebrated process of accumulation that accumulates around itself in pursuit of surpassing and superseding its own self and becoming bigger than itself.

In the same way, text is always overflowing and transcending itself to become bigger than itself. And that is why it can supplement to itself. This in no way is an addition. Capital never adds on itself. The very formation of such a model of capital adding on to itself presupposes the concept of a transcendental signified in the form of capital. Which is just never there. Capital: the discursive space with a tag of that name is overflowing and supplementing to itself; supplementing to the discourse of commodity. Or, rather, it is supplementing to the supplement, as, again, in its turn, the signifier of commodity does not carry a transcendental signified too.

The supplement is rather an added outside that is always already present within a text. This formulation can aptly help in our delving into and depicting the very relationship between the formation of the *epistêmê* and its ontological presuppositions: the intertextualplay between the theory of history and the theory of knowledge, between *illusion* and *reality*. Reality is no illusion; rather illusion is a real illusion of reality. Illusion is supplementing to reality. Reality is proceeding and proliferating itself through the extensions in the form of a series of illusions. Philosophy itself subsists in and as literature.[8]

According to Derrida, because there is a lack of full presence, there exists a condition for the existence of *supplement*. Supplement means something additional. Now, this addition could be understood as being conditioned by a certain lack to a presence (as in Derrida) or simply as an extra addition to a full presence (as in Saussure, Plato or Rousseau). In other words, presence as understood by Derrida is never complete or total as an identity. There is always an attempt to provide full presence or identity through the supplement but this process of farther fulfillment is thus all the time subverted. This can be called an auto-subversion; the fullness of the identity is undone by its strife to become full, because this word 'farther' is open-ended.

Supplements lead to more supplements and to more … and so on. Unlike the case for metaphysical thinkers, for Derrida, the lack and the subsequent supplements are something positive without which the full

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[8] This formulation is just another version of the Kantian theory of expansion of knowledge allowing the formal Western logic a backdoor entrance. Formal Western logic with its formal methodology of reading a text plays on the role of a preacher sermonizing the reader to become aware of the forgetfulness both on his part and the text's: be aware of the things that both you and the text have forgotten. As if the project of deconstruction is a kind of a social awareness program, pushing literature more and more into the jurisdiction of reason.

presence cannot be completed[9]. This is in opposition to the metaphysical thinkers who consider supplement as a harmful addition to presence and desire an end to its existence. Thus Derrida's framework leaves us with a social space which contains infinite play of differences devoid of the presence of any transcendental signifier (the other name of full presence). Society cannot be fixed by any full presence. There is no origin, no foundation and no lineage relations in social reality, and the essentialist structure of causality is subverted time and again.[10]

The theme that is common to all the post-modern positions is the notion of *totality with gaps*: a sutured totality under subversion. By the standards of tightness no totality is actually possible. If this impossibility were not there, a tight totality would always already have emerged. It is this impossibility of any social reality that breeds the necessity of a hegemony to loom and bridge over all the gaps, to rebuild in virtual reality all the bridges that you ought to have burned but could not because there was not any. The all-pervading post-modern oneness consists of this consideration of the gaps as the weak points of the social: the gaps between the finite and the infinite aspects of the same moment.

Derrida presents a parallel theme in terms of an ever-expanding universe of totality. Totality that is larger than itself, that intermittently and interminably accumulates around itself, but not in concentric circles because all circles have a center — and have a margin too that never merges. This Derridean totality accumulates around itself in uneven spacing of the alterity and the supplements.

One Derridean exemplification of this theme is the case of Europe. In the elucidation of 'Europe: the other heading', Derrida plays on the situation when a category comprises and includes its impossibility within itself—the situation what Laclau and Mouffe would aimer to call as an event of pluralism. Europe, the expanding entity, is larger than it is. Its expansion, the growth of the soil, is soiling both Europe and its *outside*: *Asias* and *Africas* and elsewhere. It is a point of strength of Europe that it includes both of Europe and non-Europe. Outside of the outside, there remains the

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[9] This completion, is obviously, an epistemological completion. Completion of the category in question, as an understandable category. Remember: there is always the *ontological slippage* from the epistemological category, *différance* being the key there, a freeze shot that both differs and defers.

[10] Laclau and Mouffe reproduce Derrida's argument on a different (Marxian) plane. They point out that closure of society is impossible because of the absence of any transcendental signifier that could serve as an underlying and intelligible element with whose help the society could be closed. In society, there is an infinite play of differences originating from the non-fixity of meaning and multiplicity of contexts. Attempts to constitute a society exist (what Laclau and Mouffe calls a sutured totality) but is constantly subverted. Since social meanings are defined by moments in which different elements come together, the field is open to a play of articulatory practices producing hegemonic relations. Hegemonic constructions are attempts to secure a sutured totality (that is, socially constructed totality) whose effort is to tie the differences together and prevent the system from collapsing. However, since each of the elements in the contextually produced enforced unity are wrought by surplus meaning, that is, differences, the hegemonic construction can only survive momentarily as the dominant unity in the social space. Hence the proposition: society as a closed totality is impossible. We would come back to this point in our Chapter Two.

inner force field of the supplement supplementing to this growth of Europe beyond Europe.

For Hegel the finite is larger than itself, is infinite.

Here intervenes Derrida. And proclaims that the finite is larger than itself but not infinite. All the journeys that the being takes (tasks) upon itself ply very much within the realm of finitude. And that is precisely, the cynosure of all (de and/or con)structions.

V. ~~Deconstruction~~ Decolonization

Deconstruction proper involves, among others, an inversion: transforming the derivative concepts into primary concepts and thus inverting the hierarchy between elite and subaltern words.

Our motto is to unite *differend* and *deconstruction*. To do this we are just plucking out differend as a disjoint motif from the writings of Lyotard, and considering our version of deconstruction as a self-sufficient system such that we can join these two. In this system, we are systematically intervening in — inverting — Derrida and his deconstruction, because with the Derrida proper we cannot open our dialogue with differend. The point is to vulgarize Derrida in the following steps.

1. Inverting the last residuals of the hierarchy of 'pre-' and 'post-' in Derrida — between text and supplement.
2. And then, supplementing to that which is always already within text.

Derrida's trajectory is from text to supplement. Text constitutes the 'pre-' and supplement configures the 'post-' and this logic can never be inverted in Derrida proper, is irreversible. Text is prior. And supplement, in its ability to complete the incompleteness of text, follows from text, is always already within text. This flow from text to supplement, this 'pre-post-erous' hierarchy is never to be contested in Derrida proper, a hierarchy that can never be cross-examined. Derrida, the messiah of inverting the hierarchies in text, is never challenging this mother of all hierarchies, is contradicting himself. Derrida is turning back on himself: *not everything can be dehierarchized.*

Let us conceive supplement as a loose part, a collection of loose parts, not like hanging and protruding offshoots from father-text, but actually without a father — *in search of a father*. Bastards, lacking a father, looking for one. But supplements supplement to the original — the father. So supplements lacking a father cannot be supplements. *Supplement without a father* — this is our conception of *differend*: bastards searching (for) a father, colonized looking for a colonizer, workers anticipating a capitalist.

So our project is to place and placate these preying bastards busy in their father-hunt, to search and explore a text for them. And obviously,

recording down these differends, which, in Bhabha's terms, may qualify for another form of 'sly civility'[11]. This project involves:

1. Recording "differend" — as a lower form of discourse — uttered from the site. Recording what the dominant discourse does not sanction. This is differend within quotes, for, at some point of time, possibly, this, with many other text-less supplements like itself, can dissolve and metamorphose into a discourse.

Then, someday, some memoir of the construction of this discourse, may pronounce,

> …many great gaps were left, which were only filled in gradually and bit by bit, some indeed, not till after the official announcement that the wall was finished. In fact, it is said that there are gaps which have never been filled in at all, an assertion, however, which is probably merely one of the many legends to which the building of the wall gave rise, and which cannot be verified, at least by any single man with his own eyes and judgment, on account of the extent of the structure.
>
> Now on first thoughts one might conceive that it would have been more advantageous in every way to build the wall continuously, or at least continuously within the two main divisions. After all the wall was intended, as was universally proclaimed and known, to be a protection against the peoples of the North. But how can a wall protect if it is not a continuous structure? Not only cannot such a wall protect, but what there is of it is in perpetual danger. These blocks of wall left standing in deserted regions could be easily pulled down again and again by the nomads…. Nevertheless the task of construction probably could not have been carried out in any other way. To understand this we must take into account the following: The wall was to be a protection for centuries: accordingly the most scrupulous care in the building, the application of the architectural wisdom of all known ages and peoples, an unremitting sense of personal responsibility in the builders, were indispensable prerequisites for the work….
>
> For the work had not been undertaken without thought. Fifty years before the first stone was laid the art of architecture, and especially that of masonry, had been proclaimed as the most important branch of knowledge throughout the whole area of a China that was to be walled around, and all other arts gained recognition only in so far as they had reference to it….
>
> One could not, for instance, expect them to lay one stone on another for months or even years on end, in an uninhabited mountainous region, hundreds of miles from their homes; the hopelessness of such hard toil, which…could not reach completion even in the longest lifetime, would have cast them into despair and above all made them less capable for the work. It was for this reason that the system of piecemeal building was decided on. Five hundred yards could be accomplished in about five years; by that time, however, the supervisors were as a rule quite exhausted and had lost all faith

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[11] Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture.*

in themselves, in the wall, in the world. Accordingly, while they were still exalted by the jubilant celebrations marking the completion of the thousand yards of wall, they were sent far, far away, saw on their journey finished sections of the wall rising here and there, came past the quarters of the high command and were presented with badges of honor, heard the rejoicings of new armies of labor streaming pat from the depths of the land, saw forests being cut down to become supports for the wall, saw mountains being hewn into stones for the wall, heard at the holy shrines hymns rising in which the pious prayed for the completion of the wall. All this assuaged their impatience. The quiet life of their homes, where they rested some time, strengthened them; the humble credulity with which their reports were listened to, the confidence with which the simple and peaceful burgher believed in the eventual completion of the wall, all this tightened up once again the cords of the soul. Like eternally hopeful children they then said farewell to their homes; the desire once more to labor on the wall of the nation became irresistible. They set off earlier than they needed; half the village accompanied them for long distances. Groups of people with banners and scarfs waving were on all the roads; never before had they seen how great and rich and beautiful and worthy of love their country was….

Thus, then, the system of piecemeal construction becomes comprehensible. But there were still other reasons for it as well.

…

Human nature, essentially changeable, unstable as the dust, can endure not restraint; if it binds itself it soon begins to tear madly at its bonds, until it rends everything asunder, the wall, the bonds and its very self.

It is possible that these very considerations, which militated against the building of the wall at all, were not left out of account by the high command when the system of piecemeal construction was decided on. …

And for that reason the incorruptible observer must hold that the command, if it had seriously desired it, could also have overcome those difficulties which prevented a system of continuous construction. There remains, therefore, nothing but the conclusion that the command deliberately chose the system of piecemeal construction. But the piecemeal construction was only a makeshift and therefore inexpedient. Remains the conclusion that the command willed something inexpedient. — Strange conclusion! … Try with all your might to comprehend the decrees of the high command, but only up to a certain point; then avoid further mediation. …[12]

Once the differend within double quote is recorded, the project proceeds to the next steps:

2. Wait and search for a text to which this *differend* — the Great discontinuous and fragmentary Wall(s) of China — may supplement to.

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[12] Franz Kafka, The Great Wall of China, Selected short stories of Franz Kafka (The Modern Library, New York, 1952). Note the last dictum in the quotation: avoid further mediation. Did not the stalker say almost the same thing to the writer and the scientist?

3. Now invert: treat *differend* as context and supply the missing text. Read a text from the standpoint of differend — a text that can supplement to the differend (now, the text).

Here, no longer text is producing context. Context has become exogenous, given. We are opening the avenue for differend by deconstructing in collaboration with the bastard words. And this we name as *decolonization*. The process of decolonization consists of deconstruction via the inversion of the elite concepts by the subaltern concepts in collaboration with the forgotten words — within and *outside* the text. It is a conscious and deliberate vulgarization: a juggling, a circus of words and concepts — words and concepts forgotten and thrown away by the *elite*. Forgotten words, rejected words, and sometimes, leftover words.[13]

Decolonization, for that matter, is an umbrella concept that eludes any more theoretical elaboration. It can only be exemplified, because it is, in that sense, not a theory, but a subversion of theory. The whole procedure of decolonization is vulgarizing the *true Derrida* because we are no more guided here by the logic of the text, by the chronology of 'pre-' and 'post-'. First, we are choosing context, and then, building into text. The whole methodology consists of the following steps.

1. Begin with context as the 'pre-'.
2. Find out its 'post-', a fitting text.
3. Treat certain concepts of the text as primary ones and the others as derivative.
4. Smuggle the bastard meaning into the text and form it (cook it up) within the text.
5. Compare the bastard meaning with the legitimate, hegemonic meanings.

So, here we are questioning the ideological hegemony of meaning over text. The traditional relation between text and meaning that we inherit — in the *cultural*, the *ideological*, and the *political* — is actually breaking down. Our vulgarization resides in overstressing *context* — the true Derrideans will obviously object to it. We are making context imbibed with a logical autonomy. We resort to logic because we are talking academic, talking with the ruling class. We cannot break the rules of the game. But with *differend*, on the plane of the writing table, in our lonesome keyboarding, we can play up unreason, prohibited emotions, reinstate the condemned, the excluded: in hysteria: writing as deviance.

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[13] This process may be both announced and surreptitious. Some part of the text is written down, some part of the text waits in abeyance. Some distant chanting (distant in space, distant in time) may incarnate the unwritten part of the text: conjuring, voodoo, witchcraft, Zinicism. May be the stalker's own child is growing up with it. It is a deliberate move that he does not deliver them all. May be he is parrying with the aged academicians, glasses sliding down their slithery noses — a *Dronacharya* that slices out the thumb off *Ekalabya:* kill *Ekalabya,* kill them all, kill the newer ones, that is the only way you *Dronaacharya* can lengthen your life.

But, as we have already said, no more of theorization, no more can be said in theory, the rest rests at the unrest of the cultural, political, ideological. We would now proceed into exemplifying this methodology in terms of a story by Borges.

VI. Elaborating through Borges

Let us recall the short fiction '*Theme of the Traitor and the Hero*' by Jorge Luis Borges.

The story narrates the discursive investigations of Ryan — "he is the great-grandson of the young, the heroic, the beautiful, the assassinated Fergus Kilpatrick, whose grave was mysteriously violated, whose name illustrated the verses of Browning and Hugo, whose statue presides over a gray hill amid red marshes".

> Kilpatrick was … a secret and glorious captain of conspirators, … perished on the eve of the victorious revolt which he had premeditated and dreamt of. The first centenary of his death draws near; the circumstances of the crime are enigmatic; Ryan, engaged in writing a biography of the hero, discovers that the enigma exceeds the confines of simple police investigation. … murdered in a theatre; the British police never found the killer; the historians maintain … the police themselves who had him killed. Other facets of the enigma … are of a cyclic nature: they seem to repeat or combine events of remote regions, of remote ages. … the officers found a sealed letter in which he was warned of the risk … likewise Julius Caesar …. Caesar's wife, Calpurnia, saw in a dream the destruction of a tower decreed him by the Senate; false and anonymous rumors on the eve of Kilpatrick's death publicized … the circular tower of Kilgarvan had burned, … he had been born in Kilgarvan. These parallelisms (and others) between the story of Caesar and the story of an Irish conspirator lead Ryan to suppose the existence of a secret form of time, a pattern of repeated lines. … He is rescued from these circular labyrinths by a curious finding…: certain words uttered by a beggar who spoke with Fergus Kilpatrick the day of his death were prefigured by Shakespeare in the tragedy *Macbeth*. That history should have copied history was already sufficiently astonishing; that history should have copied literature was inconceivable … Ryan finds that … Nolan, oldest of the hero's companions, had translated the principal dramas of Shakespeare into Gaelic; among these was *Julius Caesar*. He also discovers … an article by Nolan on … theatrical representations which require thousands of actors and repeat historical episodes…. Another unpublished document reveals to him that, a few days before the end, Kilpatrick, presiding over the last meeting, had signed the order for the execution of a traitor whose name has been deleted from the records. Ryan … manages to decipher the enigma.
>
> Kilpatrick was killed in theater, but the entire city was a theater as well, and the actors were legion, and the drama crowned by his death extended over many days and many nights.

Nolan, under the responsibility of discovering the traitor that Kilpatrick had charged, declared in the meeting that the traitor, for whom the revolt failed repeatedly, was Kilpatrick himself.

> He signed his own sentence, but begged that his punishment not harm his country.
>
> It was then that Nolan conceived his strange scheme. Ireland idolized Kilpatrick; the most tenuous suspicion of his infamy would have jeopardized the revolt; Nolan proposed a plan which made of the traitor's execution an instrument for the country's emancipation. He suggested that the condemned man die at the hands of an unknown assassin in deliberately dramatic circumstances which would remain engraved in the imagination of the people and would hasten the revolt. Kilpatrick swore he would take part in the scheme, which gave him the occasion to redeem himself and for which his death would provide the final flourish.
>
> Nolan, urged on by time, was not able to invent all the circumstances of the multiple execution; he had to plagiarize another dramatist, the English enemy William Shakespeare. He repeated scenes from *Macbeth*, from *Julius Caesar*. The public and secret enactment comprised various days. The condemned man entered Dublin, discussed, acted, prayed, reproved, uttered words of pathos, and each of these gestures, to be reflected in his glory, had been pre-established by Nolan. Hundreds of actors collaborated with the protagonist; the role of some was complex; that of others momentary. The things they did and said endure in the history books, in the impassioned memory of Ireland. Kilpatrick, swept along by this minutely detailed destiny which both redeemed him and destroyed him, more than once enriched the text of his judge with improvised acts and words. Thus the populous drama unfolded in time, until on the 6th of August, 1824, in a theater box with funeral curtains prefiguring Lincoln's, a long-desired bullet entered the breast of the traitor and hero, who, amid two effusions of sudden blood, was scarcely able to articulate a few foreseen words.
>
> In Nolan's work, the passages imitated from Shakespeare are the least dramatic; Ryan suspects that the author interpolated them so that in the future someone might hit upon the truth. He understands that he too forms part of Nolan's plot … After a series of tenacious hesitations, he resolves to keep his discovery silent. He publishes a book dedicated to the hero's glory; this too, perhaps, was foreseen.

Like any fabulous piece of fiction, this story is complex, intricate and many-folded. At the departure of our discussion, we single out the discursive interaction between the nodal characters of the story: Ryan and Nolan, the present and the past. In fact, these two are the true protagonists of the story, enacting and actualizing the fact and the fiction through the communication that reaches Ryan from Nolan past the gap in time.

The passion that drives Ryan into and through his search is the identification with the revolt, the passion that makes the great-grandfather a hero before his eyes.

This passion for the revolt he shares with Nolan, the cool fighter, but not with the great-grandfather Kilpatrick, whom he has already discovered to be a traitor.

But, this is not the only oneness between Ryan and Nolan. They both share the same discursive knowledge concerning history, Shakespeare's dramas, Swiss *Festspiele* — the collective theatrical representations. And the ability to attach and correlate that knowledge with the different cues (put in by Nolan, and read out by Ryan) is shared by both of them.

Nolan and Ryan share the same search about the traitor and Ryan repeats the same trajectory that Nolan had traversed. The same discovery and the same suppression under the same passion to cover up the same Fergus Kilpatrick, due to the same regards to the Irish revolt. Here, Ryan represents, discursively, the lineage of Nolan. It is only biology, and a biology that Ryan would obviously dislike after the discovery that he and Nolan made, that lets Fergus enter between Nolan and Ryan.

The probe, and in its follow-through, the pre-conceived exposure and ensuing concealment — this is the process through which Ryan lost his lineage, the biological one. The one that passes through the father, grandfather and forefathers — the lineage of a lofty gray height of stony death — gray in the twilight of heroism and treachery. He looses it only to relocate the true and passionate one, discursively placed between him and Nolan, one standing for the vibrant red marshes of water and weeds, borrowing its hue from the Irish revolt.

We will not venture into an elaboration of the story against a model of guilt and suppression. We want to fix the frame of our reading strategy of decolonization against this story and demonstrate that the theme of writing on part of a writer is actually always in unrest between the poles of the hero and the traitor. The role the writer intends the text to play — the intended meaning and the final and actualized and selected meaning, selected by the reality of the readers that interact the text: there is always a hide and seek between these two. The text produces offshoots, the bastards: the differends, to balance between the lust and the illustrious.

Nolan recorded the differends.

Some hints, and obviously, some gaps, were there to be filled in someday by Ryan, searching about his great-grand-father and discovering him not to be so great and grand that it seemed to be.

The intended meaning of Nolan was to unveil the traitor and to instigate the man, in this case Ryan, who unveils, to leave the mythology, the intended truth, as it is. Ryan did as Nolan intended him to do. The gaps, the lacks, the differends supplied the context from where Ryan started his discursive journey and finally supplied the text, in the form of a biography of Fergus Kilpatrick, written in a way that Nolan intended. It is true for any Ryan that starts the journey and is equipped enough to complete it.

Ryan actually inverts Nolan. The bastards of Nolan's differends find their father in the text of Ryan, the discursive inheritor of Nolan.

Or, isn't that Borges, the writer, who does this inversion?

Borges inverts the time and the space so that times can be Time and spaces can implode into Space, rehabilitating the differend. For, what is differend in one space is referendum in another. The lost in one time becomes the illustrious in another — at a later point. The stage is then set for the local-global to emerge and the mountain starts speaking to Muhammad.

Two
Strategic Essentialism and
Mimicry of Overdetermination

I. Closure for Third World

In one sense Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak is right. A third world *local* writer cannot speak globally as what she is: an illegitimate child of the West, that is, the Globe.

In order to speak, she must search for — invent — a father, her/his father. She is like Shakespeare's Aerial speaking through the voice of Prospero, pretending that Prospero is Aerial's master.

But, that, simultaneously, is a parricidal move on Aerial's part. For he is destined to kill this father, in the final action, and turn Prospero into a 'martyr'. He, Aerial, would bear the cross of this martyr (master): the name-of-the-father. That, precisely, is the lesson of Chapter One.

But, there must be somebody qualifying for the role of our father, and not just anyone can assume this role. For, we would like to tell *our* story, taking its shape in a part of the globe popularly called the third world, bearing the legacy of its historical past of colonial rule.

But how to begin our story of *third world*, when the postmodernist waves have written off its name almost entirely? In the first place we need to reinscribe this name — *third world* — in a postmodern space.

There was a time when we people used to believe in God. Modern man killed this God and put in His place a concept of perfect, that is, closed totality ruled by *reason*, to be worshipped as his ideal. But, *unreason* defies being entirely eliminated; it can only be suppressed. So, unreason survives and lurks in reason: as the *repressed*. Freud-Lacan-Žižek call it *symptom*. And the symptom must shine forth, and appear as a *thing*. We have seen such *things*: the colonies of the great nations (UK, France) — as symptoms of enlightenment. Then at one point, colonies disappear in history and in its stead *third world* appears, as the *symptom* of a closed totality called *first world*.

But, then, there can be *third world* only if people believe in a perfect totality. Such that people can read its *symptom*, as *third world*. Signs of *unreason* presume the science of *reason*.

But, postmodernism does not believe in a perfect closed totality. Therefore symptom itself gets suppressed in the postmodernist literature. And so, there cannot be *third world*. Edward Soja (and many such) says that *third world* is everywhere, that is, nowhere.

Then, how can we reinscribe *third world* in a postmodern totality? We can do it only if somebody in the West discovers — invents — some device to introduce *closure* to a postmodern totality. (Recall: we have chosen to write on the margin of Western discourses). Postmodern philosophers (Derrida, Lacan etc) leave their systems hanging in the air — as ever-open, forever flying high in the sky. Somebody must do some re-writing of postmodernism to put its feet on the ground — and introduce a *closure* to it. Such men as undertake this task qualify for being our predecessors. For, we will dis-cover *third world* on the margin of this *closure*, as its *symptom*.

We know two such pair of names: Resnick-Wolff (henceforth RW) and Laclau-Mouffe (henceforth LM). Both are 'social scientists', building on postmodern philosophy. RW's system is called postmodern Marxism (also overdeterministic Marxism) and LM's discourse is known as post-Marxism. We will see in two successive chapters (in this chapter and the chapter that follows it) — how postmodern Marxism and post-Marxism introduce closures in different ways to a postmodern totality. Our discourse begins where they end: on their margin, as a follow-up — discovery — of the consequences of such closures. *Third world* gets rehabilitated in a postmodern totality from such endeavors.

We could articulate *third world* — which, for us, is the site of ᴘᴏsᴛcolonialism — from just an interrogation of RW and LM. But, postcolonial cultural studies, deploying postmodernist conceptual tools, have already emerged as a distinct discipline. It is our impression that such studies would be richer, were it informed by RW and LM. So, in order to tell our story, we weave cultural studies — our brand of *third worldism* — with RW and LM, in chapters Two and Three of this book.

We have already hinted at a major proposition by Spivak: the subaltern cannot speak. But we have not yet dealt with the details of how she arrives at this proposition, in the context of a discussion on a stream of postcolonial cultural studies — to be specific, Subaltern Studies — in a postmodern (Derridean) vein. We will see that her contentious proposition — that the subaltern cannot speak — derives from a lack of closure in the Derridean system.

In this context, we find it interesting to draw a parallel between Spivak and RW who share the similar epistemological presuppositions. Surprisingly, in RW, the subaltern can speak — because the kind of postmodern system they are dealing with has a theory of closure woven into it. We can then take off from RW to interrogate this closure in order to articulate a specific kind of subaltern — deriving from this closure. We will call that *strategic essentialism*, which derives from an exogenous closure to a postmodern overdetermined system. Dominance-subordination relation following from this closure will be captured in terms of mimicry of overdetermination.

II. Spivak Disinterred

In view of the length and complexity of arguments involved in Spivak's essay, it might be helpful to provide a brief sketch of Spivak's argument and fix the terrain of our exploration into it. Spivak does pit Derrida against Foucault as she asks the question: can the subaltern speak?[14] Spivak deploys Derrida to build up a position for the South/East[15]. Spivak's arguments work through three distinct levels which intersect, reinforce, and compensate for one another.

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[14] It is interesting to note that Spivak (1988) also critiques Foucault on the ground that the latter's move to push the frontiers of Reason by way of internalization of the margin serves in the final analysis to fulfill the imperialist project of appropriating *subaltern*. However, we have more to say: this appropriation simultaneously displaces a subset of *subaltern*. One section of *subaltern* gets highlighted pushing the rest deeper into darkness and oblivion.

[15] Spivak, of course, like others, is oblivious of any possibility of the other of others — the outside of a constructed (fissured, sutured) postmodern totality that we want to posit and elaborate here.

1. The agent representing South/East — whom she calls *subaltern*, understood in the essentialist sense of the term (as a thing/a human being of flesh and blood) — cannot speak, for, her/his speech will be either appropriated or not heard by the elite. Spivak cites one instance where the subaltern does speak that falls into the void (as Lyotard's *differend* does) because people do not give ears to her voice.

2. Spivak then invokes Derrida to define the subaltern subject position as the blank space in the elite's text (its inner inaudible voice made louder). In this context she pits Derrida against Foucault and Delueze-Guattari, upbraids the latter with the charge of fulfilling with the imperialist design to appropriate (colonize) the mind of people living on the margin.

3. Lastly, she deploys the deconstructive moves of Derrida to re-formulate the propositions from Subaltern Studies in a non-essentialist frame.

Here we will be dealing with only the second and third parts of her arguments. In particular, we ask, whether the reconstruction (deconstruction) of the subaltern subject position as distinct from an essentialist notion of the subaltern as the subject of history serves any useful purpose or stumble into the traps laid out by the *wholist* elitist project that suppresses the differences within the subaltern. In this context, we bring out the linkage between Spivak's theoretical position (the subaltern as a subject position) and her moral stance (complicity of the Western mind vis-à-vis the *third world*). Now about the details of Spivak's argument.

In the current renditions on subaltern-elite power relations, subaltern and its subject position are considered as essentialist concepts operating in an autonomous (vis-à-vis the elite) domain. It is essentialist in the sense that its consciousness continues to operate as an independent phenomenon: *in pure form*. It understands the category of subaltern as a *thing-in-itself* (in RW's terms, as a *noun*) and its subject position as emanating from the autonomous domain of subaltern (reflecting the pure subaltern consciousness residing in that domain). Here their relationships are constituted by the pure form of language (vis-à-vis the elite) prevailing in that domain.

Spivak redefines subaltern as an *identity in differential*, as a name for the discursive space that she attempts to describe, and builds her basic theoretical position pitting Foucault and Deleuze-Guattari against Derrida. She prefers Derrida's 'mechanics of the constitution of the other' to Foucault's 'invocations of the authenticity of the other'.

Foucault and Delueze-Guattari reify power and desire respectively and hence their argument remains, in Spivak's opinion, essentialist. They let the oppressed (subalterns) speak for themselves. Their theory calls for a non-representational theory: the role of the intellectuals is to report the encounters of the oppressed, that is, to appropriate the margin within discourse and thereby extend the gaze of discourse on it.

Spivak contends that Foucault lets the oppressed speak for themselves by posing their non-representational theory as constructed from a subject position of the West, as a part of its imperialist project. Here the West recognizes the other — but as a part of the Western knowledge production that is in compliance with the Western imperialist project. The object of this ethnocentrism is to produce such an other that the inside (and its subject position too) gets consolidated. In other words, Foucault and Delueze-Guattari posit an other only to *assimilate it in the guise of non-representation.* Spivak's basic position is to resist such an assimilation of the *subaltern.*

Invoking Derrida's idea of the 'mechanics of the constitution of the other', she calls for a 'benevolent Western intellectual'. One who can 'keep the ethnocentric subject from establishing itself by selectively defining an other'— done by presupposing a text inscribed with blankness where the thought as the blank part of the text is that of the other (subaltern). The other is a quiet other that cannot speak for itself since it constitutes the blank part of the text, the delirious interior voice of the elite. Spivak recommends and adopts this solution of Derrida (of demoting the subject) to the ethnocentric problem. She deploys this theoretical technique of constituting the other to transform the essentialist arguments of some of the current studies on power relations as examples of affirmative deconstruction.

> To render thought or thinking subject transparent or invisible seems, by contrast, to hide the relentless recognition of the other by assimilation. (1988, 294)

Spivak's critique of Foucault is that since the subaltern thought forms the blank part of the text, it cannot speak as a thing; it has to be represented discursively. Spivak poses this representational politics against the non-representational politics of Foucault and Delueze-Guattari. This difference between Spivak and her detractors takes a moral dimension as well. As Spivak notes:

> The question is how to keep the ethnocentric subject from establishing itself by selectively defining an other. This is not a program for the subject as such; rather it is a program for the benevolent Western intellectual. For those of us who feel that 'subject' has a history and that the task of the first-world subject of knowledge in our historical moment is to resist and critique 'recognition' of the third world through 'assimilation', this specificity is crucial. (1988, 294)

Spivak charges Western intellectuals like Foucault with complicity. In the third world, the word used as the other of *complicity in the West* is *collaboration.* The post-colonial studies are replete with stories of how the elite, projecting themselves as liberators, turned out to be collaborators of the West. For example, the term 'comprador bourgeoisie' — a person collaborating with the West — is commonplace in the Indian Marxist jargon.

The concept of collaboration is used as a political weapon whose strength stems from the moral connotation it carries with its deployment. The collaboration of the third world (intellectuals) along with the complicity of the first world intellectuals is seen as a morally *bad* position to take. The morally *good* position is the one where this complicity and collaboration are abandoned. Both the groups — one who indulges in complicity and the other who collaborates — are charged with participating in, directly and indirectly, the imperialist project of the West. The morally bad position stems from the fact that the imperialist project constitutes and reproduces itself through force and domination. Participation in such a project is a position supporting such a force and domination.[16]

Before we move on, some word should be spent on describing Spivak's characterization of *subaltern* as a discursive name. For the subordinate sector Spivak recommends that the current studies on power relations (Subaltern Studies, for instance) deploy the subaltern subject strategically, rather than as a part of some 'authoritative truth of the text', 'caught in the game of knowledge as power'. Why in the historiography the subaltern is considered as a strategy rather than as 'the establishment of an inalienable and final truth of things?' Spivak asks.

The Subaltern Studies School, the particular lineage that Spivak refers to, basically charts out the failure of the subaltern consciousness and therefore the subaltern to 'become' (in the positive sense). The subaltern and the subaltern consciousness are located positively (that is, ideally) only to be rejected as an impossibility. This can only be operated through empirical examples, as the Subaltern Studies School does. This is close to affirmative deconstruction since it charts out the failure of the ideal to become. If a 'continuous sign system' is their object of study, then action lies in the disruption of that object. In this field of action — a state of crisis or change — the functional change in the sign system is always constituted by a lack of the signified — subaltern consciousness. So the subaltern and the subaltern consciousness cannot be the object of study. Subaltern is a plane of historiography. It has got to be a theoretical fiction. Spivak provides two reasons for why she does not consider the subaltern consciousness a functional one and therefore not as '...the ground that makes all disclosures possible'. The first reason is that she does not see the subaltern consciousness as a ground of theory or some univocal 'reflection or signification theory'. Rather she understands the negative consciousness of the subaltern as a methodological presupposition of the group that is engaged in the study. This negative consciousness is a consciousness that is transformative, historical and that arises out of the image of the elite (henceforth the negative connotation attached with this term). In other words, the subaltern consciousness appears as the mirror image of the elite consciousness, that is a product of the thought process of the elite and read out of the elite domain. The true subaltern consciousness is never recovered and never found because the subaltern cannot speak.

It is recovered in so far as it is read out of the elite thought, but, then and there it disappears. Here The trace of the origin is of importance and not the element itself. The true subaltern is a theoretical fiction, a neutral name, or as Spivak quotes from Derrida, "...thought (subaltern consciousness) is the blank part of the text". Subaltern consciousness forms the blank part, the part that remains silent. Since the subaltern and subaltern consciousness are not fully recoverable, the true subalternity cannot be posited (in reality); it is only a part of the theoretical fiction. Note that Spivak is not saying that the subaltern cannot speak in a literal and simple sense. Of course, the

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[16] The burden of the fear of this complicity and collaboration is evident in the writing like those of Lazarus (1990) and Rooney (1990).

subaltern speaks out but never to be heard. Their voice is appropriated by the elite domain. The peasant speaks out through insurgency but we never hear their viewpoint of this struggle. The voice of the subaltern is appropriated and consumed up by the elite metanarratives. It is in this sense that the subaltern cannot speak.

The second point relates to the fact that subaltern consciousness cannot be grounded positively, because, as Spivak argues, the category of subaltern is ambiguous. Spivak mentions the dominant indigenous groups at regional and local levels existing in between the elite and the people as an antre (in between) of situational indeterminacy. This category belongs ideally to the subaltern; but in 'reality', this group is neither in the elite nor in the subaltern. This group floats from area to area, siding with the elite and the subaltern in different time and context. Its position becomes ambiguous and contradictory. But this group ideally belongs to the subaltern and therefore carries its ambiguous nature to the ideal category of subaltern itself.

Therefore, the category of subaltern becomes ambiguous. The object of study cannot be the true subaltern but this *difference* from the ideal. The argument that one cannot posit subaltern as a definite autonomous category goes against the grain of Subaltern Studies School. Note: Spivak rejects the existence of an autonomous ontological domain but not that of subaltern as an ideal (epistemological) concept. The point that Spivak makes is that subaltern as an ideal exists but it cannot be captured by concrete flesh and blood. Subaltern as an ideal only exists as part of a theoretical element of text. That is, subaltern exists as a noun but is constituted by theory. It is a *noun in fiction*.

This description of subaltern completes our exegesis of Spivak. We have developed the theoretical tools used to build up the category of subaltern as a noun in fiction that cannot know and speak. The statement does not intend to imply the tautology that this subaltern cannot speak because its speaking would automatically invoke a false transparency. No discourse can speak in that general sense. But that the space of the subaltern is so displaced that it finds no space to situate itself.

> To the extent the subaltern is the name of the place which is so displaced that to have it speak is like Godot arriving on a bus. (Spivak 1995, 91)

The subaltern can only (or at best) be a discursive category — it is a name for a certain kind of discursive space.

> There is a space in post-imperialist arenas that is displaced from empire-nation exchanges. Where the 'emancipated bourgeoisie', 'organized labor', 'organized left movements', 'urban radicalism', disenfranchised 'women's arena', (these words are all used in quotes), all of this is constituted within that empire-nation exchange, reversing it in many different kinds of ways. But in post-imperialist societies there is a vast arena which is not necessarily accessible to that kind of exchange. It is that space that one calls subaltern. (1995, 90-1)

Spivak, thus, articulates *south/east* as a discursive space detaching it from its inscription within an essentialist paradigm.

III. Spivak versus Resnick-Wolff

We appreciate Spivak's gesture (patriotism) to save an academic movement in her homeland (India) from slipping into (what many people think) a disgrace (essentialism) by thrusting into it a fresh lease of postmodernist blood. But we are skeptical about the efficacy of *subaltern* as the strategic discursive category in the postmodern space speaking out on behalf of the subjugated (in) the third world. We believe that Spivak's move to re-instate the *subaltern* in a postmodern space may, to some extent, block parallel moves to detach some of the Marxian categories (such as the working class) from their current inscriptions within an essentialist discourse, which, in turn, might make way for a discursive space for what we call *third world*.

Our discussion will center around the conceptualization of 'working class' and 'capitalist class' as subject positions from within a non-essentialist framework. The objective is two-fold:

  i. to give a voice to the subaltern via *working class*; and
  ii. to build a concrete space for center and margins from a non-essentialist standpoint such that we can begin the process of articulating a space for the outside — *third world* — which is the object of analysis of this book.

It is in this context that we invoke RW. RW's position, as described in *Knowledge and Class*, is more than its worth in gold. This point needs to be hammered home that *Knowledge and Class* represents the greatest intervention in the Marxian discourse during the last quarter of a century.

Let us first quickly state the story as narrated by RW. We will then see what the deceptive simplicity of their style of writing hides.

Overdetermination, contradiction and entry-point: these are the three key concepts that mark the nodal points of RW's intervention in Marxian discourse. Marx never used the concept of overdetermination, Freud thought of it, Althusser imported it into Marxian discourse, and his disciples postmodernized it. And RW added surplus meanings to those that flow from this concept of overdetermination and the other new and fresh categories woven into the system of RW.

> To say that theory is an overdetermined process in society is to say that its existence, including all its properties and qualities, is determined by each and every other process constituting that society. Theory is the complex effect produced by the interaction of all those processes. (Page 2)

Overdetermination makes one think of processes that mutually constitute and determine — affect — each other, none of which is the ultimate cause, origin or essence for the others. RW even resisted any ranking of explanatory importance. By *contradiction* they mean

> …the tensions and conflicts produced by different directions that inevitably characterize any overdetermined process, that is, any process understood as the site of interaction of all other processes. (Page 5)

For instance, *individual* is a site of location of *plural*, that is, a site of divergences: the *economic* (he works in a factory); the *political* (he is a voter); the *religious* (he has faith in Jesus); and so on. In short, he occupies many subject positions that work in different directions producing tensions and conflicts in him and in society. What is

he, the individual? A worker? A voter? A Christian? A husband? A white man? How could one ever take a position?

The notion of *entry-point* informs the answer of RW. We all have to start somewhere to break the hermeneutic circle. Some may choose power as an entry-point, others utility. With a nod to Marx they choose *class* as an *entry-point*.

> Class as an economic concept is an entry-point and focus — not an essence for — Marxian theory and the knowledge it produces. (Page 50)

We will see later (in section V) that Richard Wolff modifies this essence: class is an essence that is provisional and contingent. But these details are unimportant for our present purposes. What is important that the concept of *entry-point* — here, class — brings *closure* to an otherwise ever-open overdetermined system. Class is a critical theorists' way of looking at and analyzing the process of production, appropriation and distribution of surplus labor.

So, for RW, class is an adjective, and not a noun. It is not a *subject-position*, but signals a *position* taken up by the critical theorists in order to abstract from the multiplicity of process. It does not imply even interpellating a working class position, and move by an *as-if* — surrogate subject. What is at stake here is not the question whether one can do practice from a surrogate subject position. The question is: can working class be the position of a viewer (though not of a voyeur)? Can the critical theorist view society, and speak from this position, forgetting the rest of plural and conflictual instances? Is working class as a position of a viewer possible? Can working class be a discursive gaze?

If anything, RW show the possibility of *working class*, as a *gaze* of the critical theorist. This position is a timely retort to that offered by LM which has gained currency during the last two decades: *impossibility of working class*. Let us have a very quick glance over this position, leaving out — deferring — the details of LM to be taken up in the following chapter.

Impossibility of working class means its impossibility as a subject position. This proposition derives from the premise that the *working class* as a subject position carries the metaphoric surpluses of the other subject positions. For instance, our writing of this book — it is a quasi-academic intellectual project. But, simultaneously and as a parallel move, it announces a political — quasi-nationalist — project: to rehabilitate *third world*. As these two projects intersect reinforce and compensate for each other, they simultaneously negate, negotiate with and neutralize each other. So, what are we writing? A book or a manifesto? Such doubts mar and destabilize our subject position as an author. One might as well announce the impossibility of the author. Impossibility of working class is a variant of such a position.

It is the merit of RW that they change the way we were used to ask questions. What is at issue is not the possibility of having a specific subject position, but of a specific kind of subaltern position as a discursive gaze: that of working class.

IV. Can the Sa*v*age Speak?

On Resnick and Wolff's scheme, then, *working class* is a name for a discursive space that one can define and describe as what it is and what it is not, in terms of what it includes, excludes, and the space of its interrelationship with other categories. And one can discursively situate this working class because it is not only a name but a context specific name; working class is a

process related to the generation of surplus labor. Surplus labor, in turn, is discursively defined through the Marxian analysis of value and abstract labor. *Overdetermination* as the epistemological entry-point concept establishes the concrete site of the working class as overdetermined by manifold other labels (race/gender/caste). Thus, it is possible to speak from a working class standpoint.

Spivak, too, is keenly aware of the exigencies of contexts, but she does not name (define, describe, locate) them while dealing with subaltern space. And that entails a whole range of problems. Is *subaltern* the name for a discursive space because subaltern is not a thing (a noun) but a standpoint (an adjective)? Or, because it is something parallel to the Kantian *thing-in-itself* that can be known only through discursive practices (as in Lyotard, or, in Laclau and Mouffe) giving it plural divergent and often conflictual (or symbolic) forms? While appreciating the importance of exploring this question, we would like to abstract away from the second way of positing the subaltern because the very act of positing it immediately (that is epistemologically) distances us from Spivak. Our epistemological presupposition is that working class is not a thing (a noun) to be known via discourses, but a discursive stance (an adjective). We will therefore like to interpret Spivak's subaltern space as an adjective, a standpoint. But Spivak's subaltern as such recalls the sense of a wholist project: an umbrella word epitomizing all kinds of specific subaltern positions. As such it defies differences, at least defers them for further analysis; we eagerly wait to see how she specifies the subaltern space. It is important to stress that without such sub-classifications, the subaltern view would represent only one view of the world implying its other — the elitist view.

Even Laclau and Mouffe (1985), who posit working class as a noun (albeit a symbolic noun) are aware that dominance or oppression (elitism) does not immediately imply its other — subordination (subalternity); it is a moral position which itself may be overdetermined by elitism. As Laclau-Mouffe observe:

> We enter here onto a terrain...which has ended by establishing a synonymity between 'subordination', 'oppression' and 'domination'… But if we reject this essentialist perspective, we need to differentiate 'subordination', 'oppression' and explain the precise conditions in which subordination becomes oppressive… The problem is, therefore, to explain how relations of oppression are constituted out of relations of subordination. (1985,153-4)

The elite can subordinate the other only by constituting, on the plane of morality, the notion of subaltern. Resistance includes fighting, among others, elitist moral positions which might imbricate the notion of subaltern itself.

Though we have not stated it (in order not to confuse the reader about Spivak's position and keep her argument as unified as possible) till now, it is not crystal clear how Spivak defines the subaltern space. There seems to be two contradictory currents (one in the 1988 article and the other in the 1995 article) in

Spivak's description of subaltern. These contradictory currents make Spivak's subaltern space problematic by producing a contradiction in Spivak's description of subaltern when it comes to the question of inclusion or exclusion of working class within the subaltern category. Let us explain this important point. On the one hand, using Derrida, she describes the category of subaltern as that 'quite other' (as opposed to the self-consolidating other) that renders

> ...delirious that interior voice that is the voice of the other in us. (1988, 294)[17]

On the other hand, the contradictory current in Spivak can be demonstrated by remembering, once again, in a fuller length, the quotation from Spivak that we have already used in our section II of this chapter.

> Derrida is not my prophet. I'm not talking Derrida, I'm talking about the introduction to the first volume of Ranajit Guha's Subaltern Studies where he is making an analysis of how a colonial society is structured, and what space can be spoken of as the subaltern space. There is a space in post-imperialist arenas that is displaced from empire-nation exchanges. Where the 'emancipated bourgeoisie', 'organized labor', 'organized left movements', 'urban radicalism', disenfranchised 'women's arena', (these words are all used in quotes), all of this is constituted within that empire-nation exchange, reversing it in many different kinds of ways. But in post-imperialist societies there is a vast arena which is not necessarily accessible to that kind of exchange. It is that space that one calls subaltern. (1995, 90-1)

Therefore, we see that Spivak defines subaltern space as the other of (within) that deriving from empire-nation exchange. One then, first of all, needs to specify the categories deriving from empire-nation exchanges, their field of articulation, how they reproduce and sustain themselves, and their limits in order to mark out subaltern space as the other of this field. We are likely to stumble here into the traps laid out by empiricism, because categories deriving from empire-nation exchanges themselves are so displaced that they require theoretical labor to recognize them. The first definition, however, contradicts the above description. There, if subaltern space is viewed as one flowing from the inner voice of the other within the West, then it should include, among others, some of the categories deriving from empire-nation exchanges too. Marx's working class position can be interpreted as recording one of such voices. This stance conforms to some mainline Marxist positions, such as that of Lenin who interprets Marxism as the synthesis of English classical political economy, French socialist thought, and the German philosophical tradition. If we define subaltern as the outside of empire-nation exchanges then it excludes working class because the later is obviously a legacy (heritage) of empire-nation exchanges. On the other hand, if subaltern is defined as the inner voice of the other within the West, then it should include working class as a subaltern. A contradiction.

Let us therefore combine (synthesize) Spivak's two apparently contradictory positions into one in order to redefine a subaltern space: subaltern space is the inner voice within the West transgressing itself onto the shadowy terrain of the other, deriving from empire-nation exchanges. In other words, the West overflows — albeit its inner voice turning on itself, the rebellious other within it — into the unknown to

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[17] By us, Derrida implies the West.

meet its comrades outside in that eternal dusk where all cats are gray and all men are savages.

As we noted, the categories within the empire-nation exchange description of subaltern themselves might be displaced, they need to be located specifically. This must intersect with the description of subaltern "as the inner voice of the West" in order to re-articulate the space of subaltern. Only that intersection (subaltern) space can include working class as a discursive standpoint. Subsequently, however, the term subaltern then becomes problematic as a concept. It belongs to the center (working class), margin and a possible outside that we will construct. It is everywhere, that is, nowhere. The term becomes so general that its usage loses its bite and its meaning lapses into vacuity. If, for example, one can carve out concrete spaces for center, margin and outside from a reading of *Capital*, then why bother with the general and abstract category of subaltern. Similar concrete spaces could be created from, say, gender or caste analysis.

In this context, let us address the issue of complicity of Western intellectuals that Spivak talks about. It is important to stress that we are dealing here with an intersection space between the West (its interior voice or margins) and its outside (other of empire-nation exchange). Therefore, it is only to be expected that the subjects in both space will participate on the project to reconstitute the subaltern space; some will do it better than others. The charge of complicity or collaboration has the harmful effect of foreclosing this space of intersection as the object of study.

We, on the contrary, hold that this complicity is a serious question — a sociologist's and philosopher's question. And it must be resolved on the terrain of theory. What does complicity, or, for that matter, its other, collaboration by third world intellectuals mean? Quietly, surreptitiously, straits of essentialism (that die hard) creep into the heart of Spivak's analysis: the non-West has (had) a pure body and soul maligned (raped) by the West. Late in the twentieth century this view is hard for us to accept. We are living in a world — a global system — where everything is overdetermining and being overdetermined by everything else: the West by the non-West, the modern by the non-modern, capital by non-capital and vice versa. The non-West is already West, determining and constituting its other, the West itself. The West is everywhere and so is the third world. Like Spivak's subaltern, the third world is so displaced that one cannot carve out a place for it in the world map. It can only be a discursive space whose precise nature needs to be theoretically elaborated by us — the disciples of Marx world-wide — because Marx did not do it as he did it for working class. The received concept of an empirical 'third world' must perish in order that we can build up a discursive space for the third that is neither the North nor the South, neither the West nor the East — let us name it *third world*.[18]

We are reluctant to mix up moral issues pitting Derrida against Foucault on the terrain of morality that itself first needs to be interrogated. Spivak's moral stance might backfire on us in the worst sort of ways: producing and sustaining a group of intellectuals thriving on (blackmailing) the good West's sense of guilt, displacing (and suppressing) us, the third kids of the third world? What is at issue is the precise nature of this global system articulating the modern and the non-modern as its moments overdetermining one another. While the ruling order would like it to evolve

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[18]From now on when we talk about *third world* in our framework, we imply the world of the third or the *margin of margin*.

in certain specified ways, we Marxists could offer competing perspectives to shape it differently. It is in this context that Foucault, Derrida, and others become relevant for us; we examine whether, in what ways, and how far their insights can be put to productive use to produce this discursive space for the world of the third — *third world*.

One might argue, as Spivak does, that Derrida promises richer insight than Foucault whose strategy, like many of its counterparts offered by the third world intellectuals, would only strengthen the hegemonies of discourses. Others might hold a contrary opinion. The question needs to be resolved on the terrain of a theory that does not imbricate race, color, geographical sites or moral issues. To produce and sustain a Marxist discourse that includes the world of the third (as distinct from the received concept of the third world) as a discursive space in the context of late twentieth century world capitalism: this, and not ethnic morality, animates us.

We are beginning to realize the consequences of this moral stance: occlusion of the world of the third from the postmodernist discourse. Kalyan Sanyal (1995) talks about two kinds of moral positions on the part of western intellectuals occluding the third world from the postmodernist discourse: sanctioned ignorance (third worldism is not our cup of tea, after all), benign indifference (who are we to talk about their problems). Perhaps we can add another to the list: third world arrogance (who are you to talk about our problems).

Consequently, a section of the intellectuals in the dark continents intimately connected with the West usurp the right to speak for the so-called third world people in the West, working as intermediaries or perhaps priests, mediating between Gods (the West) and the plebeian (the populace in the dark continents). Implicit within this is a particular political strategy: a forced unity within the so-called third world vis-à-vis (opposed to) the West, ruling out alternative possibilities of global alignment (a section of the third world people being united with selective groups in the West) or new international. The label (libel) of complicity blocks the West, and that of collaboration stops the willing third world. Therefore Spivak with her implicit third worldism bears the marks of a violence (a murder): the theoretical stance stifles a political strategy that seeks realignment of people on a global scale bypassing the intermediaries, the pimps, the priests, and the mediators, laying to absolute rest the legacy of Hegelianism: mediation. Perhaps that constitutes the message of overdetermination in the context of contemporary global capitalism: different groups can (do) constitute and determine one another on a global scale. It is wrong to adopt the moral stance that 'who are you to talk about our problems, for 'we' and 'you' resist strict separation: 'you' constitute 'we' and 'we' constitute 'you'. If we must situate us, we have to situate 'us' in a space overdetermined by 'them' and 'us'.

If some variant of essentialism is destiny, *We* can imagine that essentialism only in an overdetermined context, as a discursive device. Let us call it *strategic essentialism*. Thus said, Resnick-Wolff are spokesmen of strategic essentialism.

Something akin to strategic essentialism is also evident in Spivak, but only in an untheorized, and sometimes, unconscious form, in an ad-hoc way. Therefore, one finds her oscillating like a pendulum between the two poles of deconstruction and essentialism: some deconstruction here, some essentialism there, and most often deploying a combine of both. She never comes up with a theoretical device to fit in

her brand of essentialism-n-deconstruction. In short, she does not seem theoretically equipped enough to *negotiate differences* between deconstruction and essentialism.

This problem comes to the surface sharply in her revision of the position of 'Can the Subaltern Speak' as rendered in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999). There she comes off, explicitly and vocally, with the theoretical position of *native informant* who deploys deconstruction, among others, as a discursive device. And one is left in suspense (suspicion) as to who this native informant is, a category that Spivak never explains. As for us, we are still in search of *native* and his *nation*. All we know is the *local*, if you like, local-global, for the local is always already overdetermined by the global.

V. Re-entry of Hegel: Strategic Essentialism

It is in Richard Wolff (1996) that we find strategic essentialism in its theoretically nuanced form. Wolff posits, explicitly, the re-entry of Hegel into the neo-Althusserian framework. It is no longer the case that Hegel is the saint of essentialism and Althusser of anti-essentialism. Rather, the Hegel–Althusser combine produces a very special kind of bind between essentialism and overdetermination that allows for both the presence and absence of essentialism within the logic of overdetermination. Let us replay the basic argument of Wolff.

For the first time it is openly acknowledged that overdetermination has an essentialist component to its name. The *entry-point* concept — putting in place the object of analysis — is exogenously selected and, hence, essentialist. It is not the question of the selection being a discursive privilege (as against ontological privilege in essentialist analysis) that has been used so far to defend the anti-essentialism of entry-point within the overdeterminist logic. The question is that of a moment of explanation — the initial moment of explanation — that announces the connection of the object with its surroundings.

This initial moment creates its spacing by blocking other elements from entering into the discursive plane. The neo-Althusserians point to class as their entry-point concept that excludes other elements like gender, caste, etc from becoming the initial moment of explanation. This selection, even though exogenously posited, reflects a partisan standpoint for the neo-Althusserians. This is quite natural because, according to the neo-Althusserians, all theories have entry-points, and entry-points, by definition, announce the partisan standpoint of the participant.

Thus, this exogenously given partisan standpoint is acknowledged and accounted for in the neo-Althusserian framework. This is unlike the essentialist mode of analysis where such partisanship is not acknowledged — thereby rendering all explanations under its rubric as naturally true and the rest as false.

Despite the aspect of accountability of the entry-point concept within the neo-Althusserian framework, the fact remains that this initial moment of explanation is not explained or theorized or produced as part of the logic or process of overdeterminist mode of explanation, and is hence essentialist.

However, just after the explanation, at the very next moment, the initial essentialist moment dissolves itself since the other blocked elements now show up in another moment of constitution that transforms the very initial moment from its posited truism to falsity. We can say that the explanation becomes class-focused but no longer class-specific.

Overdeterminist explanation is then a sequence of moments where the essentialist point of reference, via its relation with other entities, is converted into this series of contradictory moments. Each moment is true at a point in time and, via its contradictory movements, false at another point in time. This dialectical logic — overdetermination — generates this series of moments as both true and false in a coherent and divided manner.

Essentialism at one moment gives way to non-essentialism at all subsequent moments. In contrast, essentialist explanation is out and out essentialist from the originary point of explanation to its final point. The initial entry-point essentialist moment is projected as true throughout the analysis, and hence, the rest as false.

The dialectics of contradictory movements of moments in the overdeterminist logic of explanation may be construed in terms of the Hegelian logic. Wolff does not argue exactly in this manner. But, we believe that our approach is the precise formulation of his point. Recall the Hegelian concept of determinate being with its:

i.   Reality (*being-by-self*)
ii. Negation (*being-for-another*)

Entry-point concept of class/surplus-labor sets the reality albeit overdetermined within itself. The rest is its negation — entry-point setting the limit for other elements by blocking and suppressing their entry into the discursive stage. However, over time, as we have explained earlier, being-by-self (the entry-point element) and being-for-another (the excluded elements), via their mutual constitutivity, give way to a higher unity.

The unity of being-for-self that as a differently new element can be treated as a new being-by-self and is involved in a new constitutivity relation with its condition of existents or beings-for-another and… ad infinitum. This sequential movement of an initially exogenously posited determinate being through a dialectical relation of contradiction captured by mutual constitutivity between the being-by-self and being-for-another is nothing but the overdeterminist logic of explanation.

Overdetermination can be understood not in terms of Hegelian dialectics and contradiction involving telos, rational order and supersession but, rather, as the contradictory movement of moments involving the dialectical play of being-by-self and being-for-another at the level of Hegelian logic. So Hegel is back, right into the game of the civilized discourse. No longer as the exorcised but as the exorciser of all that which was wrongly attributed in his name. At a certain level, the turbulent relation between Marx and Hegel is, in fact, secured and lasting.

And yet we are not satisfied.

VI. Limits of a Closure: Mimicry of Overdetermination

To begin with, let us go back to the first principle: entry-point setting the limit. Our intervention shows: this limit is ambiguous and includes a twilight zone. This limit shuts the door, but, that door does have cracks and fissures.

At the definitional level, this limit blocks other elements from showing up. Thus, the entry-point of class refers to the production, appropriation, distribution and

receipt of surplus-labor which has nothing to do with either wage-labor or commodity. Capital implies production of surplus value with equal exchange and does not require any other conceptual entity to hold it up. Similarly, commodity is defined only in terms of abstract labor — presupposed on equal exchange of labor-power.

Thus, conceptually, class is distinct from commodity and capital — capital is distinct from commodity — and so on. These concepts are unambiguously produced in the neo-Althusserian framework that goes in perfect harmony with the spirit and content of Hegelian logic.

The basic point we intend to make is very simple: the entry-point concept, *class*, closes the ambiguities of the concepts as much as it discloses them — on different planes and in new directions. Consider a discursive site: *individual*. It is a location of contradictory processes: economic (the individual works in a factory); political (he is a voter); cultural (he writes novels). As such, *individual* is an ambiguous category. We have noted this in Chapter Two.

Class as an entry-point concept closes these ambiguities. One is viewing the individual from a definite standpoint — that of *production, appropriation and distribution of surplus-labor*. Not only that. It also helps the critical theorist to resolve the theoretical problems produced by *antagonisms* in the subject position in the Laclau-Mouffe sense of the term. Recall what antagonism is: a subject position containing *metaphoric surpluses* of other subject positions. The concept of entry-point helps a critical theorist to abstract from the metaphoric surpluses in order to focus upon a single instance of a subject position. So, the critical theorist obtains a *gaze*, a *class gaze*. We have already noted this point in section III.

But the entry-point concept — class — can concurrently invite — produce — antagonism on a new plane: what class position the critical theorist is talking about? Does not a specific class position carry the metaphoric surpluses of other class positions?

Consider an individual himself producing and appropriating the surplus-labor. In other words, we are considering a self-exploitative producer in the Resnick-Wolff sense of the term. Now imagine this self-exploitative producer in a market economy. It might quite happen that the surplus-labor ѕhe produces would just vanish from her/his account and get concentrated in the hands of the capitalist class through the market mechanism.

What is ѕhe then? A self-exploitative producer? Or, a wage-laborer? His class position as a self-exploitative producer will then carry the metaphoric — more accurately, metonymic — surpluses of another class position — that of working class. Silently and surreptitiously, *antagonisms* (in the Laclau-Mouffe sense) creep into Resnick-Wolff's discourse. The closure that Resnick and Wolff insert shows cracks and fissures.

The important point to note is that an entry-point concept — here, class — is not neutral to the elements of the system. It privileges a few elements of the system, while downplays some others. Resultantly, what emerges is a hierarchical system where some concepts dominate over the rest.

For instance, working class is the entry-point concept in Resnick-Wolff's conceptualization of Marxism in the context of an overdetermined system comprised by the economic, the political and the cultural. Class as an entry-point concept helps us to focus on the instance of the economic from the standpoint of production, appropriation and distribution of surplus labor, while keeping in view the constitutive influences of the political and the cultural on them. On the other hand, the economic itself emerges as an overdetermined system of plural class processes such as the class

process in a capitalist economic and those in the other kinds of the economic that include, among others, self-exploitative class process and communistic class process.

The key point we want to make is that class as the entry point privileges, as a concept, working class in a capitalist economic in that the surplus labor in a capitalist economic only has an explicit measure. Surplus labor in a capitalist economic acquires the form of surplus value that can be measured in as much as labor here becomes equal and homogeneous, in short, abstract. Labor in no other economic, as far as we know, has a measure, at least an explicit measure.

The rest of the economic, thus get inflected by the measure of labor in the capitalist economic. To put it in a different way, capitalist class process constitutes the other class processes through its metonym, the measure of its labor — in short, through money. Different kinds of labors now get ranked in terms of this measure. It affects all, including affective labor. Silently, surreptitiously, this measure enters into the household and values its labor, that is, devalues it, compared with labors engaging in high-paying concerns outside, in the market economy. This process is irresistible.

The rest of the economic has no such metonyms that can include and subvert the capitalist economic. A capitalist class system only appropriates their metaphors. The metaphors of self-exploitative labor and communistic labor are invoked, glorified and productively used by a capitalist system to enhance its laborer's efficiency.

What is at issue here is the moment of asymmetry involved in the processes of mutual constitutivity of the different instances of an overdetermined system. The entry point concept serves as a nodal point that structures the floating signifiers in an overdetermined system. But it turns out that the structuring process is such that a few signifiers get privileged and can dominate over the rest, reducing overdetermination to its mimicry. Mimicry of overdetermination, then, is a phenomenon of hegemony or dominance in the context of overdetermination.

While Richard Wolff builds his concept *strategic essentialism* (essentialist closure to an overdetermined field) on the Hegelian notion of *determinate being*, our idea of mimicry of overdetermination is predicated on the possibility of existence of plural determinate beings within an overdetermined field. In Hegel's scheme, *determinate being* is a finite entity that is determined by what it is — its *reality* — and what it is not, its *negation*. We conceptualize an overdetermined field as an overdetermined unity of such plural and conflictual determinate beings. Different subspaces within an overdetermined space lend themselves to be imaged in the metaphors of determinate being.

Now imagine two subspaces A and B. Subspace A understands itself in terms of what it is and also in terms of what it is not, that is, in relation to its difference from B. Now, one might imagine a situation where a conflation occurs between differences from B and the metonymic surpluses of its reality. In this case, constitutive impact of B on A remains unrecognized by A, and A suffers from a false consciousness. On the other hand, if B receives the surplus meanings of the reality of A in their metaphorical forms, then that is readily recognizable. Under this circumstance B suffers from no such false consciousness. We conceptualize such a scene in terms of hegemony of B on A.

We capture such phenomena of hegemony of one space over the other in terms of the concept of mimicry of overdetermination.

So, mimicry of overdetermination occurs if there exists a subspace, within an overdetermined field provisionally closed by some entry-point concept or hegemonic rule, where the mutual constitution relapses and is relegated to unidirectional determination. The play of *equivalence* in *differences* gives way to hierarchy in dif-

ferences. One element in this subspace lies on top of its other in the true sense of a dominant concept or entity.

It is important to stress that we are not ontologizing this dominance of one element over its other. It depends on a particular and contingent set of circumstances. It presumes a discursive closure (either by some entry-point concept or a hegemonic nodal point) done upon an overdetermined field leading to what one might call *strategic essentialism.*

Richard Wolff (1996), among others, talks about such strategic essentialism. In his scheme, the entry-point concept that brings about this closure is not subject to the law of overdetermination. As such, this discursive closure signifies a strategic compromise with the idea of essentialism.

But it turns out that in this scheme laid out by Resnick and Wolff, this element that closes an overdetermined field (be that an entry-point concept or a hegemonic nodal point) does not remain neutral to the rest of the system. It privileges a few signifiers or sites and plays down some others. Resultantly, a subspace might emerge where the played-up and downplayed elements/sites confront each other in a hierarchical order leading to a play of mimicry of overdetermination.

At this point, we should qualify the rather loose representation of the mimicry of overdetermination we rendered earlier: mimicry of overdetermination = overdetermination + hegemony (dominance). There is no doubt that the mimicry of overdetermination derives from a hegemonic closure, but its effect does surpass the limit of the usual meanings associated with hegemony. Mimicry of overdetermination often signifies a dominance not necessarily matched by a corresponding consent. Hegemony, on the contrary, presumes consent. But mimicry of overdetermination is a phenomenon that happens irrespective of the consent of agents. It is an irony that consent at one point might invite dominance at some other point. The concept of mimicry of overdetermination signifies, among others, such kinds of dominance too.

The motivation behind the articulation of the mimicry of overdetermination is the compelling urgency to pinpoint the complicity among theory, vision and power within the domains of postmodern radical thinking itself. While the concept (world-view) of overdetermination has liberated human perceptual apparatus from chains of a whole range totalitarian essentialist engagements, it has served to usurp from conscious humanity the means to distinguish among good, bad and ugly *as if everything goes and is reciprocated.* On the contrary, essentialism has a ready answer to the question — what is morally bad: it is morally bad to deny or deprive of someone her/his essence. If the principle of *right* is the essence of bourgeois man (as in Hegel), then it is morally bad to take away or encroach upon her/his property that embodies her/his rights. A transgression upon right then demands legitimization. Transfers of property are thus premised on mutual consent expressed through a voluntary contract.

It is Marx's merit to pinpoint how human consent can sometimes stand over against itself. A worker enters into a wage contract with the capitalist class, voluntarily, out of his own choice and consent. Exploitation of the laborer (appropriation of the surplus labor by the capitalist class) that follows, as a consequence, is thus cloaked in the fairness of the equalitarian wage contract — a form of exploitation that he himself invites and sanctions by his own consent. The key-point to note is that the worker's consent here produces a subspace (the interior of the wage contract operative within the workshop) that brings forth effects in it turning over against him leaving little room for his further consent. One encounters here what might be called *sanctioned exploitation.*

Mimicry of overdetermination is clearly intended here as a counterpoint to this concept of sanctioned exploitation to highlight the moment of 'sanctioned colonization', 'sanctioned ignorance and forgetfulness', 'sanctioned exclusion' — or, the modality of power working through sanctions and lurking behind a hegemonic closure. It explores the interior of an overdetermined field where the law of overdetermination undergoes mutation through a whole lot of metaphoric and metonymic transformations, and sometimes even abrogates itself. In the context of overdetermination as the epistemological entry-point concept, mimicry of overdetermination signifies the counter-part of what it means to do violence to essence in an essentialist framework (that includes, among others, refined or sanctioned violence). Put it bluntly, it means refined postmodern brand of sanctioned violence.

Three
Synthetic Space in its *Sinthome*

I. Laclau-Mouffe but Not Quite

Resnick-Wolff have been faulted on two grounds. First, they are Marxists. Secondly, they talk about and in terms of categories of Marxian political economy. Though some variations of Marxism are tolerable in distinguished academic circles, Marxian political economy is not exactly in high fashion, particularly among the guardians of postcolonial studies. No big surprise, then, that RW's idea of strategic essentialism, that we discussed in our last chapter, has made little inroad in postcolonial studies, which happens to be the focus of this book.

But, some variant of strategic essentialism we do really really need — in order to take off. For, we will point to (and, maybe, stalk into) that uncanny moment of the wayward other that no discursive closure can close (we mean, shrug) off, that is, symptom. And then, aside, on the wayside, in the end, somewhere in the maze of death-traps that the Zone is — we get mom — no, we mean, Margin of Margin. *We build on strategic essentialism — that again does build on postmodernism.* Ours is a third-generation postmodernism (or, fourth-generation modernism) as you can see.

Therefore, we invoke Laclau-Mouffe, the other spokesmen of strategic essentialism, though they are not known exactly as such. While Spivak was busy in translating, introducing and explaining Derrida to American academia, LM wrote a whole book highlighting how — ~~inscribed~~ etched in the premise of postmodern openness, there is always a move for hegemonic closure so that practice in ~~society~~ is possible. That way, they unhook the Gramscian concept of *hegemony* from its essentialist engagements and re-articulate it to a postmodern problematic. Laclau-Mouffe are widely acclaimed in postmodern intellectual circles for this merit, though we can scarcely witness their names being referred to in postcolonial studies in Indian context. It is our belief that an acquaintance with and a productive use of LM would enrich such studies, for, they offer as well a theory of closure in a postmodern space. We assure those of our readers averse to Marxian political economy that LM, too, abjure the same and have been subjected to criticisms, from Marxist quarters, on this count. Their brand of social philosophy is called post-Marxism. LM's Marxian lineage is with Gramsci, whose idea of hegemony is the focal point of LM's discourse.

One usually understands the concept of hegemony in a Gramscian context, though it has a wider connotation in the Marxian discourse which we would ignore. Gramsci's concept of hegemony highlights how the ideas of the dominant section of society rule over the rest in the capitalist framework. Laclau and Mouffe critique Gramsci's concept of hegemony for its underpinnings in an essentialist paradigm of a closed modernist totality, disengage its essentialist mooring and rearticulate it to a non-essentialist problematic in order to point out how it brings about *closure* to such a system. Resultantly, we get a concept of hegemony of Laclau-Mouffe's own. Our

objective is to contest this Laclau-Mouffe's version of hegemony in order to make a discursive space for *third world*.

But, while dealing with Gramsci, we will not traverse Laclau-Mouffe's trajectory — we do not exactly share their reading of Gramsci. Our basic point of reservation is that Laclau-Mouffe do entirely miss the third-worldist connotation in Gramsci's rendition of *hegemony*. They fail to discover that he articulates it in the context of capital-precapital intercourse as well. Gramsci narrates this scenario in terms of a new concept — *passive revolution* — which, in our opinion, encapsulates the entire concept of hegemony. This *passive revolution* is our very own point of departure in reading Gramsci and in our construction of a critique of Gramsci's version of passive revolution. A concept that we want to reframe and re-narrate in an altogether different kind of setting — the postmodern postcolonial one.

The basic charge we level against Gramsci is the same as that in Laclau and Mouffe: *essentialism*.

We now detach Gramsci's concept of passive revolution from an essentialist paradigm to re-inscribe it in a non-essentialist framework such that it gets captured in terms of our new concept: *passive re-evaluation* — that signals an ever-open postmodern totality.

It is at this point that we invoke Laclau and Mouffe: to look into the details of this postmodern (postcolonial) space. We explain the two key-concepts of Laclau-Mouffe in that connection: *antagonism* and *hegemony*.

Antagonism shows the limit of a postmodern totality and *hegemony* explains how these limits can be closed.

That sets the stage for our interrogation of Laclau-Mouffe's concept of hegemony. So, this is our trajectory: from Gramsci's *passive revolution* to our *passive re-evaluation* to Laclau-Mouffe's concept of *hegemony* to unravel the *symptom* of the system.

II. Passive Revolution: a Hegelian Reading of Gramsci

In view of the fact that the current rendition of passive revolution builds on Hegelian categories, it might be helpful to provide a brief skeleton of Hegel's logic and oppose it with the idea of overdetermination informing our competing view of it. Hegel's logic centers on the idea of a *whole* which holds the *parts* as its necessary (as opposed to contingent) elements. Two parallel concepts, universal and particular, represent whole and part at the level of concepts. For instance, in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, abstract right is the *universal* that represents the principle of the whole (here the state) while the citizens of the state exercising their individual rights in civil society are *particulars*.

One important feature of Hegel's logic is the *unity and struggle of opposites*. As such, particulars are opposites fighting and resisting one another, having no meeting ground (bond of unity) on the plane of particulars. But they do meet on another plane — on the plane of the universal — which the particulars consider as their source or origin. In other words, the unity of particulars is mediated through the universal. Particulars, which are opposed and engaged in a life-and-death struggle, do need a mediator — a principle representing the whole — in order to meet and get united. For instance, in the context of a Hegelian reading of Marx's *Capital*, wage labor and capital are particulars opposing each other. But they do not immediately break apart, and they can form a unity (though unstable) because both of them can be viewed (by a Hegelian) as flowing from the universal, that is, the principle of

commodity that mediates their relationship. Capital and wage labor meet — and form a unity — on the common ground of buying and selling of labor-power as a commodity.

It is important to stress that in a Hegelian totality, the opposition and struggle of elements (as between capital and labor) are direct and immediate while their unity occurs via the mediation of the universal. So, the distinguishing features of a Hegelian totality are:

i.   The existence of two terms in binary opposition (such as, capital and wage labor) and

ii.   The potentiality of one term (here, wage labor) to annul the other (that is, private capital) to lift it up into a higher form of existence (such as, social capital or collective property).

We will oppose this concept of Hegelian totality — and its displacement into a Gramscian field via the concept of a surrogate universal — with a new conceptual framework. A framework that involves overdetermination, which dispenses with the idea of binary opposition altogether and the consequent notions of supersession and that of the universal uniting the binary opposites. A distinguishing feature of the Hegelian totality that follows is the idea of historicism inherent in it (implied by the idea of supersession). In other words, the Hegelian whole is a specific concept of a whole with telos and dynamics embedded in it.

It is important to stress that the Hegelian universal is a contradictory universal that evolves, develops, and unfolds itself in the course of history, its higher moments superseding the lower moments, until the universal spirit, that is, history reaches its terminus. This terminus in Hegel inscribes upon itself a special name: *idea*. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* presents the different moments of this universal, while his *Philosophy of Right* illustrates how the universal (right, law, freedom) actualizes itself and flows over as particulars (citizens). Hegel articulates them at two levels: first, proceeding from particulars he shows how the particulars feel, recognize and carry within them the sense of a universal (bond of unity). Then, in order to rule out the possibility of the universal being accidental, Hegel gives a concrete shape to the universal (the state form) working as the mediating body of the struggling particulars. The domain of particulars is called *civil society*.

The universal actualizes itself in the state form. Perfect harmony occurs between the universal and particulars and correspondingly, between the state and civil society — in a perfect state, as in Hegel's conception of Prussia during his time where the idea actualizes itself, prevails — and rules, so to speak. The state, for Hegel, is not an external authority encroaching upon the freedom of civil society (citizens) but itself is a means to achieve freedom.

A Hegelian reading of Marx, or for that matter, of Gramsci, would not accept this. In their conception, an unbridgeable gulf — an opposition — separates the two, the state and civil society. Particulars (here, citizens in civil society) fall apart; the center (the universal, the state) cannot hold. In short, a Hegelian reading of Marx calls into question Hegel's idea of a perfect state: the harmony between the state and civil society — and re-conceptualizes it by the idea of an oppressive state holding civil society by way of coercive and persuasive forces. This Marxian re-conceptualization of Hegel, however, does not put into doubt, fundamentally, Hegel's logic and his historicism implied by it. It retains the idea of a contradictory universal

whose higher moments can supersede the lower moments through different stages of history. The historical moments of the universal are called *thesis* and *anti-thesis* and their resolution (supersession) at (as) the higher moment is called *synthesis*.

Like the Hegelian particulars, thesis and anti-thesis are opposed to each other and engaged in a life-and-death struggle out of which emerges the higher level of synthesis annihilating the lower moments, but preserving their spirit in a higher form.

The traditional Marxist discourse on historical materialism builds on this Hegelian idea (of the triad: *thesis–anti-thesis–synthesis*). This discourse narrates the movement of the essence or spirit of time towards a goal (the idea of *modernism* in Hegel, and that of *communism* in historical materialism). The essentialist undertone — and idioms — that run through this discourse capture and narrate the spirit of time in terms of a whole series of 'ism'-s (such as feudalism, capitalism, and socialism) with their higher moments superseding the lower moments.

It is important to stress that the Hegelian logic — his concepts of universal and particulars — undergoes mutation at this juncture of the discourse on historical materialism. For, we encounter here universals across two axes: the axes of time and space. For instance, in the context of debates on transition from feudalism to capitalism, one posits feudalism and the emerging capitalism in its embryonic form as the two successive moments of time — as the thesis and the anti-thesis. While a full-fledged capitalism represents the synthesis which annihilates feudalism (as also the embryonic capitalism at its immature form) to lift them up into a higher form of existence. But — and this is important — across the space axis, both feudalism and capitalism persist in being universals with serf/landlord and wage-labor/capital as their respective particulars. The traditional discourse on historical materialism focuses on the time axis in order to confine itself to the binary opposites, getting rid of the multiplicity of contradictions that would follow if one allows for movements along both axes. We abstract here from the possibility of multiple contradictions in order to see how Gramsci's notion of passive revolution displaces the Hegelian logic.

One consequence of the displacement of the Hegelian notion of the universal on the time axis — the appearance of the universal in its not-fully-developed forms as the moments of the spirit of time — is to displace the concept of particulars. Particulars here are not only in binary opposition; they simultaneously become separate, divided and mutually exclusive. For instance, both the thesis and the anti-thesis — in our context feudalism and nascent capitalism — can be seen on the scene as separate entities. Capital cannot dare to annihilate wage labor, for that would mean killing itself: committing a suicide. But it might afford to eliminate feudalism — landlord as a 'class' — without killing itself. Thus, if both wage labor and landlord/serf relations are the others of capital, they have different status vis-à-vis capitalism. While the former is an internal other of capital in binary opposition with it but not separate from it, the latter is an external other separate from capital, resisting it from outside. This point will be very important in the context of a discourse on the Gramscian notion of passive revolution.

Gramsci questions the Hegelian category of supersession: the idea of lower moments of history being simultaneously annihilated by and preserved through higher moments. In the orthodox version of historical materialism, capitalism is seen as growing out of the internal dynamics of a feudalism which loses itself in capitalism: capitalism supersedes feudalism. What remains of feudalism is considered a survival, an unimportant residual that the social scientist can ignore for all practical purposes. In this conception, as soon as the baby, that is, capital, is born, it faces pre-capital and launches a massive offensive against it, crushes it, and establishes itself. Capital is

seen, in this conceptualization, as providing active leadership in the battle against pre-capital in order to annihilate and eliminate it.

It is here that Gramsci imaginatively intervenes in the classical discourse on historical materialism. A Hegelian reading of Gramsci (or for that matter, a Gramscian re-formulation of Hegel) would suggest that capital does not necessarily eliminate pre-capital, it also, and simultaneously, appropriates it. In technical terms "the thesis does not always annihilate the anti-thesis, it appropriates a part of the anti-thesis to create a surrogate or false synthesis".[19] Gramsci describes this situation as passive revolution.

So passive revolution, in the context of a Hegelian reading of Gramsci, signifies a situation where the bourgeoisie (the thesis) does not always engage in a crusade against the landlord (the anti-thesis). It neutralizes, appreciates, and appropriates the landlord class in order to rule. More, the bourgeoisie internalizes, sometimes (often), both the landlord and the peasant. The thesis and the anti-thesis, here, are to be taken as two complexes: the thesis as a complex incorporates the anti-thesis, also a complex. That is to say, capital as a complex appropriates the complex of pre-capital that might include both the landlord and the peasant as contending elements. There are interesting details of the situation and these details assume manifold forms depending on the characteristics and specificities of the concrete sites of passive revolution. For instance, the narrative of passive revolution might include an account, as perhaps in India where, the bourgeoisie does not organize the struggle, against the landlord, nor does give direct and active leadership to it. The peasants on their own — and sometime led by the communists — fight the landlord. As the peasants and the landlord fight and bleed each other, without anyone coming out as victorious, the bourgeoisie, the third party, emerges as the 'Caesar'. The peasants and the communists sow the seeds; the bourgeoisie reaps the harvest. But the message of the story remains the same: the thesis (capital) does not always annihilate the anti-thesis.

Gramsci designates this situation as one of *blocked dialectic*. We postpone an analysis of the empirical details of this blocked dialectic in different (Indian) social contexts. We only note here how Gramsci intervenes in the Hegelianism that runs through the traditional discourse on historical materialism. He calls into question the one-dimensional binary opposition between the thesis and the anti-thesis and their consequent supersession into a synthesis; the thesis, for him, has got another dimension that can neutralize the anti-thesis, appropriate it, and thus block the emergence of the true synthesis. But he retains the idea of the thesis and the anti-thesis as separate entities.

Then, how can the thesis appropriate the anti-thesis without a corresponding qualitative mutation of itself? It can do so by appropriating the anti-thesis at a different level: on the plane of a surrogate synthesis. The capitalist class, as Gramsci

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[19] Pointing out the major difference between the surrogate universal and the Hegelian universal, Chaudhury wrote:

There remains a fundamental difference-between the Hegelian universal and the surrogate universal. The *Hegelian universal* is real but essentially contradictory: contradictory because the idea is ever changing — it is always implicitly what it is not, its other — in its development, unfolding itself. The *surrogate universal*, on the other hand, creates an illusion, is unreal; but an illusion, rooted in the real — it is not any society that can create this illusion, the illusion is embedded in this society, therefore is not pure imaginary. The surrogate universal resides in a non-imaginary unreal space.... The surrogate universal is only a symptom: it is a symptom of the false unity that it represents.... To repeat: the unity exists in fact, in real space and time. Therefore, there must be a unity in truth, at least as a possibility. The elite converts the possibility into an actuality, projects a universal which in turn strengthens the unity, makes it relatively permanent, stable. (1991-2, 46-47)

views it, can appropriate the landlord class as part of a nation, at the level of the state, on a macro-plane. But at the micro or grass-root levels, the Gramscian notion of capitalism and feudalism do not undergo any qualitative transformation. In the following section, we will critique this aspect of Gramsci from a post-colonial context where we observe a transformation of the visages of both capitalism and feudalism at the grassroots level via their mutual overdetermination.

III. From Passive Revolution to Passive Re-evaluation

Thesis, Anti-thesis and *Synthesis*: these age-old Hegelian categories — although in their modified forms, the *surrogate synthesis* replacing (displacing) the *true synthesis* — continue to inform the current discourse on passive revolution. For instance, Glucksmann[20] writes: "Passive revolution, as revolution — restoration, thus expressed a blocked dialectic, as opposed to dialectical supersession in struggle and the development of struggles." In this case, the thesis incorporates a part of the anti-thesis without being transcended by it. And Chatterjee[21] restates Glucksmann's position:

> In situations where an emergent bourgeoisie lacks the social conditions for establishing complete hegemony over the new nation, it resorts to a passive revolution by attempting a molecular change of the old dominant classes into partners in a new historical block…in order to first create a state as the necessary precondition for the establishment of capitalism.

It is important to stress that both of them, Glucksmann and Chatterjee, share the Hegelian problematic in its modified form, that is, minus (liberated from) the category of supersession: the thesis does not supersede the anti-thesis, but appropriates and neutralizes parts of it. Glucksmann calls it a situation of blocked dialectic and Chatterjee analyzes its consequences in the context of the Indian situation. They, thereby, resist a facile incorporation of Gramsci into a robust historicist paradigm, though we shall soon see historicist traits, quite a lot of them, continue to inform (deform) their analysis.

Dialectics, Hegel's dialectics, ceases here: the thesis here has numbed, etherized, and neutralized the anti-thesis, and therefore the dynamics, of the system. History here comes to a halt. Does this halt mimic and parody Hegel, signaling an *irrational end of history*? What kinds of contradictions, then, run through, permeate (permit), and sustain the system? Glucksmann and Chatterjee leave off here, leaving behind them these questions crying out for answers. They do not follow

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[20] 1975, 315.
[21] 1986, 30.

through the consequences of their argument — that their notion of blocked dialectic also, and simultaneously, blocks and opposes oppositions, contradictions and the dynamics of the system. They do not explain what sustains this blocked state. Hegelianism as understood in the discourse on historical materialism, we might recall, is premised on the mutual exclusiveness of the thesis and the anti-thesis. So that, they can be worked upon in order to produce the synthesis which actualizes the possibilities of the higher moment (the thesis) while preserving the spirit of the annihilated anti-thesis (the lower moment). In other words, the thesis and the anti-thesis are opposites that do not intersect as such; only their *spirit* can unite in and as the synthesis.

Glucksmann and Chatterjee retain this strict separability between the thesis and the anti-thesis. A blocked dialectic, in their thinking, signifies a situation that blocks the formation of the synthesis. Their view of passive revolution explains this by way of the formation of a 'false' (surrogate) synthesis on the ideological plane which acts as a surrogate Hegelian universal holding the thesis and the anti-thesis as its particulars. Consequently, these struggling opposites, the thesis and the anti-thesis, now recognize the surrogate universal as their *source*. The effect is to engender a situation that encourages co-existence of the thesis and the anti-thesis with less intensive fight between them, blocking the formation of the true synthesis.

We propose here a re-conceptualization of the 'blocked' dialectic in an overdeterministic frame. It is possible that the thesis can directly determine and constitute the anti-thesis (and vice versa) without the mediation of the surrogate synthesis. This presumes a situation in which the thesis and the anti-thesis are mutually effective, calling into question and destabilizing the very status of the anti-thesis as some entity that just opposes the thesis, in turn putting into doubt the status of the thesis itself. This subverts the whole range of Hegelian logical categories turning them into something contingent, variable and sometimes even dispensable.

It is our belief that we can perhaps mobilize this possibility of an alternative reading of Gramsci. Strictly speaking, what is at issue here is not a blocked dialectic,

but, a break from Hegel's dialectics. The situation calls for an alternative rendition of contradiction capable of translating Gramsci's idea of passive revolution in non-deterministic, non-historicist terms.

Gramsci's presentation of passive revolution itself, to be sure, is suffused with Hegelian overtones and subterranean historicism implied by them. For instance, Gramsci[22] writes:

> Passive revolution requires the thesis to achieve its full development up to the point where it would even succeed in incorporating a part of the anti-thesis itself — in order, that is, not to allow itself to be transcended in the dialectical opposition. The thesis alone in fact develops to its full potential for struggle, up to the point where it absorbs even the so called representatives of the anti-thesis; it is precisely in this that the passive revolution or revolution/re-iteration consists.

Gramsci's historicist perspective circumscribes his choice of words such as *thesis* and *anti-thesis* and by implication, *capital* and *pre-capital*. We might recall that Althusser's critique of Gramsci takes note of Gramsci's historicist inclinations. The key point Althusser aims to drive at is that of Gramsci's engagement of re-structuring historical materialism, unaided by parallel move to re-define dialectical materialism, must necessarily founder on the iceberg of traditional Hegelian categories such as thesis and anti-thesis. Primarily, Gramsci needed to dismantle the parent Hegelian model. So, effectively, we can say, Gramsci under-theorized the dialectical field in which the marks of historicism occur.

Althusser challenges the compartmentalization of the social into two water-tight compartments such as *thesis* and *anti-thesis*. On his scheme, the thesis works upon, determines, and constitutes the anti-thesis (and vice-versa), overflows with (one might say in Derridean terms) excess meanings erasing the conventional — given — meanings inscribed upon them. Althusser disengages the notion of *contradiction* from their initial inscription within an essentialist Hegelian discourse and situates them in a space of *multiple contradictions* where categories are not self-subsistent but are the sites of manifold contradictions impressed with the marks of multiple categories. In familiar Hegelian terms, the thesis and also the anti-thesis are simultaneously overdetermining one another. What is involved here is not a thesis–anti-thesis dialectic — one of its blocked version — but a different logic — a break from dialectics — into the logic of overdetermination[23].

Gramsci's discourse on passive revolution running in terms of conventional Hegelian categories destabilizes the very Hegelian categories. Neither does one comfortably situate Gramsci's concept of passive revolution within such a fissured space. This situation invites a re-articulation of Gramsci onto a new discursive field — a (provisional) divorce between Gramsci and Hegel is the only logical solution. We then wed the Gramscian categories to an Althusserian paradigm so that we can not only admire and espouse Gramsci, but put it to productive use to follow through its consequences. Consequently, the Gramscian concept of Passive Revolution, too, undergoes a mutation. We give it a new name: Passive Re-evaluation.

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[22] 1971, 110.

[23] That is not to say Hegelian dialectic ceases to operate altogether. As Resnick-Wolff argues, there exists a limit to overdetermination that can be captured in terms of Hegelian logic. We come back to this point later.

IV. Syntax of Hegemony in a Postmodern Context

Let us situate the analysis in a concrete context. We address a question that is central to the discourse of postcoloniality: the question of *a dialogue between modernism and tradition*. The question of emergence of postmodernism, its renunciation of the *enlightenment* legacy and its aversion to the modernist project of human emancipation with the power of reason, science and technology have placed the tradition — modernity's binary — in a new discursive field. In the postcolonial context, the critiques of modernity have shown the tendency to pit *tradition* against *modernity* and stressed the need to have democratic dialogue between the two. While the modernists posit annihilation of the traditional society as their goal, we find this desire to have or not to have a dialogue between modernity and tradition very innocent (you may say naïve). To engage the two into a dialogue is no option for us to be chosen or rejected. The dialogue is forced upon us as modernity and tradition overdetermine each other, independent of our individual wills. The dialogue is always already there between the two — it goes on both silently and aloud, in different forms, at different levels, on different platforms.

We have only to discern the structure of this dialogue and intervene in it to give it the turn we desire. It is not a question of having a dialogue between the two, but changing its course. That modernity and tradition overdetermine each other means that they do meet, send signals and receive them. We need to sketch out the structure of the signaling process and redefine it in our way. If one's ears are not tuned to the accents of the dialogue between modernity and tradition already going on, one cannot add to or modify this course of this dialogue because one understands neither modernity nor tradition in the context of late 20th century.

Let us illustrate this point: how this dialogue is already going on in the cultural and ideological field of India. The political processes in India, as it is well known, are defined in terms of a set of 'modern' institutions such as multiparty democracy, universal adult franchise and a state grounded in a secular constitution. The party in power is required to establish the legitimacy of its rule periodically through an electoral process. But, one point is very interesting, and often intriguing, about this electoral process. While this process is premised on the concept of a civil society consisting of citizens with rights of exercising their franchise to articulate their pref-erences, in fact, it relies heavily on a culture/ideology rooted in 'tradition' for such articulation. In the electoral process, images of gods and goddesses of Hindu mythology are invoked. And a candidate is often presented before the electorate as the incarnation of a particular god or goddess who has come to put an end to corrup-tion and injustice and bring about an order based on justice. These images are deployed to elicit support of voters belonging to communities defined in terms of ethnicity, cast or religion. Recent years have witnessed the prevalence on the list of candidates of actors and actresses who have played in the roles of mythological characters in popular films and television serials. This representational strategy rests on an ideology which is an integral part of tradition. It produces and disseminates meanings in terms of which the communities have traditionally interpreted the world. Indeed, the mythological figures are frequently pitted against those espousing the alliance of western (read modern) ideology and Indian (read traditional) culture.

Yet, this tradition remains locked with modernity in a fundamental way. Its own interpretation of the world in terms of religious cannons is never allowed to radically challenge the practices of modern institutions and repress them with an alternative that it deems superior. Not only is the projection and dissemination of

tradition done with the help of modern, high-tech electronic gadgets; the ultimate purpose of this strategic deployment of tradition is to gain access to state power and the instruments associated with it. The mythological gods and goddesses can bring justice and order only if they are elected to office and have at their disposal the instruments of a 'modern' state. On the other hand, this constituted tradition is indispensable for the functioning and legitimization of the modern institutions, because it is the only effective mediator between these institutions and the communities that speak, think and dream in terms of an archaic system of signs and meanings. By lodging tradition in its own interstices, modernity allows itself to be constituted by it.

So, that is what overdetermination between modernism and tradition is: a dialogue between the two. Neither party negates the other (its other). What emerges is a negotiation between them, leading to their mutual translations and relocations. The current postcolonial cultural studies designate such space of interrelationship between modernism and tradition as hybrid space.

But we believe that further (finer) theoretical distinctions between hybrid spaces is necessary. The concept of hybrid space signifies too many things, that is, too little. For instance, how do we distinguish between a hybrid woman, modern in public life and traditional in private life, and a woman for whom modernism is always already marked by tradition? In the latter case, modernism contains an overlap of tradition, — the latter's metaphoric surpluses — as in the case of Indian politics we delineated earlier. So, we invoke the three theoretical categories: *simple space*, *complex space* and *synthetic space* — to mark finer distinctions between *hybrid spaces*.

The effect of passive revolution, read in the light of overdetermination, is to produce a discursive space which we call the *synthetic space*: a discursive space overdetermined by modernism and tradition in which both of them get displaced by way of a whole series of metaphoric an metonymic transformations. We oppose this discursive space to what we call a *complex space* — a Hegelian space getting displaced in which modernism and tradition as pure categories re-articulate themselves as moments — particulars — of a surrogate Hegelian universal (the nation state, for instance). A *simple space*, on the other hand, would refer to an un-reconstructed Hegelian totality that serves to articulate different moments of modernism (the state, civil society), denigrating *tradition* as a residual to be looked down upon and dispensed with as a pain in the ass of reason.

Our project is to articulate, discursively, the different moments of *synthetic space* taking off from different perspectives (postmodern, postcolonial, Marxist). We aim to problematize, primarily, a postcolonial scenario, in terms of divergent instances of *synthetic space*, though we believe and would later come to see that the concept can be deployed to deal with a colonial situation. But, before that, let us explain *simple space* and *complex space* in some details to comprehend the significance of *synthetic space*.

Note: both *simple space* and *complex space* presume essentialism. In the case of *simple space*, the essence that founds it is straightforwardly given (the principles of equality, freedom, efficiency etc.). The context of complex space requires its reconstitution — a surrogate essence (the traditional concept of community and its modernist version blended into one). That way, a complex space exhibits signs of hybridity, by way of a hybrid essence.

Synthetic space dispenses with essentialism in all of its variants. It is not through a hybrid essence that cultural hybridity permeates here into a society

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containing modernism and tradition in water-tight compartments. In a synthetic space the very concepts of modernism and tradition lose their usual connotations and articulate themselves as *differences*: modernism as what is not tradition and tradition as what is not modernism. *Synthetic space* is an overdetermined unity of such differences.

Viewed alternatively, in a synthetic space, modernism contains an overlap of tradition, and vice-versa. Both of them carry the *metaphoric surpluses* of the other one. In other words, their identities are incomplete, open and negotiable. One might say that *synthetic space* is what Lacan calls *symbolic space*. We would like to understand cultural hybridity in the sense of a *synthetic space* or *symbolic space*. *Complex space*, on the other hand, denotes *cultural diversity*.

This point is often missed — that a hybrid space is a symbolic (synthetic) space in the Lacanian sense of the term. And that lots of work have been done in social studies making use of this theoretical space.

Laclau-Mouffe's pioneering work has shown how the Lacanian concept of symbolic space be productively used to deal with a social reality. We believe that current postcolonial cultural studies would have been richer were it informed by Laclau-Mouffe and the literature following them.

The concept of hybrid space (or, *third space*, as Homi Bhabha conceptualizes it) as such has nothing new: it is a version of postmodernist overdetermined totality talked about by many.[24] What is new in the concept of hybrid space is its binding of the instances of modernism and tradition in a postmodern overdetermined (or, symbolic) conceptual framework. Laclau and Mouffe or Resnick and Wolff do not deal with traditional societies. It is therefore interesting — and challenging — to follow through the theoretical consequences of a hybrid space.

But, it is our impression that current postcolonial cultural studies have taken up this challenge inadequately. Uses of such terms as negotiation (instead of negation), relocation, realignment, translation etc in the context of cultural studies emphasize that what is at issue is a postmodern overdetermined totality, an accidental totality, with plural and conflictual meanings always open to translation and negotiation. But they never ask questions such as — How are these multiple meanings (provisionally) closed? What are the consequences of such closures? — etc. If postcolonial cultural studies move one step forward by way of their incorporation of the instance of tradition in an overdetermined framework, they move two steps backward by dropping the questions of closures in it and their consequences.

In fact, both Resnick-Wolff and Laclau-Mouffe have dealt with such issues of closure quite at length. We have already seen, in Chapter Two, how Resnick and Wolff bring about a closure in an otherwise open-ended overdetermined system: through the concept of entry-point. Let us see how Laclau and Mouffe talk about it. For our project begins where they end. We discover the consequences of such closures as brought about by Laclau and Mouffe, and Resnick and Wolff in a postmodernist ever-open totality.

Laclau and Mouffe's theoretical framework is premised on the impossibility of the object society as a rationally unified totality. It deals with identities that are incomplete, open and politically negotiable in character. And, of course, they overdetermine one another. Laclau and Mouffe are very particular about what they mean by an overdetermined totality. They have in mind a totality that is symbolic in

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24 Laclau and Mouffe, 1984; Resnick and Wolff, 1987.

the Lacanian sense of the term. Which means metaphoric cuts and metonymic slidings would come out to be very important in their treatment of the details of such a totality. That is to say, they are very specific about their representation of a postmodern totality. It is not just any kind postmodern totality — with cracks and fissures — that postcolonial cultural studies talk about, where identities are subject to endless negotiations all the time. Laclau and Mouffe point to the distinctiveness of the different processes of negotiation. As we will find, the concept of metaphor and metonymy have important roles to play to underline such specificities.

It will be helpful if we set out the conceptual categories involved in the analysis that follows in the rest of the chapter as well as the book as a whole. *Metaphor* and *metonymy* are the two Lacanian categories on which Laclau and Mouffe build their concepts of *antagonism* and *hegemony* respectively. We will invoke two other Lacanian categories — *symptom* and *mimicry* — to make a critique of and a supplement to Laclau-Mouffe's discourse on hegemony.

It is our argument that while Laclau-Mouffe render a very imaginative discourse on hegemony, their discourse lacks a definite *theory* of counter-hegemony as distinct from a *strategy* of counter-hegemony (radical democracy). The Lacanian concept of *symptom*, we contend, will fill in this gap. The concept of *mimicry* serves, on the other hand, to highlight and explain another kind of hegemony — postcolonial hegemony — that takes us beyond Laclau-Mouffe, indeed beyond the terrain of the entire postcolonial discourse. As far as this chapter goes, our focus will be on the consequences of metaphor and metonymy. Though we also provide here a sketch of the two other categories — symptom and mimicry — in order to indicate the limitations of Laclau-Mouffe, their full consequences will be evident in Chapter Five.

Lacanian concepts of metaphor and metonymy help to sharpen the two basic Freudian categories, *displacement* and *condensation*. Freud invoked these categories in order to interpret the structure of dreams. Two important devices involved in a dream structure — indeed, in any language — are *substitution* and *combination*. One word/image is often substituted for another word/image to convey, sharpen and also hide the meanings involved. Also, one often encounters a combination of images, one image being superimposed on the other. Freud categorizes such tropes of dreams by *displacement* and *condensation*. Displacement involves substitution of images and condensation occurs from their combinations.

Lacan was not entirely happy with such classifications. For, substitution itself can be of different types and consequently condensation can also be classified into different kinds. Lacan thus sharpens these Freudian categories in terms of metaphor and metonymy.

Metonymy has come to mean, first, a word representing another word (that is absent but implied) and second, a term that, although only a part of the term which it refers to, stands as meaning the whole of that term. A metonymy resides when the 'scepter' is used to stand for the 'king', or, say, 'reading Lacan' stands for 'reading the texts of Lacan, and may be, to an extent, reading and understanding the theories and the literature related with Lacan'. Thus, in a text, metonymy can apply to a word focussed upon, but which represents another word to which it is related but which is absent. The word visibly present, in this case, carries the surplus meanings of another word. Derrida's concept of *trace* (that we have talked about in Chapter One) refers to such metonymic surplus meanings. Alternatively, a part of a book can represent metonymically the whole of it.

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The metaphor, on the other hand, substitutes the known for the unknown or rather it communicates the unknown by transferring and translating it into the terms of the known. For instance, in a film, metaphor applies when there is a juxtaposition of two consecutive shots and the second one functions in a comparative way with the first. Take, for instance, a lover's embrace that is followed by a shot of a train running wildly through a tunnel. The second shot communicates the meaning of the embrace — that which is unknown, because unseen, at least to the spectator — and transfers it into known terms: speed of the train equals rush of emotion, tunnel equals excitement of penetration, and so on.

Metaphors, then, are very visible. They draw attention to themselves. Metonyms are not. And that is why the two terms can be seen as two sides of the same coin. Metaphors render the unknown visible, make the unknown have presence. Metonyms represent what is absent, stand as part of the whole story to which they refer, which is why they work invisibly.

The above is an account of metaphor and metonymy from the standpoint of a critical theorist, an observer-thinker. It is Laclau-Mouffe's merit that they bring out the consequences of metaphor and metonymy for a subject. While for an observer-thinker metaphor serves to make implicit meanings transparent, for the subject, as we will see, it produces too many meanings to be chosen from leading to what Laclau-Mouffe call antagonism. Metonymic surpluses of a set of key signifiers privileged by master signifier (emanating out of the field of fantasy) then help to stabilize the subject and give the totality a hegemonic meaning by way of closure. Laclau-Mouffe leave off at this point where Žižek joins with them through his conceptual tool of *symptom* whose function is to contest this closure. At least, that is the way we conceptualize Laclau-Mouffe-Žižek chain.

In order to grasp what this *symptom* is, let us note first what it is not. For instance, it bears little relation with the sense of the term as used in the medical science (the patient shows such and such symptoms). More important, we unhook it from a neo-Freudian context that views it as a compromise formation between an *impulse* and the defense against it, keeping anxiety at bay. The Freudian concept of symptom is premised on a concept of psyche as composed of a set of 'rational' myths. The founding assumption is that 'unconscious' is the site of a whole range of (sexual) drives deriving from the pleasure principle that impart a sense of guilt to the conscious mind which, therefore, desperately seeks to suppress them. But, such drives in the unconscious are so compelling that the conscious mind cannot

quite parry with them. Consequently, what emerges is a compromise formation between the pleasure principle and the reality principle: such drives get masked.

Symptom in a Freudian context, then, is a device contrived by the unconscious to re-present the disagreeable drives of the unconscious in a different color and modality so that they might appear respectable to the self in particular and society at large. A typical example of it is the *washing mania* on the part of a Hindu widow. The unfortunate widow feels guilty for her repressed sexual drives. Washing mania is a trick contrived by her unconscious to assuage her sense of guilt for them concealing their true meaning.

In Lacan's rethinking of the relationship of the symptom to the psyche, *the symptom does not conceal but reveal*. It signals, for Lacan, a Real order of being which persists diachronically on the slope of parole as opposed to anxiety. Whereas Freud refers to symptom as indicative of a psychic effort to attain equilibrium pleasure subject to the interdictory messages inscribed in the taboos of society, Lacan pertinently asks: why the nervous system does not succeed in living pleasurably on any sustained basis? Why does the symptom return as suffering — subverting the self, hurting its ego, and calling into question its reason? Inasmuch as in Lacan, ego is based on a certainty, symptom is that which puts into doubt the sense of self-certainty.

Symptom, then, is a substitute signifier for a repressed signifier. In technical terms: it is the trace of the *Unsaid* (*Other* of the *others*) in the terrain of the *symbolic*. In this context, it is necessary to bear in mind the three fundamental Lacanian categories: the *imaginary*, the *symbolic* and the *Real*. The *imaginary* is the world — the register — of images, conscious or unconscious, perceived or imagined. *Imaginary*, this point needs to be stressed, is not the opposite of the *Real*, for images that constitute the *imaginary* certainly belong to reality.

The *symbolic*, on the other hand, consists of symbols. But the symbols referred to here are not icons, stylized figurations, but signifiers, in the sense developed by Saussure, extended into

a generalized definition: differential elements, in themselves without meaning, which acquire their value only in their mutual relations and forming a closed order mediated through language. The important question in Lacan is: whether this order is or is not complete?

The Real is that which is foreclosed from the analytic experience. Before it, the imaginary falters; over it the symbolic stumbles. It is refractory, resistant and defy all notions of complete totality. Hence the formula: the Real is impossible. The Real, then, is such an outside of any notion of totality that can never be eliminated: the Other of the others, the Unsaid.

We are now in a position to re-present the Lacanian symptom in technical terms: the symptom is a metaphor by which the Real can be inferred — a mark of the Real in the terrain of the symbolic and the imaginary. Symptom is the ~~misfit~~ in a totality that resists inclusion as well as exclusion, a pain in postmodern man's tail. The dominant postmodernist discourse is not yet ready to address the issue of symptom, for it knows only to flirt with an ever-open totality given epistemologically.

Symptom is an invasion of one's ego, one's feeling of self-certainty. While Lacan's ego is a narcissistic principle of certainty, the unconscious escapes the ego's circle of convictions and reveals itself in to conscious life enigmas borne out by symptoms. The effect of the symptom thus elicits aggressive tendencies because any thwarting of ego certainty and love of self threatens the unity of the ego, leading to an aggressive replay of the despair and anger of the mirror stage: the infant's dependence on the other's regard. As the effect of the symptom the adult now turns into a baby. The Lacanian baby looked at the mirror and thought that she was upright, when, precisely, she was held from behind by the mother. Faced with the symptom, the adult-baby desperately seeks to deny the hands that hold from behind. The Supplement to this book illustrates precisely this situation. The dominant discourse, of political economy, will not just listen to any discourse on the symptom of a concept of commodity as a self-contained

category premised on an equalitarian principle. It hurts their ego.

We understand mimicry as a *defense mechanism* against symptom. Instead of denial, the ego here shelters itself through repetition of the original totality, but not quite. The result is a duplicitous reproduction of itself — a metonymic transformation of the given totality — that serves to hide itself. Faced with the lack in itself, it produces another lack that masks the original lack: the Real. In Chapter Five we will understand this lack in great detail and understand it as postcolony giving rise to postcolonial hegemony.

But as this chapter goes, let us see only the consequences of these categories for Laclau-Mouffe's analysis of *antagonism* and *hegemony*. What distinguishes Laclau-Mouffe's treatment of a postmodern totality is the concepts of *antagonism* and *hegemony* that follow from the metaphoric and metonymic transformations that we were talking about. Antagonism signals

> …The final impossibility of any stable difference and thus of any objectivity….

The experience of the limit of all objectivity does have a form of precise discursive presence, and that is antagonism.

In other words, Laclau and Mouffe not only talk about a postmodern totality with gaps, fissures and limits, they as well point to where the limits are. Antagonism is a theoretical concept that captures the *becoming* of the limit.

> …Antagonism, far from being an objective relation, is a relation wherein the limits of every objectivity are shown — in the sense in which Wittgenstein used to say that what cannot be said can be shown…. Antagonisms are not *internal* but *external* to society; or rather they constitute the limits of society, the latter's impossibility of fully constituting itself.

It will be helpful to grasp this very important category in Laclau and Mouffe, if we make a distinction between *contradiction* and *antagonism*. *Contradiction* denotes the discursive presence of A and not-A at the same time. In an overdetermined system, such discursive presence comes out very sharply: a *site* in an overdetermined system as a location of many plural and conflictual *instances*. Consider *individual* as a site. An individual X is a worker, a husband, a brown man, a Christian, etc. In other words, divergent processes (economic, cultural, political, racial, religious) occur in the site that the individual X represents. His decision as a worker might conflict with his position as a brown man. His religious being and political being may not be in conformity with each other. The concept of contradiction captures this state of affairs. It shows a site — here, an individual — as a contradictory presence of divergent instances.

Antagonism, on the other hand, deals with the predicament of an individual as a worker. Consider a female worker Y. She has to leave home in order to work in a factory. In many quarters of our society, her leaving home daily has a cultural significance. In other words, Y's being a worker has metaphoric cultural surpluses that prevent her to fully constitute herself as a worker. While she is working, she is perhaps fighting by this very act her husband or her mother-in-law who opposed to her going to work on cultural grounds. And it might quite be that the man next to her, working by her side, sympathizes with and shares those sentiments and therefore cannot fully become her comrade. It is in this sense that Laclau and Mouffe talk about impossibility of working class. Working class as a position carries the *metaphoric surpluses* of the other *instances* of the society that import cracks and fissures into the class position preventing it from fully becoming itself, that is, working class. *Antagonism* is a theoretical concept signaling this limit.

Then, what closes this limit? And, what produces and sustains the *identity* of a given ideological field where all *identities* are provisional, contingent and negotiable? Laclau-Mouffe's concept of *hegemony* seeks to provide an answer to this question: the multitude of floating signifiers, of proto-ideological elements, is structured into a unified field through the intervention of a certain 'nodal point' which 'quilts' them, stops their sliding and fixes their meanings. This nodal point constitutes hegemony.

> Hegemony is, quite simply, a political type of relation, a *form*, if one so wishes, of politics; but not a determinable location within a topography of the social.

In a given social formation, there can be a variety of hegemonic nodal points.

In plain terms: *hegemony* is an *organizing principle*. In a pure Hegelian space that we have called a *simple space*) this organizing principle is internal to the space — the essence or the universal from which the different parts or particulars flow. In a reconstructed Hegelian space (*complex space*) this organizing principle is camouflaged as the as-if (surrogate) essence, imparting a sense of false consciousness. In an overdetermined (synthetic) space, all such camouflages are abandoned. The organizing principle is put forward and represented as what it is: a *form* of organization — constituting hegemony.

> Hegemony is basically metonymical; its effects always emerge from a surplus meaning which results from an operation of displacement.

Such metonymic surpluses serve to close the gaps and limits of the given identities due to the metaphoric surpluses of different instances. The following is the way Slavoj Žižek illustrates the functioning of hegemony.[25]

> If we 'quilt' the floating signifiers through 'communism', for example, 'class struggle' confers a precise and fixed signification to all other elements: to democracy (so called 'real democracy' as opposed to 'bourgeois formal democracy' as a legal form of exploitation); to feminism (the exploitation of women as resulting from the class-conditioned division of labor); to ecologism (the destruction of natural resources as a logical consequence of profit-oriented capitalist production); to the peace movement (the principal danger to peace is adventuristic imperialism), and so on.

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[25] 1989, 87-88.

…. In this way, every element of a given ideological field is part of a series of equivalences: its metaphoric surplus, through which it is connected with all other elements, determines retroactively its very identity. But this enchainment is possible only on condition that a certain signifier — the Lacanian 'One' — 'quilts' the whole field and, by embodying it, effectuates its identity.

So, in Laclau-Mouffe, hegemony is possible because of the specificities of certain signifiers which play the key (determining) role in organizing an otherwise open-ended system. Hegemony is neither an essence nor a false consciousness. It is just a privileged signifier that carries metonymic surplus meaning for the other floating signifiers.

V. Beyond Laclau-Mouffe's Hegemony

Therefore, in short, *hegemony* provides a principle of closure in Laclau-Mouffe as the concept of *entry-point* does in Resnick and Wolff. Of course, a *provisional* closure. Nevertheless, a closure. And a closure giving rise to a subtler form of hegemony that we have captured in terms of mimicry of overdetermination. It is a merit of Laclau-Mouffe that they unhook the concept of hegemony from its essentialist moorings in Gramsci. But, concurrently, it also loses some of the bites and edges of the Gramscian concept of hegemony that can point to the source of hegemony. Mimicry of overdetermination restores the moment of hegemonic source: how one cultural space can dominate over another.

Our uneasiness with Laclau-Mouffe does not end there. We have more questions to ask. Like: can the principle of closure penetrate into and permeate the whole of the system with equal intensities? Will not the closure itself carry the trace of impossibility of society? Does it not produce its own symptom? How does one respond to this symptom?

We contend that the postcolonial studies (development studies, culture studies) are a response to such symptoms. If the concept of hybrid space or that of *synthetic space* can have any — specific — meaning distinct from a symbolic space, it is in the context of a response to certain symptom: *third world* is a response to the symptom of the first world. Postmodern studies make this first world an entity that can only disperse its symptoms, but cannot dispense with them. Half-way postmodernism only defers the question of *third world*. But inevitably and irresistibly, the time of closure comes and *third world* raises its ugly head — as a symptom.

That is the way we propose a postcolonial *third world*-studies — and not just as another narration of a hybrid space hanging in the air, out of nowhere. We need to point to its limits and how these limits are closed in the hegemonic discourse. An interrogation and contestation of such hegemonic closure is then in order. So that we encounter the *symptom* of the system: unreason inherent in the reason of the hegemonic closure. We will then see how others respond to this system — through a whole range of *ideological fantasies*. On our part, we bid farewell to such fantasies and look the symptom in its eyes and tell others to face it — the symptom, the phantom.

Or, to be more correct, maybe, not just the symptom, but the sinthome. The sinthome of the synthetic space. The poltergeist that possesses us, and, we, somehow, end up in loving that possession, in cherishing it. It does no more haunt the streets of deserted darkness but fare through the auricles and ventricles of our heart — our innermost emotions. Our discourses start to become colonies of the poltergeist that is definitionally a ghost that manifests itself by noises, rappings, and the creation of disorder. Maybe at some later point for all these noises, rappings and disorders to become our subjective identity — that is us. Because we have started loving them, now we love them.

Let Žižek (1994, 74) discuss the concept of *sinthome*.

… why in spite of its interpretation, does the symptom not dissolve itself; why does it persist? The Lacanian answer is, of course, *enjoyment*. The symptom is not only a cyphered message, it is at the same time a way for the subject to organize his enjoyment — that is why, even after the completed interpretation, the subject is not prepared to renounce his symptom; that is why he 'loves his symptom more than himself'. …

… we can also articulate two stages of the psychoanalytic process: *interpretation of symptoms — going through fantasy*. When we are confronted with the patient's symptoms, we must first interpret them and penetrate through them to the fundamental fantasy as the kernel of enjoyment which is blocking the further movement of interpretation; then we must accomplish the crucial step of going through the fantasy, of obtaining distance from it, of experiencing how the fantasy-formation just masks, fills out a certain void, lack, empty place in the Other.

… how do we account for patients who have, beyond any doubt, gone through their fantasy, who have obtained distance from the fantasy-framework of their reality, but whose key symptom still persists? How do we explain this fact? What do we do with a symptom, with this pathological formation which persists not only beyond its interpretation but even beyond fantasy? Lacan tried to answer this challenge with the concept of *sinthome*, a neologism containing a set of associations (synthetic-artificial man, synthesis between symptom and fantasy, Saint Thomas, the saint …) (Lacan 1988a). Symptom as *sinthome* is a certain signifying formation penetrated with enjoyment: it is a signifier as a bearer of *jouis-sense*, enjoyment-in-sense.

What we must bear in mind here is the radical ontological status of symptom: symptom, conceived as *sinthome*, is literally our only substance, the only positive support of our being, the only point that gives consistency to the subject. In other words, symptom is the way we — the subjects — 'avoid madness', the way we 'choose something (the symptom-formation) instead of nothing (radical psychotic autism, the destruction of the symbolic universe)' through the binding of our enjoyment to a certain signifying, symbolic formation which assures a minimum of consistency to our being-in-the-world.

Let us cite a fiction here, *Pragoitihashik* by Manik Bandopadhyay to augment this discussion on *sinthome*.

Pragoitihashik is a story of Bhiku the ~~Hero~~, the muscleman that he is not anymore. He was a dacoit, and a successful one, we must say, and all the success now gets undone by his final failing and his final fly for freedom from where the story starts. He is now nothing more than a footprint of his earlier life of bloodlust. In both his body and his mind. Today's Bhiku rejoices in the remembrances of the time past and laments for those bygone days.

> In the resting place of the self-made bed, he lingers restless.
>
> He can't bear this life anymore — this life without any woman presence, a threadbare life stripped of any festival of any kind. His soul longs laments and craves for those heady days of the past full of events.
>
> The lots of noise, the mess, and the disturbance that he would create after numerous *bhnars* of *taadi*[26] from the *taadi*-shop. After all that, his faltering steps would lead him to Baashi's room — spending, that is, living the night with her, yes, in madness. And, occasionally, they, the whole group of them, together, would attack a household, beat and hack them all to pieces, and vanish into the darkness of night, after grabbing all the money and jewelry. All the indescribable features that would emerge on the face of the wife, when before her very eyes they were hurting and killing the tied up husband, the screams of the mother at the gushing streams of blood from the body of the son, those sights in the light of the flickering flames of the *mashal*, all those screams — what can be more intoxicating than this on the face of the earth?

Bhiku's body too, like his mind, carried the marks of those days. Actually, his whole existence got redefined through the process of inscription of these marks. His wound in his last fight vested in him a gangrene. Different phases of this rot and decay of the tissues of the limb and the process of learning on part of Bhiku of the entirely new set of grammatical rules in this altogether different kind of life without the active limb comprises the first half of the story. The transformation of Bhiku the muscleman into Bhiku the beggar and also the transformation of the role of his right hand from the activity of action into the display of inaction. In both the cases it served him his livelihood. His right hand, the active limb that once spelt death, now

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[26] Local homemade liquor.

dried and desiccated into a numb paralysis like the dead branches of a tree. Even the apology of movement that was there in the primary days withered away slowly and gradually.

But the irony of the whole thing resides here that this inactive right hand that earlier proclaimed his rights, and wrongs, being the more active of the two hands, now, once again, earned him his right to live.

Hunger was looming black in his eyes and not even a single paise to purchase and have some *muri*[27]. He held out his hand to the first man that he met on the streets of the market, "Give me two paise, sir?"

His shags of hair, rough and gray with soil and plastered with dirt, the piece of cloth around his waist that itself looked like moist clay, and then, finally, the hanging hand, thin and swaying like a piece of rope. Maybe this man had some mercy, and gave him a paise.

This was the beginning of begging — the new life that now Bhiku started to live — by manufacturing mercy through the display of his inactive right hand. A new life, a new kinship, falling in love with a new woman, and, resultantly an entirely new kind of fight with a new rival. All these had only one thing in common — a lack, an incompleteness, a disease. And a display of this disease. His new heartthrob is a beggar-woman, who

sits there to beg, beside the very entrance to the market. Not at all aged, she has all the due and fitting curves and waves where they should be on her body. But, on one leg, knee downward to the foot, all covered with an ulcer, slimy and oily with pus and discharge.

It is all due to this sore that she can earn more than Bhiku. That's why she takes special care that it does not heal, does not just get cured away.

And the new rival of Bhiku in the fight of right over this woman, is a man named Basir. One of Basir's legs

has dried up the same way as Bhiku's right hand. With immaculate thoroughness Basir holds this part of his body in display before him and begs the mercy of all in the name of Allah the God.

All of them, each and every member of this new kinship of Bhiku had some disease in some part of their body. And this disease, this diseased part, due to the active part they played in the profession, by virtue of being able to display the disease,

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became their livelihood, their means of life — the meaning of life. The degree of presence or absence of this disease and its ability of ostentation now became a hierarchy in their reality, awarding the beggar-woman a higher place in that ladder than Bhiku. Now they cherished the disease. They protected it from any possible cure, preserved it, cared for it, this disease became their life. They held this disease in proud and loving display. This phenomenon of *disease-in-loving-display* is what *sinthome* is.

Let us recall, once again, the discussion on the strategic essentialism of closure and the concept of hegemony as formulated by Laclau-Mouffe, with this concept of *sinthome* in our mind. As we have already discussed it, the theoretical structure cannot remain open-ended for ever. Somewhere you have to insert some essentialism strategically — in order to close it. And as you close it, this key-concept, that is serving you the closure of the system, gets imbibed with a kind of privilege within the theoretical structure. From this follows the hegemony, as Laclau-Mouffe formulated it. This hegemony fosters through the false consciousness that is contingent to this concept of closure. The local-global, or the savage, as we have called it, carries a resistance towards this closure and fights this imperialism of false-consciousness. But how can the fight go on if the local-global cannot externalize this closure and the contingent false consciousness from itself? What if the whole thing becomes internal to it? What if the local-global starts to cherish it and protect it lovingly?

Remember the Lacanian concept of symptom that reveals the ~~misfit~~ that resists both inclusion and exclusion. The repressed return from the future (may be through psycho-analysis) to unsettle the certainty of logic of the ego, the psyche, that gets named as a symptom of the colonized mind. The certainty of self of the colonized psyche gets jeopardized through the emergence of the symptom.

But then, in the process of learning to live within the grammar of coloniality, the colonized, at some point of time, in some cases, start to love these symptoms. And this begets the

sinthome. This sinthome is internal to the psyche. The false consciousness that mushrooms around hegemony was external and so the colonized mind could fight it out discursively, in the body of the discourse. But this sinthome, being internal, and a disease that she cherishes to possess, robs her/him of the right to resist and she herself cannot even know it. This sinthome, remember, is not a kind of intellectual shortcoming. It just unsettles the certainty of logic of the postcolonized psyche and cannot be settled. At least within the realm of discourse. We have to be fortunate enough to get condemned into a hundred years of solitude, may be several hundreds, through the counter-journey of modernist civilization — from speech to whisper to silence — to come in a dialogue with this sinthome. We will talk about that elsewhere, maybe in a different book. Maybe we would not.

Now let us end this issue here and go on to our next chapter, where we narrate the history of how we began our story a decade ago and told our friends about it — the phantom. And they laughed at us, for they love fantasy and not the phantom. The following chapter records and reproduces this experience.

The experience that, once again, brings to our mind this fiction of Manik Bandopadhyay. Cannot we read this same fiction repeating in some form or other in the discourse on postcoloniality? Where the mode of production of papers has ceased to remain just a mode of information, but has become the mode of existence?

In the next chapter of this book — Three and a Half — we will follow through the queer events, where, someone, how many times and in how many ways you may remind him/her about the mistakes, is never ready to correct them. This strange phenomenon is not at all a stranger in the postcolonial studies. And we can interpret it very well if we remember the concept of sinthome in the way of the disease that became the proud and loving object of display in the community of Bhiku the beggar.

Maybe this deliberate closing of the eyes is a part of the sinthome of the postcolonial studies of the space which is nothing but a synthetic kind of reality, that we have already

discussed. A synthetic kind of colonial reality — but, remember it — the colony is here and now. And the mistake of postcoloniality, that is posting the 'post' before 'coloniality' in the mode of production of papers, is maybe nothing other than the loving display of disease in the mode of begging, as in the case of Bhiku and the beggar-folks.

Three and a Half
Making of the Book:
Trauma of Avant-garde Third World Writing

I. How It Did ~~Not~~ Start

Resnick-Wolff. Laclau-Mouffe. These are mere names, western names. They
provide for us only the pretext to articulate and circulate our text. The illegitimate
children of Macaulay need a few western brand-names in order to *salebrate* ~~their~~ our
positions and counter-positions.[28]

In other words, we foreground Resnick-Wolff and Laclau-Mouffe, consciously, in
order to tell a story unfolding itself in the background that forms the real pre-text of
this book. What follows, then, is an account of that story — the story behind the
writing of this book, the tears and bloodshed; OK, you may call them postcolonial
paraphernalia.

We can foresee the raised brows of our refined readers: come on, tell
your story sharp and direct! Who cares for the melodrama behind the
writing of a book? Such is the dominant western concept of writing. But
there are westerns and westerns, not all westerns will buy this position —
there are voices of dissent. And we will not rush into a style of writing
which just no westerns permit.

We have talked about Resnick and Wolff — they have written a great book,
Knowledge and Class, in an impersonal style, with detachment, hiding their emotion.
But does not suppressed emotion, like repressed sex, do harm to a project — here, a
book? A western — *Sahib* — reviewer of Resnick-Wolff's *Knowledge and Class*
writes:

> The argument compels reflexivity, but the writing keeps the reader at bay.
> How is this text made, he or she may wonder. A close collaboration as
> that of Wolff and Resnick is rare. How does that affect the production of
> the text? Did their personal circumstances matter? Does it matter that
> this text has been produced in the context of lively discussion that has led
> to a new journal, Rethinking Marxism? The notion of overdetermination
> suggests they do, but the distant impersonal style employed in this book
> hides these processes from view. Style is substance, too.

Style is substance, too. More so for our book. This book is about a *new third world*
as well as a *new third world writing*.

One of us tried to discursively articulate this *new third world* more than a decade ago
(Chaudhury, 1984, 1988) in terms of a new concept — *synthetic space* — that has a
strong parallel to what is currently called *hybrid space* in postcolonial studies. That
concept of *synthetic space*, even in that primary form, highlighted some of the

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[28] The legitimate children of Macaulay are those taught in expensive English-medium schools
(Arundhati Ray, Gayatri Spivak, Salman Rushdie). We picked up English on the road, as leftovers.
But please: do not try to correct the above construction — don't write *sic*.

moments of hybrid space that are lacking even in the current literature on it. For instance, the metaphoric cuts and metonymic slidings in a hybrid space. And the question of its symptoms and how agencies in a hybrid space negotiate and reconcile with these symptoms.

There happened a presentation of that understanding of a hybrid space — which was called *synthetic space* — in a seminar on Gramsci.

The point the paper wanted to make was very simple: the need to move beyond Gramsci. The concept of hybrid space — that, in our opinion, describes the postcolonial space — resists being captured in terms of the Gramscian categories. But, what followed was a total failure to communicate this point, as will be apparent from the reviewer's comments enclosed in this chapter.

It was in no way at all a question of intellectual shortcoming on part of the discussant. In this area of social studies what is crucially lacking, particularly in a country like ours, is a certain attitude to any new idea. Academia in a country with a colonized past is not particularly eager to hear new ideas from one of its next-door neighbors. Any new idea, as a rule, has to *come* from abroad.

A non-immigrant non-frequent-flying third world writer *cannot speak*. If ѕhe ever comes to discover ѕhe has got something new to say, ѕhe won't say. She must wait. If ѕhe differs, ѕhe will have to defer. She must wait, so that the westernized friends can catch up with this newness, and perhaps, in the meantime, overtake it. So that ѕhe can continue in the job, the one and only job assigned to her/him — the job that is the destiny — writing footnotes to works done in a distant world, for nameless people, in an alien language.

If that be our destiny, we can encounter it only by making a writing form out of it. Let us pretend, then, that we are extending and contesting a few ideas from the west — here, in this particular case, of Resnick-Wolff and Laclau-Mouffe. That is why, after delineating our writing strategy in Chapter One, we start off with a discussion of their writings in Chapters Two and Three. But the following critique of Gramsci might well be a take-off point for this book.

While writing, refined western intellectuals hide their emotions. *We hide ourselves*. The following records the way the first author of this book began the writing of a book, may be this book, a decade ago.

II. A Section Written a Decade Ago

This section quotes, almost in entirety, with one or two minor changes chipped in here and there, an essay named "From Hegemony to Counter Hegemony/ A Journey in a Non-Imaginary Unreal Space" by Ajit Chaudhury, published in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Review of Political Economy, January 30, 1988. The seminar where this paper was presented took place earlier, in 1987.

I

The limits of Gramsci follow from this that he had to work within the orthodox Marxist paradigm. In the process, Gramsci hits the limit of the orthodox school, which in turn also defines the limit of Gramsci.

This paper intends to be a critique, and a parallel construction, of Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and counter-hegemony. In short, the paper restructures some of Gramsci's major theoretical categories in the light of Hegel's and Freud's analysis. The central propositions of the paper are:

Proposition I: Hegemony epitomizes the elite's dream. In Gramsci, the elite and the subaltern are defined over a *homogeneous* cultural space. Consequently, the signals have identical significance to the agents concerned. Thus, collaboration on the part of the subaltern is represented as the negative — a mirror image — of the elite's power of persuasion: collaboration is not seen as an autonomous element embedded in the consciousness of the subaltern — subalterns collaborate with what they consider right and just. Similarly, the elite's persuasive power, inasmuch as it is defined over a *different* cultural space, is also culture-specific. Therefore, there are possibilities of *displacement* of the signs of collaboration within the same cultural space — from collaboration to resistance — as also from one space to another. Similarly, possibilities of *condensation* also exist. *Hegemony is an expression of these displacements and condensations as in a dream: it epitomizes the elite's dream.*

Proposition II: Counter-Hegemony is a quantitative extension of the signs of the displaced (synthetic) hegemonic power. A symptomatic reading of hegemonic power reveals the true position of the elite, from which follows counter-hegemony as a leap.

Thus, my point of departure is the dream — a non-imaginary unreal space — and not *reality*: hegemony is an expression of the elite's dream. Therefore, I begin with questions like: what is the structure of the elite's dream? How is it formed? What does it signify? Can we fulfill our dream? Etc.

II
Structure of Hegemonic Power

We begin from the first principles — the elementary aspects of elite/subaltern relationships. The elite and the subaltern relate themselves in the idiom of power — of dominance and subordination. Dominance subsists in its explicit other: subordination. Again dominance, as also subordination, is itself a complex: of persuasion (P) and coercion (C). Similarly, the complex of subordination includes as its elements collaboration (C*) and resistance (R). Therefore, dominance/subordination relations define a complex of complexes.

Hegemonic power is a mapping of P and C* in the (D, S) space. For this to be a valid mapping, it is necessary that (D, S) is homogeneous. But $P|. \in D$ is qualitatively *different* from $C*|. \in S$. P and C* define an exchange relationship — P flows from the elite to the subaltern and C* flows from the subaltern to the elite. If a cultural space *separates* the elite from the subaltern, then it is theoretically necessary to show how signals are transmitted from one space to another. In other words, collaboration is not immediately a negative persuasion. To persuade, it is necessary — though not sufficient — that a subject persuades an object who understands the language of persuasion. The question is: how does the elite construct the universal, that is, hegemonic power?

Hegemonic power, therefore, does not immediately follow from the elite's persuasive principles: it is the elite's appropriation of the collaborative principles internal to the subaltern as an autonomous force, a *displacement* of the collaborative principles. More correctly, hegemonic power is a *condensation* of the persuasive power and the *displaced (synthetic)* collaborative principles. The subaltern can now read the language of persuasion — by means of its own modified language, that is, of collaborative principles.

Hegemonic power, therefore, is a complex of *different* qualities. The hegemonic power thus formed can be called *synthetic hegemonic power* as opposed to simple hegemonic power flowing from the elite's persuasive principles. In this connection it needs to be stressed that by hegemonic power Gramsci means simple

hegemonic power. Gramsci, however, observes that the elite's simple persuasive principles do not always work in modern capitalism. The situation comes out in Gramsci as an illustration of the failure of the hegemonic power. I, on the contrary, would like to argue that the hegemonic power still continues to work in this situation — but in an altered form. For example, Gramsci, in his discussion of passive revolution, illustrates a situation where the capitalist cannot rule by its thesis, and constructs a surrogate synthesis to incorporate a part of the antithesis. The surrogate synthesis, in Gramsci, signifies the failure of hegemonic power. We should like to designate Gramsci's surrogate synthesis as *displaced (synthetic) hegemonic power*. Since Gramsci could not recognize the displaced (synthetic) hegemonic power, it was, naturally, not possible for him to ask questions like: how is the displaced (synthetic) hegemonic power formed? What are its limits? How does counter-hegemonic power grow out of the displaced (synthetic) hegemonic power? Etc. These are the questions we take up in this paper. These questions are particularly important in less developed countries where the capitalist class cannot establish its simple hegemonic power. In the existing literature the situation is often described as leading to Caesarism. It is our conjecture that the supposed Caesarism can very well be a case of hegemonic rule by the capitalist class: only we fail to recognize this hegemonic power because it appears in an altered form. We hope that an analysis of the displaced (synthetic) hegemonic power will bring out these issues more sharply.

It needs to be stressed that the displaced (synthetic) hegemonic power is not the elite's appropriation of the antithesis — it is not a thesis incorporating a part of its antithesis to block the synthesis.

Since collaborative principles are not the other of persuasive principles, they do not stand in a thesis/antithesis opposition. Indeed, the moment we pose *dominance* and *subordination* as complexes, it is difficult to pose them as Hegelian *others* — one has to reformulate the concept of an other. Elements of the complex neither annihilate each other as in Hegel's doctrine of being, nor do they support each other as in the doctrine of essence: they condense (and they condense because they can be displaced from one complex to another). Indeed, thesis-antithesis do not stand even as Hegelian categories. An analysis of the implications of the argument appears in section IV.

III
A Dream Sequence

The following records the dream of an elderly woman, highly cultivated and held in high esteem:

> She went to the first military hospital and said to the sentinel at the gate that she must speak to the physician-in-chief (giving a name which she did not know) as she wished to offer herself for service in the hospital. In saying this, she emphasized the word service in such a way that the sergeant at once perceived that she was speaking of 'love service'. As she was an old lady, he let her pass after some hesitation, but instead of finding the chief physician, she came to a large gloomy room, where a number of officers and army doctors were standing or sitting around a long table. She turned to a staff doctor and told him her proposal: he soon understood her meaning. The words she said in her dream were: 'I and countless other women and girls of Vienna are ready for the soldiers, officers or men, to….' This ended in a murmur. She saw, however, by the half-embarrassed, half-malicious expressions of the officers that all of them grasped her meaning. The lady

continued: 'I know our decision sounds odd, but we are in bitter earnest. The soldier on the battlefield is not asked whether he wishes to die or not.' There followed a minute of painful silence; then the staff doctor put his arm around her waist and said: 'Madam, supposing it really came to this, that … (murmur).' She withdrew herself from his arm, thinking 'They are all alike' and replied: 'Good heavens, I am an old woman and perhaps it won't happen to me. And one condition must be observed: age must be taken into account, so that an old woman and an young lady may not … (murmur).'

… As she went up, she heard an officer say: 'This is a tremendous decision, no matter whether she is young or old; all honor to her.' With the feeling she was simply doing her duty, she went up an endless staircase.

In spite of the *absences* and *suppressions* — where the gaps occur the speeches are interrupted by a murmur — we can get at the meaning of the dream: the dreamer is ready at the call of duty to offer herself to gratify the sexual needs of the troops, irrespective of rank. The old lady in white dress comes out as a self-appointed prostitute.

Here is a classic case of displacement: the prostitute appears in an altered form — a nurse. The old lady does not make any *incorrect* statement, nevertheless her statements are not *true*: there are absences, commissions, suppressions, alterations. A symptomatic reading of the lady's statements brings out the truth.

The opposition here is not between transient and permanent or finite/infinite, as in Hegel: we do not annihilate or negate the lady's statements. Indeed, we accept the lady's basic position: that she is respectable. But we also add: she is a prostitute. In short, she is a respectable prostitute. Now, the quality of a respectable prostitute is different both from the qualities of respectability and of prostitution: we have here a condensation of respectability and prostitution. A close scrutiny will reveal that there is nothing immoral about being a respectable prostitute. Being a respectable prostitute is a necessary step to being a decent lady — the respectable prostitute contains in an embryonic form the decent lady, one has only to take a leap. So we proceed in the following steps:

(1) interrogate a well-meaning nurse to bring out the prostitute in her;
(2) observe her as a respectable prostitute;
(3) create a decent lady out of a respectable prostitute.

It is superfluous, but still I add: the lady epitomizes our elite appearing in the guise of a well-meaning nurse, this is its hegemonic power. We cannot negate this hegemonic power; we can only contest it.

IV
From Dream to Reality

It immediately follows why and how I differ from Gramsci's concept of hegemony: I do not subscribe to the *thesis-antithesis-synthesis* paradigm of orthodox Marxism. In Gramsci, displaced (synthetic) hegemony follows because the *thesis* incorporates a part of the *antithesis*, and thus blocks the *synthesis*. In other words, the ruling class constructs a *surrogate synthesis*. Two things follow straight way:

(1) Gramsci extends the thesis-antithesis-synthesis frame to include a new concept — *surrogate synthesis*;

(2) and this follows from (1), he accepts *true synthesis* as a valid theoretical category for the Marxist.

Our position is that the synthesis cannot be a point of arrival: it tells only half the story. We counterpose to synthesis the Hegelian universal which involves both synthesis and analysis. A moment of the universal represents hegemony for the elite; a more developed moment signifies counter-hegemony for the subaltern. Counter-hegemony is a quantitative extension of hegemony which involves a *change in quality*. On the other hand, Gramsci counterposes surrogate synthesis and true synthesis. Displaced (synthetic) hegemony follows from a surrogate synthesis, while counter-hegemony is an expression of the true synthesis. In other words, counter-hegemony is not a supersession of bourgeois hegemony, it is a plain and simple rejection of the hegemony of the ruling class.

It will be more appropriate if we can incorporate the spirit of Gramsci within a Hegelian frame. The ruling class does not, in fact, project a moment of the universal — it presents only its surrogate. In other words, the moments of the universal undergoes a process of *displacement* or *transvaluation* at the hand of the ruling class. Construction of counter-hegemony involves two steps:

(1) determination of the truth-content from these transvalued universals by a symptomatic reading, that is, there is a coming back from the displaced (synthetic) universal to its original point; and

(2) movement towards a higher moment of the universal.

In other words, false consciousness cannot hide the truth; it reveals the truth. Silence, absence, slips, errors, all contain in them the elements of truth. It is the purpose of theoretical labor to extract truth by forcing false consciousness to reveal itself. *We do not always negate: we do sometimes, as Foucault says, contest. Contestation is a necessary step for negation/transgression, transgression for counter-hegemony, for counter-hegemony is a journey from a lower moment of the idea to a higher one.*

III. A Section That Is Not Ours

In this section we are quoting the relevant part of the paper of Partha Chatterjee (except of the obvious spelling changes due to the differences in the British and the American system) that came as a reaction to the above paper by Chaudhury. This paper by Chatterjee, titled "On Gramsci's 'Fundamental Mistake'" was published in the same number of *Economic and Political Weekly*.

Ajit Chaudhury's paper deals with a 'fundamental mistake' in Gramsci. He locates this 'mistake' by constructing a 'model' out of Gramsci's writings on hegemony, passive revolution, subaltern consciousness, strategies of counter-hegemony, etc, in the *Prison Notebooks*. I do not think Chaudhury will claim that this is a full, or literal, or even a correct, reading of Gramsci. It is a deliberately one-sided reading which brings out a consistent chain of argument that is representative of what may be called an 'orthodox' variety of Marxism. Locating oneself within that tradition, it is possible to identify Gramsci's extension of the orthodox argument. Chaudhury's task is to show that this extension is untenable in terms of the orthodox framework. That is Gramsci's 'fundamental mistake'.

I will come back later to the implications of Chaudhury's demonstration that it is impossible simply to extend the orthodox argument to deal with the sorts of problems with which Gramsci was concerned, viz., the problems of hegemony and counter-hegemony in countries which have not passed through a 'classical' bourgeois revolution. Let me first go through some of the details of Chaudhury's demonstration.

The Simple Structure of Hegemony

Hegemony in Gramsci's 'model' (as constructed by Chaudhury) implies the following:

a) there is a homogeneous cultural space over which persuasion (by the elite) and collaboration (by the subaltern) can operate;
b) collaboration (by the subaltern) is the negative of persuasion (by the elite); and
c) there is no element of collaboration in subaltern consciousness which is autonomous of the persuasive principles of the elite.

Taken together, these characteristics of hegemony mean that the dominant ideas propagated by the ruling classes constitute the paradigm (code, language, culture) within which both persuasion and collaboration is practiced. When the subaltern classes collaborate with their rulers, they do so because, and only because, they accept as their own the dominant ideas propagated by the latter. Collaboration is thus a mirror image (negative) of persuasion. Of course, since we (the critical theorists) know that this society is class-divided, we also know that the persuasive principles of the elite only reflect its specific class interests. Hence, what the elite projects as generally valid for society as a whole is in actuality only valid for its sectional interest as a ruling class. When the subaltern classes collaborate, they do so because they falsely believe that those sectional principles are valid for them as well. Hence, we obtain a simple structure of hegemony where persuasion is only an extension of the coercive powers of the elite and collaboration the result of the false consciousness of the subaltern classes (i.e., of the mirror image of ruling ideas in subaltern consciousness).

I do not think it can be denied that there is a long and influential tradition in Marxist thinking which looks at hegemony in precisely these terms. Ajit Chaudhury's exercise may be seen as an attempt to judge the extent to which Gramsci's ideas can be fitted within that framework. Chaudhury shows that if we take hegemony in Gramsci as having this simple structure, then the latter's contribution to the orthodox theory of counter-hegemony will consist of the following extension. The orthodox theory takes the capital/labor relation in bourgeois society as comprising a thesis and its antithesis, socialism is the new synthesis constructed by a working class which successfully overthrows the bourgeoisie. Gramsci considers the non-classical case of 'passive revolution' where the bourgeoisie seeks to achieve hegemony by itself incorporating a part of the antithesis, i.e., by constructing a *surrogate* synthesis which blocks the true synthesis. Examples of such non-classical cases will be Bonapartism/Caesarism, fascism, Americanism, and Fordism. The content of hegemony here will be different from that in 'classical' bourgeois society. Strategies of counter-hegemony, consequently, will also have to be different.

 The question is: if the structure of 'classical' hegemony is a simple one — that is to say, if the bourgeoisie is able successfully to propagate its sectional interests in a universal form, if it is able to use its persuasive principles to elicit the necessary collaboration from the dominated classes (by creating a mirror image in subaltern consciousness within a single homogeneous cultural space), i.e., if it is able to 'rule by its thesis', then why should it need a surrogate synthesis? There can be no such need.

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The need will arise only if the simple hegemonic process fails. Thus, within the orthodox framework, the 'non-classical' cases must all be cases of the *failure* of the classical form of bourgeois hegemony.

It that is so, what is the form of surrogate synthesis? Can hegemony here retain its simple structure as in the classical form? It can be shown very easily that it cannot. If persuasion by the elite is not able to elicit collaboration from the subaltern classes, it must mean that the mirror image is not produced in subaltern consciousness. This can happen if subaltern consciousness occupies a *different* cultural space from that of elite consciousness. In such a situation, the simple structure of hegemony will not apply. What the elite must attempt here is an appropriation of elements of collaboration in subaltern consciousness which spring from an autonomous cultural space. These elements of collaboration will not be the mirror image of the elite's persuasive principles. Such an appropriation can be made possible only by *constructing* a surrogate cultural space in which the elements of persuasion and collaboration (the latter not the negative of the former) appear as distorted, displaced and condensed. Such hegemony, in other words, will have a *complex*, not a simple, structure.

Before we go on to Ajit Chaudhury's analysis of this complex structure of hegemony, let us take note of two implications of this demonstration. If Gramsci's problem is to understand the 'non-classical' cases of bourgeois hegemony as classified under the term 'passive revolution', a mere extension of the simple hegemony model will not serve the purpose. This means, first, that the thesis–antithesis–synthesis form of arguments will have to be abandoned. If the surrogate synthesis consists of the appropriation by the thesis of a part of the antithesis, the thesis itself cannot be defined unambiguously, for now it is no longer the projection of the sectional interests of the bourgeoisie in the form of a universal: it *contains* other (different, contradictory) interests. Besides, the surrogate synthesis can now be expected to produce a new antithesis which will not be identical with the original antithesis. The very form of the orthodox problematic will need to be changed. In other words — and this is the second implication — hegemony will have to be thought of as a complex structure, which again is something the orthodox 'model' does not permit.

I think the usefulness of Ajit Chaudhury's one-sided reading of Gramsci is to show the impossibility of an 'orthodox' resolution of Gramsci's problem (along the lines of, say, Plekhanov, Luxemburg or Bukharin — perhaps Trotsky and Stalin as well).

The Complex Structure of Hegemony

Chaudhury's treatment of the complex structure of hegemony brings out the following characteristics which are the opposite of those of the simple structure:

a*) collaborative principles in subaltern consciousness reside in a cultural space which is autonomous of the cultural space occupied by elite consciousness;

b*) collaboration is not the negative of persuasion; and

c*) the elite seek to appropriate the autonomous collaborative principles in subaltern consciousness by displacing them and by constructing a modified (surrogate) cultural space in which the displaced collaborative principles and the elite's persuasive power can be condensed.

The result is hegemony 'in an altered form', which Chaudhury calls 'displaced hegemonic power'.

Chaudhury's analysis here is avowedly 'structuralist', in Althusser's sense, and in line with this form of argument, he presents hegemony as 'the elite's dream'. Distortion, displacement, condensation — all of them Freudian categories used in Althusserian analysis — are deployed here to reveal the complex structure of hegemony. (I think Chaudhury also uses the device to suggest that hegemony represents the elite's 'wish' which it can fulfill only in a dream, not in actuality.) The particular dream used by Chaudhury is reported in Freud (both in the 'Interpretation of Dreams' and in the 'Introductory Lectures') and is used by the latter to illustrate the form of 'censorship' (in this case, the 'murmurs' resorted to by the lady at the most embarrassing moments in her proposal to the soldiers) as an instrument of distortion of the dream-content. The interpretation in terms of the prostitute/nurse dichotomy is Chaudhury's own — it does not occur in Freud — and, as far as I can make out, the image of the lady 'in a white dress' is Chaudhury's addition; it does not occur in Freud's account of the dream.

In any case, it is not difficult to see what Chaudhury means. The bourgeoisie wishes to present itself as prepared to provide 'services' to all, 'irrespective of rank'. Yet it also wishes to maintain its standards of 'respectability', which necessitates distinctions of rank. 'Universal' services can be provided only by selling oneself in a marketplace where all are sellers and buyers: the 'respectable' person must become a prostitute. The opposition between 'respectability' and 'prostitution' is sought to be overcome in the condensed terrain of a dream where the two terms are displaced from their original cultural moorings. This is the surrogate field of displaced hegemonic power.

Chaudhury argues that this displaced hegemonic power cannot be negated; it can only be 'contested'. We cannot counterpose the surrogate synthesis with a true synthesis. We cannot assert a counter-hegemonic strategy which constructs a true synthesis simply by rejecting the surrogate synthesis. The counterposing of surrogate/true synthesis is implied by a Gramscian 'model' built along orthodox lines. Consistent with his argument up to this point, Chaudhury must reject the validity of this implication.

What he proposes instead is, first, an interrogation of the displaced hegemonic power to 'determine its truth-content', i.e., tracing the way back from the displaced (surrogate) universal 'to its original point', and second, moving from this lower moment of the universal to a higher one. Let us consider the implications of Chaudhury's proposed journey.

Coping with Complexity

It must be obvious by now that this journey is impossible within the confines of the orthodox model; it can only be undertaken if one takes the structure of hegemonic power as a complex.

What does Gramsci have to say about this? We may use this opportunity to bring in the other side of Gramsci — the side which Chaudhury had deliberately left out in his construction of 'Gramsci's model'. Does one not get in Gramsci's writings sufficient evidence that he too thought of hegemonic power as having a complex structure? Let us take as an example Arun Patnaik's discussion in his paper 'Gramsci's Concept of Commonsense' (appearing elsewhere in this issue). In his review of Gramsci's criticisms of Bukharin on the one hand and Croce on the other, Patnaik brings out the following characteristics of the hegemony process:

a**) elite consciousness and subaltern consciousness do not occupy a homogeneous cultural space;

b**) collaboration is not the negative of persuasion (this is implied by Patnaik's criticism of 'inversion'); and

c**) some elements of collaboration are internal to subaltern consciousness and hegemonic power requires their appropriation.

A little reflection will show that these are exactly equivalent to a*), b*) and c*) which Chaudhury had described as characteristics of the complex structure of hegemony. Arun Patnaik's reading of Gramsci, therefore, brings out precisely that which Ajit Chaudhury had shown to be impossible in an 'orthodox' construction of Gramsci's 'model'.

This will not be surprising to anyone familiar with Gramsci's texts. In fact, some may wonder if an 'orthodox' construction of Gramsci's 'model' was at all warranted. I think, however, that Chaudhury's construction is useful in focussing our attention more closely on what precisely is involved in our abandonment of the simple structure of hegemony and what we must do to cope with a complex structure.

Chaudhury's two-step proposal involves, first, a return to the 'original point' of the hegemonic process, and second, a movement from a lower to a higher moment of the universal. The first step implies a questioning of the surrogate (that is, false) form of the universal and the uncovering of its 'truth-content'. One obvious difficulty here is that while Chaudhury rejects (quite correctly, in terms of dialectical logic) 'true synthesis' as a valid Marxist category, he asserts that there is an 'original truth content' which lies transvalued and displaced in the surrogate universal. He gives no indication as to what this might be, if not an original thesis/antithesis antinomy. The second difficulty is that the return to an original point and the subsequent moment to a higher universal would seem to imply that the displacement in hegemonic power can be completely erased; if this journey of counter-hegemony is indeed successful, the displacement might never have happened at all.

I think it can be argued that this part of Chaudhury's proposal is wholly at variance with Gramsci's suggestions. Gramsci takes the form of displaced hegemonic power quite seriously. He not only asks: 'What is the truth-content which lies displaced in the surrogate universal?' (perhaps he does not ask this question at all); he also asks: 'What makes it necessary for the elite to construct a surrogate universal? What makes it possible for it to deploy the surrogate effectively?' Crucially, Gramsci seeks to establish, in their relation to each other within the hegemony process, the positions of the elite and the subaltern as conscious historical subjects inhabiting autonomous cultural domains. Can this be done in Chaudhury's structural model? I have serious doubts about this. Althusser's method has great force in demonstrating the poverty of a Marxism which treats a social formation as an aggregate of simple structures. It is the critique of reductionism which Chaudhury applies with precision to show the impossibility of tackling within that sort of framework the 'non-classical' cases of hegemonic power. (Perhaps Chaudhury will even argue — and I am with him if he does so — that there are in fact no 'classical' cases at all; hegemony in class-divided society is always complex.) But can he take the next step as easily as he thinks? Will he not, if he has to remain true to his structuralist method, be forced to put down the possibilities of change as conditioned by 'structural overdetermination' and leave it at that? Can he seriously talk of 'conscious historical subjects' and of 'conscious mediation' within this framework? Was there not a logical imperative in Althusser's method itself which forced him to talk of 'history without a subject'?

Chaudhury has sought to get out of the problem by an appeal to Hegel. Having interrogated the surrogate universal and uncovered its truth content, Chaudhury's counter-hegemonic strategy is to move from a lower to a higher moment

of the universal. The first and most obvious difficulty here is to reconcile the Althusserian (or Freudian) notion of the structure with the forms of Hegelian logic. Chaudhury himself says that the elements of a complex structure cannot be seen as annihilating each other as in Hegel's doctrine of being (obviously), nor as supporting each other as in the doctrine of essence (in which case the structure cannot be defined as a whole consisting of parts, which would be a real problem). To enable him to find an access to the Hegelian universal, Chaudhury must first backtrack, that is, extract the truth-content in the displaced universal. Does this mean then that we first reconstruct the complex as a simple structure, redefine it as a Hegelian whole, discover its contradictory essence, and then make the journey towards the suppression of the contradiction in a higher moment of the universal? Will not the first step in the journey mean throwing away the baby with the bathwater? One certainly cannot see Althusser approving of this procedure. Indeed, one has grave doubts about whether the marriage which Chaudhury proposes between Hegelian logic and the Althusserian method can ever be consummated.

IV. Rewriting Gramsci in the Context of Cultural Differences

This paper quoted in the earlier section records Chatterjee's comments. We appreciate it. Chatterjee responded to Chaudhury's ideas about Gramsci with due responsibility, that is, in black and white.

Chatterjee's fundamental objections are the following:

i. Chaudhury's structuralist reformulation (as in Section I of this Chapter) of Gramsci in the context of cultural differences, and the concept of synthetic (hegemonic) space that Chaudhury proposed to deal with cultural differences — have nothing new to add to Gramsci — all of Chaudhury's propositions can be traced back to Gramsci.

ii. Since Chaudhury had modeled a structuralist Gramsci, he should not invoke, methodologically, the Hegelian categories in the later part of the paper, for structuralism and Hegel (Chatterjee thinks) do not go together.

We will now respond to these criticisms one by one. First let us deal with the first criticism by Chatterjee. We must admit the elegance in Chatterjee's summing up of Chaudhury's position as represented in the paper regarding synthetic cultural space.

As Chatterjee sums up: *synthetic cultural space* (in Chatterjee's words — 'complex structure of hegemony') is a product of *cultural differences* that separate the elite's persuasive principles and the subaltern's collaborative principles. But Chatterjee does not agree that this instance of cultural difference is absent from Gramsci. In his view, Gramsci's concept of hegemony too occurs in the context of such cultural differences, though the popular rendition of Gramsci dilutes this as *simple hegemonic space* devoid of cultural differences. In this connection, Chatterjee admits the merits of Chaudhury's formulations.

The 'fundamental mistake' of Chatterjee flows from the fact that he understood difference in the sense of the everyday usage of the term — as distinct from its discursive postmodern connotations. The source of this misunderstanding was his elision of the concept of *homogeneous cultural space* that nuances Chaudhury's exploration of hegemony.

For instance, thesis and antithesis are, of course, different — but they flow from, in Gramsci, a *surrogate synthesis* and therefore reside in a homogenous cultural space built on a *surrogate essence.* Such differences flowing from some *sameness* (real or posited) is not *difference* as a discursive category. Partha misses this point. Chaudhury, on the contrary, abandoned the very thesis-antithesis-synthesis paradigm. As Chaudhury wrote in his 1987 Gramsci paper "synthetic hegemonic power is not the elite's appropriation of the antithesis — it is not a thesis incorporating a part of its antithesis to block the synthesis" in order to form a surrogate synthesis. … "Indeed, the moment we pose dominance and subordination as complexes, it is difficult to pose them as Hegelian others — one has to reformulate the concept of an other."

The above should be self-explanatory. Still, Chaudhury did explain more — in fact, over-explain — to drive this point home. Nothing is obvious from all perspectives. Imagine a modernist space and the space of tradition as two Hegelian others, the elite residing in a modernist space and the subaltern inhabiting the space of tradition. As Hegelian others, both *modernism* and *tradition* here are capable of being recognized on their own, that is, in terms of their respective essences.

Partha Chatterjee would say that here the elite and the subaltern occupy different cultural spaces. A surrogate synthesis would then emerge with the thesis appropriating some collaborative principles internal to the subaltern. Therefore Chaudhury's position of the elite and the subaltern inhabiting different cultural spaces does not inaugurate a break from Gramsci. But, the central thrust of Chaudhury's argument rests on the claim that modernism and tradition as Hegelian others are not different as understood in postmodern academic discourses. Because, as Hegelian others they flow from some imagined, may be potential or may be posited, unity that renders them as parts of a homogenous cultural space.

In Chaudhury's construction, elite space and subaltern space are two structures (complexes) that cannot recognize themselves in terms of their essences. But, they have to know themselves in terms of, among others, their differences from each other — that is, what the other structure is not.

This was and is a break. Something new. Thus understood, the instance of *cultural difference* is absent in Gramsci. And this instance now leads to new questions and new answers in the context of a discourse on hegemony. Chaudhury's question was, how can the elite (or more correctly, the elite space) have its hegemony over the subaltern in such a situation? A situation in which the elite space can neither annihilate nor appropriate the subaltern cultural space.

Recall: Partha Chatterjee's stress is on the instance of appropriation. Look: we are going to traverse here an uncharted terrain of hegemony — beyond Gramsci, beyond Laclau and Mouffe, and of course, much much beyond Partha Chatterjee.

Now, the question is: how can the elite space, or more generally a space — say space I — can have its hegemony over another space II without appropriating or including it — even while it excludes the other. *How can a space have its hegemony over what it excludes?*

Chaudhury's answer to this question, as recorded in the 1987 paper, was: "*through exchanges*" — of goods, meanings. In this context, Chaudhury used such Freudian categories as *displacement* and *condensation.* Lacanian terms, metonymy and metaphor would bring out the subaltern nuance of the answer at a later stage of the analysis.

Chaudhury's argument was: categories from the *elite space* get displaced into a *subaltern space* during a course of exchange between these two. The categories of the elite space get condensed into the categories of the subaltern space. Categories that

include, among others, the subaltern's concept of *negation*. In Lacanian terms the statement would be: metonyms of the elite space migrate into and get condensed in an altered subaltern space in and through a process of exchange and start re-constituting its categories, even its concept of negation.

More correctly, in the beginning there is neither an elite space nor a subaltern space — there are only *two spaces* — space A and space B. Space A emerges as an elite space through a process of (unequal) exchange that involves transfer of A's metonyms into B signifying a surreptitious intrusion of space A into space B. Chaudhury understands hegemony as a process of such unequal exchange out of which emerge elite and subaltern as discursive categories.

So, the categories of elite and subaltern are not Chaudhury's points of departure, but, actually, points of arrival, through an exposition of the process of hegemony. If Chaudhury had started off with such categories, it is because Chaudhury, in that Gramsci seminar, was talking to an audience uninitiated in postmodernism. So, forget (the) elite and (the) subaltern and pretend that there are only spaces — cultural space A and cultural space B. Let us be a bit more concrete: call A-space 'modernist space' and B-space 'tradition-bound space'.

But how do we recognize modernism and tradition? We recognize it by *what it is* and *what it is not* — by its *reality* and *negation*. A spectrum of constitutive principles informs a modernist space. But not simply their presence, modernism does also know itself in terms of their absences. But note: *modernism* as a category, in this frame of conceptualization, has no essence.

Likewise, a tradition-bound space has its own reality and negation.

It is this abstract scheme that informs Chaudhury's rendition of elite space and subaltern space. Elite space has its own *reality* (persuasive principles) and *negation* (coercive principles). On the other hand, collaborative principles embody the reality of subaltern space and principles of resistance signify its negation.

Now what is Partha Chatterjee's concept of (complex) hegemony in this context? Let us consider a concrete example.

Assume that God is a constitutive element in modernist space — it does not matter whether it is a Christian God or bourgeois God (a concept of equality). On the other side a tradition-bound space has its own gods. *God* and *gods* reside, in Partha Chatterjee's conceptualization, in two different cultural spaces. Chatterjee would identify (complex) hegemony as a situation in which the elite recognize, honor and appropriate the gods of the tradition-bound space in order to produce a composite *God* ruling over the subaltern *gods* in the tradition-bound space. Chaudhury might add in Parenthesis that this is the Hindu mode of exercising hegemony over the margins in Indian Pre-Muslim history.

But that is altogether different from Chaudhury's point. *God* and *gods*, in Chaudhury's opinion do not reside in two different cultural spaces, in as much as they flow from a potential unity or synthesis — here, from the idea of *composite God*. Nor is Chaudhury's concept of synthetic hegemony predicated on the possibility of an appropriation of subaltern gods by the elite.

Synthetic hegemony does not seek a unity, composite or otherwise. Its allegiance is to *differences*. One might say that it is hegemony in a postmodern world.

Synthetic hegemony occurs through a process of exchange (of goods and meanings) that involves externalities. Metonyms of the reality of space A get condensed into the *negation* and *reality* of space B and thereby usurp space B silently, surreptitiously, unseen. Space A and B apparently remain as what they were: *different*. But space B is now ruled by the part objects from space A that agents of space B do not recognize:

they think that they are worshipping their own good old goddesses oblivious of the obvious that their goddesses now put on denim jeans.

And as they negate too, they forget they are affirming an alien God, for the metonyms of the realities of another space now constitute even their *negation*.

V. Some Entirely New Conceptual Tools

But why did Chatterjee — or for that matter, the brightest stars of Chaudhury's generation in Calcutta — miss this simple point? Because they did not take Chaudhury's redefining of the concept of hegemony seriously. And hence, treated it as a structuralist legerdemain. Recall Chaudhury's definition of synthetic hegemonic power:

> It (synthetic hegemonic power) is the elite's appropriation of the collaborative principles internal to the subaltern as an autonomous force, a displacement of collaborative principles. More correctly, hegemonic power is a condensation of the persuasive power and the displaced collaborative principles.

Displacement, *condensation*, *synthetic*: all these are not clever and deceitful use of jargons, but convey a new meaning of hegemony that Hegelian concepts such as *thesis*, *antithesis* and *synthesis* cannot capture. Elide over them and the entire message of the paper gets lost on you.

What does *displacement* mean? Displacement is an important Freudian category that Freud deploys to discover the structure of dream. It designates a situation in a dream sequence in which a signifier appears in an altered form. *Condensation*, on the other hand, represents a case where different signifiers combine into one. Synthetic hegemony as "a condensation of persuasive power and displaced collaborative principles" means that the synthetic hegemony is structured by a whole range of signifiers that are combines of persuasive power and altered (dwindled, dwarfed, distorted) collaborative principles. Condensation carries within it a sense of *hybridity*.

> The construction of collective and composite figures is one of the chief methods by which condensation operates in dreams…A collective figure can be produced for purposes of dream-condensation, namely by uniting the actual features of two or more people into a single dream-image. It was in this way that the Dr. M of my dream was constructed. He bore the name of Dr. M, he spoke and acted like him; but his malady belonged to someone else…One single feature, his pale appearance, was doubly determined since it was common to both of them in real life. (Freud, 1976, 400)

Who, then, did visit Freud in his dream? Dr. M? Or, someone else? Or, perhaps, neither Dr. M nor someone else, but a hybrid signifier hinting at some of its fragments? Instead of using the term *hybridity*, Chaudhury used the concept *synthetic hegemony* in the 1987 paper.

Chaudhury's concern there was to provide a preliminary — and, excuse us for our arrogance, pioneering — theoretical outline of a cultural space informed by such synthetic signifiers constituted out of the interaction between two different cultural spaces.

More: Chaudhury raised the issue of hegemonic power within the context of a

synthetic space — how to prise open the instance of dominance of one set of signifiers within a cultural space over those of another. When signifiers are synthetic, the issue of dominance gets blurred and therefore needs to be theoretically posed and discerned.

We are happy to see Chatterjee using in his later works (Chatterjee, 1993), a term 'synthetic hegemony' that Chaudhury brought into circulation in Calcutta in that Gramsci seminar. We are happier to see that Chatterjee (1993) has come out of some of his earlier Gramscian obsessions that counterpose hegemony to passive revolution as a blocked dialectic.

Let us listen to what Chatterjee (1986, 30) said:

> In situations where an emergent bourgeoisie lacks the social conditions for establishing complete hegemony over the entire nation, it resorts to a passive revolution by attempting a molecular change of the old dominant classes into partners in a new historical block.

And Chatterjee (1993) changes his position and writes:

> In passive revolution, the historical shifts in the strategic relations can be seen as a series of contingent, conjunctural moments. The dialectic here is not blocked in any fundamental sense. Rather, the new forms of dominance of capital become understandable, not as the immanent supersession of earlier contradictions, but as parts of a constructed hegemony, effective because of the successful exercise of both coercive and persuasive power, but incomplete and fragmented at the same time because the hegemonic claims are fundamentally contested within the constructed whole.…The dominance of capital does not emanate from its hegemonic sway over civil society. On the contrary it seeks to construct a synthetic hegemony over the domains of both civil society and the precapitalist community. (Chatterjee,1993,212).

For us, it is flattering to see the leap in Chatterjee's understanding of the nuances of hegemony. But we are sorry to say that his essentialist bent of mind is capable of receiving only a small fraction of the wisdom (please, again, forgive our arrogance) of the 1987 Gramsci paper. Chatterjee's essentialism leaps out of him in spite of his use of terms such as 'fragments', 'contingent', 'conjunctural' etc.
Firstly, capital cannot produce synthetic hegemony — indeed no subject can produce it. Synthetic hegemony *is produced*.
Secondly, neither civil society nor community is distinguishable, immediately.
Because, they are formed by synthetic signifiers. If there are any such things as community and civil society, they need to be re-produced theoretically, as two distinct spaces. Only then the question of hegemony can legitimately be asked, given that hegemony as a concept has been theoretically produced.
It is not a question of constructed hegemony, but of construction of hegemony as a concept. Then why does Chaudhury say — how does he claim — that what is involved is a hegemony of the elite (space) over the subaltern?
Because: elite's persuasive principles do not alter, fundamentally, in this course of interaction. It just gets deposited in the subaltern cultural space which the subaltern consume, unconsciously.
Lacanian categories such as *metaphor* and *metonym* can bring out this point in a more focussed way. While the elite space appropriates the signifiers in the subaltern space

in their *metaphoric* transformations, *metonyms* of the signifiers in the elite space get deposited in the subaltern space. These days, we designate this asymmetric exchange between the two spaces informing (elite's) hegemony (over the subaltern) as *mimicry of overdetermination*.

Look: the above does not necessarily entail an appropriation or inclusion of the subaltern (signifiers) into the elite space. The elite space remains what it is. Valorization of the subaltern signifiers does not alter it remarkably. But the (metonyms of) signifiers in the elite space intrude into the subaltern space, alter it, and put their marks on it, silently, surreptitiously. In other words, the elite space *colonizes* the subaltern space. Thus comes into being a colonized subjectivity, excluded from the elite space, yet thinking, speaking and writing in its idioms.

In fact, it is the question of colonial hegemony that prodded and prompted Chaudhury to undertake the task of formulating the concept of synthetic hegemony. Partha Chatterjee's book on the concept of *India as a nation* — how it emerges out of the nationalist discourses during colonial India — came out just a year back (Chatterjee, 1986). Chaudhury had been asked to write a review of the book for a Bengali journal *Baromash* by its editors. We might add that Partha Chatterjee himself was one of the editors of the journal. Chaudhury raised the issue of synthetic hegemony there, in concrete terms, within the context of such nationalist discourse deferring a theoretical formulation of the problem at a later stage. The review was published in *Baromash* in April, 1987.

Partha Chatterjee's rendition, in that book, portrayed the concept of Indian nation emerging as a *surrogate* (constructed) universal that joins *modernism*, *colonial heritage*, and *indigenous tradition*. In this context, Chatterjee valorizes the strength and merits of indigenous tradition and the concept of Indian nation building on and around it.

Chaudhury argued in his review that the very concept of *indigenous* gets altered, dwindled and dwarfed during and within such nationalist discourse. And, what finally emerges out of it is a concept of *tradition* constituted by modernist discourse. The central thrust of Chaudhury's arguments lay in the claim that colonialism (modernism) colonizes the very space of tradition by putting its mark on it. *Synthetic hegemony* consists in a misrecognition of these modernist twists and bends incorporated within the very body of *tradition*. The important question it raises is: how a distant power (colonial, Asiatic, postcolonial) exercises its cultural hegemony on the agents without appropriating them in its fold — indeed simultaneously subjecting them to a process of exclusion, even seclusion. Colonial hegemony thus raises a *new* question that has never been asked before in the modernist discourse and thus requires a *new* answer in terms of *new* conceptual tools. Chaudhury's concept of synthetic hegemony is a riposte to this challenging question.

This is the kind of hegemony that we are observing in our space that rules over the wise and the pagans alike. Chaudhury made a very modest attempt to problematize this hegemonic scene more than a decade ago. As far as we know, till now none else in our shared global village has come up with such a concept of hegemony. Not even Laclau-Mouffe who have constructed a concept of hegemony in a postmodern context. Chaudhury did not have to look for and think over his concept of synthetic hegemony in North American universities. He found it in this very Job Charnock's city — Calcutta — just bent down and picked it up. For, this is colonial hegemony. Colonizer Job Charnock left it behind.

VI. Cross-comparing with Other Positions

Let us state quickly what is new that Chaudhury's 1987 Gramsci paper has (still) to offer to current cultural studies. We will contrast, briefly, that position with those of Laclau-Mouffe and Homi Bhabha. Earlier we have discussed Laclau-Mouffe to a fuller length. Here we just insert a few words in the particular context of *Synthetic Hegemony*. A similar thing with Homi Bhabha — later in this book we are going to discuss him more thoroughly.

 Laclau-Mouffe's (henceforth LM) central questions are: why hegemonic formations are necessary and how they are formed. LM built on the premise — or more correctly, the lemma — that *society is impossible*. The lemma derives from the postmodernist (now commonplace) assumptions — such as there are no essence, logos, or closed totalities — that inform their model.

Their founding concept is *antagonism* that articulates the lemma of impossibility of society. In their conceptualization, antagonism issues from plural metaphoric surpluses of subject positions in a constituency. Impossibility of subject in general — and impossibility of working class as a subject in particular — is the primary upshot of these conflictual subject positions. In LM's frame, impossibility of subject and impossibility of society are one and the same thing.

Hegemonic formations, then, are necessary, in their scheme, for the society to function. Hegemonic formations consist in privileging a few signifiers that structure the other floating signifiers around a nodal point. A hegemonic formation thus derives from the surplus meanings of the contingent privileged signifiers.

Chaudhury's journey began from where LM ended. While LM ask how a hegemonic formation comes into being, Chaudhury's concern is with the mode of interaction of multiple hegemonic formations. The key question that Chaudhury asks is: how one hegemonic formation dominates over another hegemonic formation?

We suppose that an illustration will help to foreground the issue. Consider *modernism*. In Partha Chatterjee, it is capable of being recognized in terms of its essence. For LM, it is a hegemonic formation that comes into being in the way we have discussed. Likewise, *tradition* too is a hegemonic formation in their conceptualization.

LM ask: why hegemonic formations are necessary, what inform them and how one hegemonic formation can counter another hegemonic formation. But they never ask the question how plural hegemonic formations interact with one another and in this process one hegemonic formation dominates over the rest.

On the contrary, what intrigues us is the question how one cultural space as a hegemonic formation can dominate over another cultural space, a different hegemonic formation. This question gets blurred in LM, for their concern is with a single hegemonic formation. In the final analysis, their novel analytic turns out to be totalitarian — albeit contingent, with cracks and fissures — but, none the less totalitarian, with a few privileged signifiers transmitting their surplus meanings to the entire system. Hegemony in LM means hegemony of a few signifiers within a culture, and synthetic hegemony — with one culture dominating another culture.

We would say that this lacuna inflects their discourse on counter-hegemony that mandates radical democracy as the bottomline of all counter-hegemonic struggles. Before positing radical democracy as a counter to the dominant hegemonic formation, we will ask: how radical democracy interacts with, interprets and intervenes in the dominant culture? In short, we would like to examine first whether the concept of radical democracy

itself gets inflected by and inflicted with the 'evils' of the dominant culture. It is postcolonial cultural studies that has foregrounded the issue of *cultural differences*. But unfortunately, instead of streamlining the discourse on hegemony, it has served only to put it under the carpet. Instead of positing cultures as hegemonic formations, it views them only as differences: *modernism* is what *tradition* is not. Likewise tradition is understood as a negation of modernism. The *unity* that emerges, then, is an overdetermined unity of negations or differences that Homi Bhabha — a foremost member among the group doing cultural studies — calls *third space*. And this over-valorization of differences in culture pushes in the background the moments of their (hegemonic) realities and thereby the entire issue of hegemony, for hegemony is the intrusion of the hegemonic reality of one cultural space into another cultural space through its metonyms.

VII. Sameness, Difference and Diversity

Let us return home. We were talking about Partha Chatterjee. LM and Bhabha can wait. The problem with Chatterjee is that he does not quite get the contextual meaning of the pair of words 'cultural differences' associated with Chaudhury's poststructuralist frame of reference. The sub-title of the paper — "A Journey in a Non-Imaginary Unreal Space" — refers to the symbolic space that Lacan talked about. And the theoretical categories that Chaudhury deployed in this paper are *displacement* and *condensation* which get translated in Lacan as *metonymy* and *metaphor*. Chaudhury's use of the term — (cultural) difference — has to be understood, therefore, in a Lacanian — or, more generally, poststructuralist — sense that does not flow from some idea of *sameness* grounding a *totality*. Poststructuralism dispenses with all notions of totality. *Difference in poststructuralism means difference without any reference to sameness*.
Chatterjee's, or, for that matter, Gramsci's, notion of cultural difference, on the other hand, is situated within a Hegelian conceptual framework running in terms of such categories as *thesis*, *antithesis*, and *synthesis*. If, for instance, the thesis is capitalism and the antithesis is feudalism, then the elite in capitalism and the subaltern in feudalism, of course, occupy different cultural spaces. But these cultural differences are mere moments in the journey of the Hegelian idea referring to some sameness that the concept of the Hegelian idea entails.
For instance, consider a typical Gramscian subaltern (that Chatterjee refers to) who has not read Hegel or Kant, and goes by the principle of commonsense and has deep faith in religious (Christian) values. The cultural values of this typical subaltern are, certainly, fundamentally different from those of an educated modern western man. But poststructuralists will not call it *cultural difference*, instead, they would designate this as *cultural diversity*. It is precisely because of this reason — his leanings towards Hegelianism — that Chatterjee loses from view how Chaudhury's formulation of the problematic of hegemony distances itself from that of Gramsci. Chaudhury's articulation of the problematic of hegemony is in the context of cultural differences, while that of Gramsci deals with a situation of cultural diversity.
What then, is *cultural difference* that draws a wall between the elite's persuasive principles and the subaltern's collaborative principles?
Chaudhury had in mind the sort of cultural difference in a colonial context. As a footnote to Chaudhury's essay indicates, persuasive principles and collaborative principles "…are Guha's concepts. The implications of these concepts have been discussed at length in Guha's 'Idioms of domination and subordination in colonial

India', a paper presented at the subaltern studies conference, Calcutta 1986."
Chaudhury's intervention in Guha's essay consisted in foregrounding the issue of *cultural difference* in the field of transmission of what Guha calls — elite's persuasive principles and the subaltern's collaborative principles. Chaudhury then followed through the consequences of this cultural difference in the context of a master/servant (elite/subaltern, colonizer/colonized) relation: how the elite's persuasive principles (the concepts of equality, freedom etc) get translated into the subaltern's collaborative principles (flowing from *dharma*).

Freudian categories such as *displacement* and *condensation* come out to be very important in this context. They turn out to be the principle vehicles in this *process of translation*.

So what was really at issue in Chaudhury's paper was *cultural difference* in a colonial situation that cannot be written off or negated. But, that has to be encountered and negotiated upon, with a whole range of transnational consequences by way of a series of displacements (metonymic slidings) and condensation (metaphoric cuts).

Though Chatterjee entirely missed these subtle instances in Chaudhury's poststructuralist formulation, he would encounter these issues later in his treatment of colonial difference (Chatterjee, 1993). But we must say that his treatment of colonial difference (cultural difference in a colonial context) leaves much to be desired, mostly because of his empiricist moorings and inadequate understanding of what *cultural difference* as distinct from *cultural diversity* entails.

The concept of *colonial difference* that Chatterjee talks about has always been present in Chaudhury's essay as an *absence*: *colonial difference is a particular type of cultural difference* (that we will shortly explain) in the context of a visible master-servant relation that defies *erasure*. Thus understood, it is a theoretical concept. It involves four moments:

i. A particular kind of cultural difference;
ii. A visible or declared master-servant relationship;
iii. A logical impossibility of an *erasure* of the colonized's culture;
iv. A naming, that is, *colonial difference*.

Only the fourth moment was absent from Chaudhury's discussion, all others had been present.

Colonial difference, for us, is an overdetermined structure of master-servant (coercion-resistance) relation and a specific kind of cultural difference (persuasion-collaboration principle) marked by principles of equality in the master's space and that of hierarchy in the servant's space. Coercion-resistance relation, on the one hand, determines and constitutes cultural difference: the colonized culture *is* what *is not* the colonizing power's culture. On the other, *cultural difference* determines and re-affirms coercion-resistance relation: the principle of hierarchy in the colonized space invites and legitimizes a hierarchical colonial structure. *Colonial difference* then presumes a specific kind of master's space that embraces the principle of equality and master-servant relation simultaneously, in one complex. In other words, master's reason of equality must contain unreason always already inherent in it. This precisely what Lacan-Žižek would call *symptom* that expresses itself in various forms. *Colonial difference* is one such form.

Colonial hegemony is constituted by, among others, *ideological fantasies* that cover up the *symptoms*. Let us understand this in terms of a deconstruction of Freud's analysis of a dream that has been already referred to in Chaudhury's 1987 paper that is quoted in full in Section I of this Chapter.

We would like to posit it as a dream dreamt by the General of the Army (the colonizer), and not the lady. The dream serves as a wish-fulfillment of the colonizer (the General): *they (the women) want to get screwed*. This serves to cover up the colonizer's/General's wish to screw the colonized people. The colonizer is a gentleman and a rapist, simultaneously and together — he rapes gently. This displaced version of the dream expresses this symptom covered up by a *fantasy*. And when the colonized receives it as his/her dream (the dream of the old lady) — cometh the Genesis — colonial hegemony is born.

The purpose of Chaudhury's paper (1987) was precisely this: to describe the colonial space as what Lacan calls *symbolic space* where the objects in the *imaginary* (the images) go through different forms of *displacements* and *condensations* (*metonymic slidings* and *metaphoric cuts*). Chaudhury called this *colonial symbolic space* as *synthetic space* to mark it as overdetermined by the Lacanian *Real* — the *unsaid* — that is to say, marked and masked by *ideological fantasies*.

We can appreciate Chatterjee's uneasiness about Chaudhury's rendition of Gramsci. Chatterjee problematized, implicitly, the social reality around him in terms of a *complex space*. Chaudhury, on the contrary, posited a *synthetic space*. *Complex space*, we might recall, is that which can be captured in terms of an *essence* or *surrogate universal* (like nation, community) that binds the mutually fighting *thesis* and *antithesis* to defer their *synthesis*. The concept of *synthetic space*, on the other hand, dispenses with a thesis-antithesis conceptual framework altogether and views the entities at issue as overdetermined by one another. We might add that a simple space is one that can be grounded on an *unreconstructed* (Hegelian) *universal* such as the notion of 'right' or 'efficiency' in the context of a capitalist society.

Look: both *complex space* and *synthetic space* are the same when viewed from the perspective of a simple space — as what the latter is not. So it is quite legitimate for Chatterjee to think, from his undertheorized epistemological stance, that he (with his *complex space*) and Chaudhury (with his commitment to *synthetic space*) are rendering the same thing. But, it gives us relief to see that finally he spots something wrong with his equation and grasps that they two are not saying *quite* the same thing. He also spots that Chaudhury is a structuralist. But here Chatterjee notes his dissent: one cannot rearticulate Hegel to a structuralist frame.

From the vantage point of 2000 we can say that Chatterjee's puritan discursive stance — of a strict separation between Hegel and structuralism does not carry much weight these days. Structuralism is no longer considered much of a break from Hegel. For instance, it is one of Žižek's merits that he joins Lacanian structuralism and Hegel. So, without going into a methodological detour, we choose to focus upon the substantive part of the issue at stake: what are the steps involved in our re-mix of Hegel and Althusser and their theoretical consequences?

A structuralist space is a synchronic space that is analogous to Hegelian space announcing the *End of History*. It exhumes *unhappy consciousness*. *Happy consciousness* for those favoring the status quo and *unhappy consciousness* for those committed to socialism.

We propose here a break away from *unhappy consciousness* through *skepticism* to a kind of *stoicism*: a knowledge of *lack of freedom* in reality in order to be *free* in the terrain of thought. If we cannot change the order of reality, we can at least make some changes in the order of discourse.

What is at stake here is the Hegelian vector of stoic→ skeptic→ unhappy consciousness — we are going to invert it. Ours is a move from *unhappy consciousness* to *stoicism*. So how can our structuralist frame jettison Hegel?

Recall what happy consciousness means : a feeling of attainment — of the *End of History*. Our motivation throughout this chapter, or the book in general, has always been to interfere with, interrogate and intervene into this *happy consciousness*. That is why Chaudhury invoked one of Freud's contestation of a dream consciousness, symbolizing here the bourgeoisie's dream of an attainment.

Some are happy only with a *contestation* of a happy consciousness. We call them *skeptic*. Most of our postmodern colleagues — all of them — choose to be *skeptic*, with a few (Foucault, for instance) desperately groping for freedom in between the flashes within *skepticism*. They all are prisoners of *Reason* — condemned to be confined by the four walls of skepticism.

Our project is to make a break through these walls of the legacy of western postmodernism. Our proposition is that this unending skepticism enslaves us even more — reaffirms and perpetuates our chains, even in the terrain of thought. If not in reality, we would like to be free at least in the terrain of thought.

That requires, first and foremost, that one gets out of this all-embracing skepticism to finally realize that one thing is beyond contestation: that *we, an overwhelming majority of people on the globe, are still a variety — variation — of servants* (postcolonized servants, as we would say later in the book).

That puts our skepticism to a stop — and we at last know what we are and where we stand. The cataclysm has happened and we are among the ruins. We have got to live no matter how many skies have fallen. Life goes on heedless of what we are: whether we are masters or servants. One then becomes a *stoic*. Her/his endeavor is to make the best of a big bad mad world, out of its master-servant relations that are upon him.

So, what is on our agenda is nothing short of an inversion of the Hegelian *stoicism→ skepticism→ unhappy consciousness* sequence. The reverse move *happy consciousness→ stoicism* involves what is analogous to the Hegelian notion of *supersession* : *thesis* (here, *skepticism*) annihilating its binary opposite, *antithesis*, to lift it up into a higher form of existence called *synthesis* (here, *stoicism*).

Analogous, but not homologous. Because, the Hegelian method — or, for that matter, any method — taken out of its system entails a translational problem which is nothing short of a violence.

Our import of the Hegelian categories into a structuralist rendition of Gramsci is, of course, guilty of this violence. But so also are great dialectical materialism and historical materialism: Marxian dialectical and historical materialism disengage dialectics from its initial idealist roots and rearticulate them to materialist problematic. Which is a violence, as you will presently see.

Recall the Hegelian vector of *stoicism→ skepticism→ unhappy consciousness*. *Skepticism* is always already present in *stoicism*; *stoicism*, from its very inception, carries the traces of *skepticism*. *Skepticism*, then, is nothing but the *actualization of the possibility* of *skepticism* within the idea of *stoicism*. The two, *skepticism* and *stoicism* are not two categories differentiated by time and space. Both of them are moments of one *idea*. The higher moment of *idea* (*skepticism*) annuls the lower moment of *idea* (*stoicism*) to elevate it into a higher form of existence, that is, *unhappy consciousness*.

By contrast, historical materialism often deals with categories divided by time and space. For instance, *embryonic capitalism* as the thesis on the margin of a *feudal society*, the antithesis. Materialist dialectics deals with two material entities as thesis and antithesis and as such must be differentiated in time and space, something that a Hegelian dialectics would call a violence.

We contend that our inversion of the Hegelian vector — a reverse journey from happy

consciousness to stoicism — does less violence to Hegelian dialectics than what its materialist counterpart does. For, what we are dealing with is a variation of Lacanian structuralism, as the very title of the essay suggests (note the phrase: 'Non-Imaginary Unreal Space'). So, *happy consciousness* here is *happy consciousness with a gap*. That is why it is possible to contest this happy consciousness which carries within its idea the traces of skepticism. To call into question the concept of *equality*, it is enough to interrogate the concept of *equality*, as we shall see elsewhere.

Stoicism is a discovery of the gaps of the gaps. If *happy consciousness* is a (false) *feeling of an attainment* of freedom, *skepticism* is *finding out holes* in it — a glimpse of the power relations lurking within. One becomes *stoic* by way of a knowledge of the *gaps*: where power of the master ceases and the servant becomes himself, that is, free.

We shall see elsewhere how one discovers this space of freedom through an interrogation of the dominant morality. Our concern here is primarily to drive home why and to what extent this reverse journey that we undertake within a structuralist frame can be captured, explained and expressed in terms of the popular Hegelian categories such as *thesis*, *antithesis* and *synthesis*. In short, our motivation is to contest a position — Chatterjee's position — which is becoming a prejudice for a large section of academicians (both Calcuttan and Non-Resident-Calcuttan) that categories of one system defy translation into another system.

Look: *thesis-antithesis-synthesis* are not, strictly speaking, Hegelian categories. Hegel talks about lower moments of the idea being superseded by their higher one and not the *thesis* superseding the *antithesis* — to form a *synthesis*. *Thesis-antithesis-synthesis* sequence is a conscious distortion of Hegel to suit Marx's dialectics to a materialist frame. Similarly, we too can play around with these categories in order to integrate them into our poststructuralist frame of an overdetermined totality (albeit, with gaps, fissures and cracks).

What does this play involve? It is a play by the savage — his bricolage — that absorbs everything occurring on earth and in heaven to fit in with his tiny world made of a whole series of his *totems and taboos*. He can soft-pedal one of these categories and play up the rest to make a whole lot of poststructuralist paradigms.

But where does it leave us? Not in the realm of fantasy. But neither in the realm of defeatism. For poststructuralism does not rule out possibilities of change and actions. It just limits their scope. *Stoicism* of the 21st century is a search for the knowledge of this limited scope. The agent has finally known himself to be colonized on the postcolonial scene, in a melodrama of difference. What will he do now? What are the things he can do? What is his *dharma*?

Four
Postcolonial Cultural Studies:
Looking through the Glass Differently

I. Colony and Postcolony

We share the *democratic* belief of many of our postmodern contemporaries (Bhabha, 1994, Escober 1995). The belief that being hybrid is not a vice or a disgrace — hybridity of culture only reflects cultures in terms of differences that negotiate with one another and thus oppose a moral stance that knows only to negate its other. We, after all, live in a world where and when everything and everyone determine and constitute one another to produce what Bhabha calls *third space*.

Third space is an in-between space that is neither the West nor the East, neither the North nor the South. Everyone rules, and is, simultaneously, ruled. And therefore the same. Nobody enjoys a privileged situation to determine and dictate others. In fact nobody does anymore determine, everyone just overdetermines. The air of overdetermination produces a sense of sameness. It claims no hierarchy of concepts: all concepts enjoy the same status in this world of discourse. Our concept of synthetic space has a *kinship* relation with this *third space*.

But with one difference. We add: same but not quite. We contest the very concept of overdetermination and show how, in the final analysis, overdetermination turns out to be its own mimicry: everyone is overdetermined, but not quite. Capital slips through the network of overdetermination and dictates, unseen, from behind the scene — but never appearing obscene, that is, without overtly abandoning the play of overdetermination, but playing it down, downgrading and mimicking it.

We have called this phenomenon mimicry of overdetermination. It is a very subtle form of hegemony that characterizes our postmodern postcolonial time. Or, to put it the other way round, postcolonialism is a form of hegemony of one (geographical) space over another, characterized by mimicry of overdetermination. Thus understood, postcolonialism is a discursive phenomenon that resists being captured in terms of historical time.

Current postcolonial studies, on the contrary, are overtly historicist in nature. The 'post' of the postcolonial studies has the sense of a simple succession, a diachronic sequence of periods in which each one of them is clearly identifiable. It has a historical referent (the concrete of the colonized past) and indicates a rupture with the latter. As always a thousand schools of thought contend in postcolonial studies. But their differences count for little next to this abiding unanimity. The business of postcolonial studies is to deal with the legacy of the colonial space. From this legacy the postcolonial space breaks away as one comprised by a sovereign nation.

We are going to contest this rupture. We argue that it is essentially a way of forgetting or repressing the colonial past. That is to say, repeating it and not surpassing it. On our scheme, the colonies exist here and now, at this fag-end of the twentieth century. It exists on the other side of the border of discourse: its

undeclared, unwritten and unrecorded outside. As great nations fight and their colonies fall, their discourses take over the reign. They re-establish their discursive colonies where the rules of the parent discourse undergo metonymic changes. We propose to put a name to this undeclared outside — *third world* — and record its voices.

That demands, first, that we must make it clear what we mean by the term: colony. By *colony* we mean the colony at its best form, that is, the British form. (Give the devil his due.) Colony signals a limit to the dominant discourse: the recognized and recorded one. Colony is a discursive space that displaces the rules of the dominant discourse by a display of substitute rules. Let us hear what John Stuart Mill says:

> All the orders given and all the acts of executive officers are reported in writing...[There] is no single act done in India, the whole of the reasons for which are not placed on record. This appears to me a greater security for good government than exists in almost any other government in the world, because no other has a system of recordation so complete.[29]

So, here, the text, the writing, or, the recordation, is subrogating itself in place of the concrete context of colonial hegemony. In supplanting itself in the order of power it generates a chain of metonyms appropriate to the colonial context and thus appropriates the colonial civility and its enlightenment.

Colonialism consists in an abrogation of the hegemony of enlightenment. The substitutes of the hegemony of enlightenment replace the actual one. This act of replacement, as we would see, might have a whole range of consequences. The colonizer calls a spade a spade and a colony a colony. He makes a clean breast of it (that is, keeps a clean account of it), and records what goes on in it. In short, puts it under the gaze of enlightenment, that is, colonial power. The colony is a pain in the tail of enlightenment, its limit, which it recognizes, records and reforms.

Our central proposition is that postcolonialism is an unrecorded version of colonialism. A limit to the dominant discourse that the postmodern man does not (dare to) recognize and record. Postcolonialism is colonialism in its un-British form. It is a discursive space of the suppressed, and perhaps forgotten, colonies. In short, postcolony — or, *third world* — is a (the) symptom of postmodern society.

It occurs readily enough that ours is a very different way of conceptualizing postcolonialism, or, *third world*. Therefore, we put a name to our brand of postcolonialism: *margin of margin*. The idea of *margin* or *periphery*, as it emerges in forms of different brands of center-periphery models, is a legacy of colonialism. There, the periphery or the margin is the continuity of colony — its counterpart —

[29] Parliamentary Papers, *1852-1853, XXX, testimony of John Stuart Mill to a select Committee of the House of Lords, 21 June 1852, page 301. Re-quoted from Homi K. Bhabha, 'Sly civility', in his* The Location of Culture *(London: Routledge, 1994), page 93.*

into the postcolonial space comprised by sovereign nations. The very idea of the center-periphery model smacks of essentialism and empiricism. It evokes the memory of past (lost) colonies: the colony evaporates only to become a periphery. It involves a refinement of colonies — a *rarefaction* — into the periphery.

A whole range of models in postcolonial studies has currently called into question *binary opposites* such as *center-periphery*. These models have intended to explore the complex inter-connections between the opposites in, what we could call, an overdetermined space. Where the center and periphery overdetermine each other (though with contradictions). Consequently, the center and the margin acquire surplus meanings, with their initial meanings and familiar sites erased. That simultaneously erases the margin in its essentialist sense. Or, at best, denigrates and displaces it as a blank space in the newly constructed overdetermined space. Spivak (1988) talks about such subject-positions in strictly occidental space that are full of such gaps, we have already more than discussed it. Bhabha (1994) explores the new *in-between* subject positions emerging out of the *negotiations* between what we previously labeled as the center and periphery, or, the colony and metropolis.

Bhabha, clearly, is a development of the center-periphery models. His periphery is a *rarefaction* of colony that further rarefies into a new in-between subject position as it moves in the rarefied circle of its past lords. Thus the margins liquidate themselves.

We contest these new-wave center-periphery models and re-inscribe, that is, redraw the margin (or, the periphery) as a displacement of the colony in postcolonial space. We have already talked about what this displacement means: a discursive space where the categories of the parent discourse undergo mutation. We concentrate on a subset of this genre of postcolonial studies (their NRI[30] makes, remakes, and re-mixes) keeping in mind that they have a very large network of kinship relations, a web of highways and super-highways spread over the globe. We choose Bhabha as a typical — and perhaps the best and the richest — representative of this family.

The key-concept in Bhabha is the *third-space*, comprised by what he calls the 'in-between' categories. Through the play of cultural differences (a postmodern concept) as distinct from cultural diversity (its essentialist counterpart) Bhabha formulates his *third space*. It emerges out of the interactions between the dominant discourse (the West) and its Other. In this postcolonial cultural field they overdetermine each other. So, the discursive categories in the parent discourses transcend their familiar meanings. They gather surplus meanings and condense into new — in Bhabha's terminology, 'in-between' — categories to constitute Bhabha's '*third space*'. We might add that we find no fault with this argument, in so far as we confine our attention to a subset of the postcolonial scene.

We are going to build our argument on a concept, *synthetic space*[31] that is, in more ways than one, very similar to Bhabha's *third space*. Bhabha confines the scope of the *third space* only to the analysis of the postcolonial scene (offering alternative insight to grasp its colonial counterpart that we shall discuss later). But we find the notion of *third space* working in the colonial context as well as in the postcolonial context, although with a much greater force in the postcolonial case. We argue that this lack of insight is inherent in Bhabha's partial (partisan) view. Bhabha views the

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[30] NRI, the non-resident Indian is a very important category in Indian commerce and economics these days, due the adorable and enviable magic of the NRI position of earning in dollars and spending in rupees. Remember the very highly skewed dollar-rupee exchange rate that is a commonplace in DC-LDC trade.
[31] Chaudhury, 1994.

colonial context as one of *mimicry* of man (that is to say, *man of enlightenment*). This, we fear, offers only ways of repressing, or perhaps, forgetting the colonial past — that is repeating it and not surpassing it. We, therefore, invoke the notion of mom, margin of margin, and point to the specificity of the postcolonial perspective, the dark spot (black hole) of enlightenment.

In short, we articulate postcolonialism and colonialism as distinct discursive categories. For us, postcolonialism is a metonymic transformation of the dominant categories — capital, commodity, etc — into its outside: a response to the symptom of postmodernism. And, this must necessarily occur on the other side of its border: the border of postmodern-Marxist/postcolonial discourse: as its symptom. While colonialism is the enactment of the same dominant discourse as something contingent and accidental.

Our motivating aspirations are clear and straightforward: to intervene into the discourse on hybrid (in-between) identities. We intend to specify, name, and discursively articulate its different kinds and pinpoint the colonial hybridity. That will separate it out from the other kinds of hybridized nomadic identities that the postmodern man possesses.

Our central proposition is: postcolony is a metonymic representation (overflow) of some of the principal categories of the dominant discourse in an alternative (discursive) site. This site occurs independent of the subject's will in case of postcolonialism. But, in the case of colonialism, the same discursive categories flow from the acts of a colonizing subject — the ruling colonial power. In short, postcolonialism is colonialism in its higher (more refined) form, beyond the will of the subject. We apply our idea of postcolonialism to contest an important and influential segment of the current discourse on postcolonialism that valorizes on hybridities of culture erasing their colonial moments.

We appreciate Homi Bhabha and his followers for the articulation of this novel concept: *hybrid space*. It is a unique contribution by our immigrant friends in the west to contemporary social studies. We will not hide our pride for being their siblings.

We do share their concern for the limitations of the center-periphery models. In a world where everything overdetermines every other thing, center-periphery models (North-South, West-East, or any other mutant) do not carry much sense for us. Everything becomes hybrid — this precisely is the message of our concepts of *passive re-evaluation* and *synthetic space* distancing us from old Gramsci and his not-so-old disciples.

We appreciate our NRI-brethren's appraisal of postmodernist precepts as well. It is interesting to observe how our non-resident Indian friends deploy the postmodernist categories in a very different context to deal with the mundane problems of the wretched-of-the-earth. This leads to a translation, relocation and realignment of the parent postmodernist categories that we find fascinating.

But we believe such postcolonial cultural studies would be richer, were it supplemented by a theory of *closure*. It is nice to philosophize at the level of epistemology, on an ever-open postmodern totality with no fixed ground. But, as we have discussed it earlier, on a different plane, at the level of a (specific) discourse, we do need a theory of closure to lend it a sense of direction. This closure might help us

to distinguish between different kinds of hybridities. Colonial hybridity and postcolonial hybridity might not turn out to be quite the same thing!

We have noted such theories of closure in a postmodern context in Chapter Two and Chapter Three of this book. We can follow through the consequences of such a discursive closure: grope for the possibilities of a closure and be aware of its impossibility. We are then driven to the brink — to encounter what *symptom* is. The Supplement to this book has done precisely this, it has dealt with an analysis of *symptom* in the context of a discussion on Marxian political economy. But Marx is not just everybody's cup of tea. And a reference to Marx might as well make quite a few uncomfortable. In this case, the message of our previous chapter regarding *symptom* will fall flat. The impossibility of the market economy that such symptoms signal will be taken in for yet another Marxist commonplace.

So let us pretend that we know nothing about political economy. It is our belief that an in-depth analysis of current cultural studies might also bring us to the brink: interrogate the hybrid and find quite a few of them to be bastards. Please, let us add that the word 'bastard' here does not carry any derogatory sense — Jesus too was a bastard. (Who represents Virgin Mary? Mother India?[32])

We therefore propose to elaborate on, extend, and interfere with the current discourse on postcolonial studies dealing with cultural hybridity. We will inscribe in it our *colonized* gaze. (Beware: for us the word 'colonized' does not carry any pejorative meaning). First, we would wed aspects of a theory of closure to the literature on cultural hybridity. Laclau and Mouffe will inform us in this project. Laclau and Mouffe, mind it, and not Resnick and Wolff: for the latter speak with a nod to Marx that would repel many of our friends. And Laclau-Mouffe talk about post-Marxism that bids farewell to Marx. Our present concern is not with Marx, but with the symptoms of this society and of social studies.

We might as well put forward this skeleton of our argument. The literature on cultural studies build upon categories such as *negotiation*, *relocation* and *realignment* of concepts and of their meanings. All these mean: all concepts and words are ambiguous and carry surplus meanings.

Fine. But, what kinds of surplus meanings do they convey? Metaphoric or metonymic?

Laclau and Mouffe come out to be very important for us in this context — their system deals with precisely such questions. We have noted that in Chapter Three: metaphoric surpluses signal *antagonism* while metonymic surpluses build up *hegemony*.

What interests us in a process of dissemination of meanings is their metaphoric cuts and metonymic slidings. Particularly the metonymic slidings: how a chosen set of words distribute their metonymic surpluses over an entire cultural text. And also the metaphoric cuts that support such metonymic slidings. A few key concepts build up their hegemony through the distribution of their metonymic surpluses. And the metaphoric surpluses signal the shadow of a subject behind some essence that dies hard. While the metonyms arrange for a closure, we encounter the subject, metaphorically, organizing this closure — as a phantom. We interrogate and contest the phantom — and it disappears. The totality crumbles down. And there we are — face to face with symptom of civil society.

We take off from where Homi Bhabha ends: from a hybrid cultural space. We note two distinct phases in Homi Bhabha's discourse on cultural exchanges: one

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[32] The Indian counterpart of the proper name 'India' is 'Bharatbarsha'. It carries the name of the mythological king Bharat, who was a bastard himself.

dealing with the colonial situation and the other in a postcolonial context comprised by sovereign nations. Homi Bhabha captures the spirit of culture of the colonized subject in terms of a novel concept that he borrows from Lacan: *mimicry*.

Mimicry is a kind of repetition. But no repetition does ever exactly repeat the original. Mimicry is a kind of repetition that repeats the original but not quite. The colonized's culture, Homi Bhabha claims, is a mimicry of the colonizing subject's culture in this sense. Homi Bhabha makes no reference to cultural hybridity in a colonial context. The issue of cultural hybridity emerges in Homi Bhabha's model of history later, in connection with the postcolonial situation. But the issue of mimicry, in its turn, disappears in Bhabha's model in the postcolonial context.

We intervene in Homi Bhabha's discourse in a two-fold manner.

1) We contest the thesis that *mimicry* designates the dominant culture of the colonized. In our opinion, the colonized's culture shows signs of hybridity marked by the hegemony of the culture of the colonizing subject. And

2) We propose that the moment of *mimicry* persists on into the postcolonial period too.

Which means that there must be a (missing) theoretical field where this mimicry occurs. We call it postcolony or *third world* or *margin of margin*.

It is in this context that Laclau and Mouffe enter into our discourse. We pick up from them the concepts of *antagonism* and *hegemony* that they build on the Lacanian ideas of metaphoric and metonymic surpluses in the meanings. We deploy these categories in their modified forms to deal with colonial and postcolonial hegemony. We take to task the disciples of Bhabha for missing this point that a hybrid cultural space is not a neutral space, but marked by the hegemony of a (dominant) party. *Third world* is nothing but a legacy of this postcolonial hegemony — a response to the *symptom* of postmodern society.

II. Hegemony as a Lack of Hegemony

We begin from Guha (1989): *a forgetfulness in current postcolonial studies*. Chatterjee (1993) and Gyanprakash (1996) could and should take off from Guha (1989). The latter, in our opinion, is more important in the contemporary context of postcolonial cultural studies than his seminal work: *Colonial Insurgency: Elementary Aspects of Peasant Consciousness*. Forgetfulness of Guha (1989) has reduced Guha to a mere *Old Vanguard*, worn and exhausted, nothing more than simply an organizer of a movement — Subaltern Studies — with little contemporary relevance. This ongoing section builds on Guha.

Imagine a colonized state facing a colonized power. The master and the servant — the colonizer and the colonized — relate themselves in the idiom of power, of *dominance* and *subordination*. The master-servant relationship is a complex of dominance and subordination. Dominance subsists in its explicit other: as subordination. Again, dominance itself is a complex of *persuasion* and *coercion*. Similarly, the complex of subordination includes as its elements *collaboration* and *resistance*. Therefore, dominance-subordination relations define a complex of complexes.

We assume that, from the standpoint of the colonized country, the principles of *persuasion* constitute a homogeneous field given externally. It is important to stress that these persuasive principles follow from a constructed cultural space (discursive field) overdetermined by many contradictions and therefore are continually changing its forms. But from the servant's (here, the colonized people's)

standpoint, these changes — which he does not understand — are unimportant, so that for all practical purposes we (the critical theorists) can consider the complex of persuasion to be homogeneous.

However, the complex of persuasion and that of collaboration do not belong to the same cultural space; they are qualitatively different. Persuasion and collaboration define an exchange relationship: persuasion flows from the master to the servant and collaboration flows from the servant to the master. If the master and the servant belong to different cultural spaces, it is theoretically necessary to show how signals are transmitted from one space to another. In other words, collaboration is not immediately a negative (mirror image) of persuasion. To persuade successfully it is necessary — though not sufficient — that a subject persuades an object who understands the language of persuasion.

Then the question is: how does the master construct a cultural space (a discursive field) in which the communication between the master and the servant is possible? In concrete terms, the questions is: can a colonial power rule with hegemony (some kind of persuasion) if the colonized subjects do not understand its language, its principles of persuasion?

It is now a commonplace proposition that the capitalist state is not always coercive: it can persuade its people to collaborate in its rule. In short, the capitalist state has its hegemony. But as far as the question of colonial domination is concerned, the current literature on the subject rules out the possibility of the hegemony: the colonial state is always a coercive state (Guha 1989). Collaboration by the colonized people is viewed either as an aberration (betrayals by the lackeys of colonial power) or as a myth produced by the colonizer. This underestimates the strength of colonial (and imperialist) power and misses how the colonial power reaches into the minds of people and deforms them into the end-product: the *colonial mind*.

By implication, this also overestimates the strength of our liberated intellectuals. *Those who speak for the masses of the third world might too, Oh God, carry a colonial mind!* In short, the point is missed that the formation of colonial hegemony is an unconscious process that needs to be theoretically analyzed.

Such an analysis requires that we break out of the notion of simple (cultural) space that prevails in the current discourse on colonial hegemony. The notion of *simple space* presupposes that the persuasive and collaborative principles belong to the same homogenous space. The master persuades the servant; the servant is persuaded and therefore collaborates. If the master fails to communicate the persuasive principles, the failure is understood as a *lack* of hegemony. This question is never asked: why does the colonial power fail to communicate its persuasive principles? And, how does it overcome this problem of communication in order to produce a new kind of hegemony which does not rest entirely on the persuasive principles? And, how this transmission is at all possible if the master and the servant — and therefore the persuasive principles and the collaborative principles — belong to different cultural spaces?

We argue that, in such a case of first-order failure, the master needs to construct a synthetic (artificial) cultural space that includes the complexes of persuasion and collaboration (in their modified second-order forms) as its moments. In other words, there exists an *articulated field* in which persuasive and collaborative principles emerge as *moments* of the master's discourse. *Synthetic* (cultural) space is defined in this theoretical field as a flow of these modified persuasive principle from

the master to the servant, who in turn receives them in terms of the modified collaborative principles.

   Synthetic space, therefore, does not immediately follow from the master's persuasive principles. It is a product of the master's appropriation of the principles that constitute the servant as an autonomous force. In other words, it is a *displacement* of the servant's constitutive principles. More correctly, *synthetic space* is a *condensation* of the modified persuasive principles of the master and the constitutive (internal) principles of the servant. The master distorts (reforms) the constitutive principles of the servant, taxes them up with his own persuasive principles, and sends them back to the servant. The servant, then, can read the language of persuasion. *Synthetic space*, therefore, is an ideological practice or *articulation* on the master's part, establishing a relation among elements (persuasion and coercion) such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. *Synthetic space* is to be distinguished from the notion of *simple space* flowing from the master's persuasive principles. *Simple space* implies the following:

1) There is a homogenous cultural space over which persuasion (by the master) and collaboration (by the servant) can operate.
2) Collaboration (by the servant) is the negative of persuasion (by the master).
3) There is no element of collaboration in the servant's consciousness that is autonomous of the persuasive principles of the master.

Taken together, these characteristics of *simple space* mean that the dominant ideas propagated by the ruling classes constitute the paradigm (code, language, culture) within which both persuasion and collaboration are practiced. When the subaltern classes collaborate with their rulers they do so because, and only because, they accept as their own the dominant ideas propagated by the ruling class. Collaboration, thus, is a mirror image (negative) of persuasion.

   Of course, since we (the critical theorists) know that this society is class divided, we also know that the persuasive principles of the master only reflect the specific class interests of the master. Hence, what the master projects as generally valid for the society as a whole is in actuality valid for his sectional interest as a ruling class. When the subaltern classes collaborate, they do so because they falsely believe that those sectional principles are valid for them as well. Hence, we obtain a simple cultural space where persuasion is only an extension of the coercive power of the master. And, collaboration is the result of the false consciousness of the subaltern classes — that is, the image of the ruling ideas in the mirror of subaltern consciousness. For example, in the context of capitalism, simple cultural space is said to prevail when capital can control labor by principles of persuasion that includes capitalism's own principles (accumulation, democracy, freedom).

   It is in this context that we develop the concept of synthetic cultural space. If persuasion by the elite is not able to elicit collaboration from the subaltern classes, it must mean that the mirror image is not produced in subaltern consciousness, the servant is failing to understand the *language* of the master. The master then learns the language (code, totem) of the servant, distorts it and constructs out of it a new code to convey the message of his persuasive principles. The servant then starts speaking a

new language — his master's language[33] — without being aware of it, thinking that he is speaking in his mother tongue. The servant becomes a refugee in his homeland.

The current discourse on colonial hegemony misses this subtle point. It identifies hegemony with the persuasive principles of the colonial power. So, the current discourse does not find any hegemony operative in the colonized country. And, it considers the only mode of action of colonial power as the coercive one — and thus misses all that is subtle in this game of power. To make this point more specific we focus on Guha's analysis of colonial hegemony, which summarizes others' positions and finally dismisses the colonial hegemony as *impossible*. We are now going to point out what this analysis misses.

The current literature on colonial hegemony opposes modernism to tradition. The colonial power is viewed as both good and evil. Good, because it brings modernism (science). Evil, for the obvious reason that its presence means lack of freedom for the colonized people. *The degree of modernization in the colonized country is considered as the index of colonial hegemony.*

That is to say, hegemony in the colonial context is understood as simple hegemony. The colonial power is said to be hegemonic if it can persuade the colonized people, in terms of the principle internal to it (modernism), to collaborate in its colonial rule. For example, British rule in India is announced to be hegemonic to the extent that it modernized the education system in India. The people who collaborated with the British in this project (Bidyasagar, Ashutosh Mukherjee) are worshipped as great thinkers and leaders of modern India. Likewise, economic reforms (bringing railways) opening up the possibilities of modernization in the country are cited as indices of hegemonic rule. Opponents of this view also share this notion of simple hegemony, but argue that the educational and economic reforms were quantitatively insignificant and therefore do not signify hegemony.

Latter discussion on the subject (Cambridge Historiography, for example) identifies the roots of British hegemony in India in its system of representation of the colonized subject in the administrative and legislative set up.[34] This inclusion of the colonized subjects in the administration and legislature produced a whole gamut of values constituting modern India. For example, the Cambridge view contends that the nationalist movement in India draws its inspiration from this system of representation. In this view the nationalist sentiments are nothing but quantitative expansions of the urge on the part of the colonized subjects to represent themselves on a greater scale in the administration and legislature. The nationalists in India, of course, would not share this view. They argue that the representations were made on a very limited scale that cannot produce such a distinct value system on its own.

Surprisingly, both the proponents and opponents of the notion of British hegemony in India share the same sense of simple hegemony: the colonial power persuading its subjects, in terms of modernism, to collaborate in its rule. An assimilation of (that is, a compromise with) traditional values is viewed as a failure of hegemony.

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[33] His Master's Voice, HMV, is the biggest Music Company in India, with a picture of a dog listening to a gramophone in its logo. HMV, in a sense, carries a history of Indian culture, and so, the music-addict Indian society as a whole. A history that started, obviously, in the colonial period, the gramophone becoming a very living symbol of power and elitism for both the colonizers and the colonized mimic-men. And it is the same history that continues to unfold in these hyper-real times of the remakes and re-mixes — that salebrate and simulate the past but not quite.

[34] We present here the Cambridge position in the light of Guha's treatment of the subject (1989).

This is the thrust of Guha's argument which dismisses the notion of British hegemony in India. Guha shows how (how often) the colonial power (the British) compromised with the traditional values in order to get the consent of the colonized subjects in its rule. In this context, he argues that the ordinary colonized subjects in British India understood colonizers' persuasive principles in an entirely different idiom — different from the West. They understood in terms of *Dharma/Adharma* — that, in India, demands that the king (the ruler) ensures that his subjects are not denied certain minimum rights (the right to a bare subsistence, the right to pursue their religion, etc).[35] A *Dharmik* king (one who practices *Dharma*) would also undertake certain programs for economic improvements (providing irrigation facilities, etc). On the other hand, resistance takes on the form of *Dharmik* protest when people are denied those minimum rights. For example, *Dharma* requires that the king should not indulge in luxury during a period of famine and that, if the king has surplus stocks of food-grains, he will distribute them to the people. Otherwise the people would have the right to rise in rebellion against the king to take possession of the surplus food-grains. Guha points out that the British persuasive principles in India were combinations of modernism and *Dharma*. He reads this as a *compromise* of the colonial power with the traditional principles — its failure to impart modern values, that is, a *lack of hegemony*.

We concur with Guha's view that British persuasive principles in India were combinations of modernism and traditional values. What distances us from Guha is the theoretical understanding of the concrete situation. While Guha reads this as a lack of hegemony, we find in it the beginning of a new kind of hegemony — synthetic hegemony — the structure of which we have already described in terms of synthetic cultural space. So what is at issue here is a theoretical question: what does hegemony mean? It is in this context that we develop the concept of synthetic cultural space to reach a theoretical understanding of the situation.

Both the Cambridge historiography and Guha share a notion of simple cultural space and debate over its presence (or, absence) during the British rule in India. We argue that one needs to dismiss this simplistic notion of hegemony to understand the nature of colonial hegemony and its continuity into the present (postcolonial) phase. And this dismissal prepares the background for what might be a richer analysis of the concrete nature of colonial hegemony. For example, it is interesting to examine how the colonial power alters (displaces) traditional values in order to combine them with modern values. Perhaps, contrary to what Guha argues, we might find that the British did not merely compromise with traditional values — it altered them, modified them, effaced them — that is, *overdetermined* them.

But, Guha opposes modernism to tradition. The prevalence of the principles of modernism in the colonized country is understood as an index of hegemony of the colonial power. And the appropriation of the traditional values on its part is called 'spurious hegemony' (Guha 1989) — it is understood as a failure of (proper) hegemony.

We have already argued that such a hegemony is not a 'spurious hegemony' or an index of weakness on part of the colonial power. Quiet the contrary: it is a more subtle form of hegemony that needs to be analyzed if we are to understand the strength of postcolonial power and the weakness of the colonized mind. So what is

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[35] *Dharma = dhri + man* is a construction on the root verb *dhri*: to hold. In fact, the word 'dharma' can be considered as a traditional Indian counterpart of the Marxian concept of world-outlook, the concept of ethics being in-built within it. Though, the popular usage equates it with the English word 'religion'. Adharma is the antonym. Something that is not done, that does not hold (the human life).

involved, here, is primarily, a theoretical question. At the level of concrete analysis we concur with the view that the simple hegemony has not worked here — in the colonial context. But while Guha equates this *absence* as an absence of hegemony, we read in it the presence of a *more subtle form of hegemony*. The question that intrigues us is: how come that modernism could appropriate, smoothly, the principles of tradition, a dissimilar thing? The idea comes readily enough, then, that modernism and tradition are not two entirely dissimilar or antithetical things. For, in that case, the appropriation would have not been so smooth. In other words, the notion of tradition itself changes in the presence of modernism. That is to say, modernism displaces tradition: we view tradition in the light (logic) of modernism and therefore as an aspect of modernism.

In Althusser's terms — as restructured by Resnick and Wolff (1987) — this means that tradition is overdetermined by modernism. Modernism and tradition are not two entirely opposed things that can be divided into separate watertight compartments. Modernism determines/constitutes (and is determined/constituted by) tradition. This overdetermining aspect of modernism (and by implication, of tradition) is one of our entry-point concepts into the current discourse on colonial hegemony.[36]

If modernism is a complex of the complexes of economic, political and ideological, then modernism itself is overdetermined by tradition. As modernism interacts with tradition, the notion of modernism itself changes. However, for our purposes, the converse of the proposition is more important: we are more concerned here with the changes in the body of tradition. *Modernism overdetermines tradition, that is to say, determines and constitutes it. As tradition interacts with modernism, the notion of tradition itself undergoes a change.* This creates an identification problem: modernism often appears in the form of tradition.

For example, one upholds tradition (Lord Rama) without knowing that one is actually flagging a western notion of totality, perhaps in a distorted form. The representation of tradition by the subordinate sector often involves screening and censoring in the light of modernism, so that the modern mind can understand it, appreciate it, and perhaps admire it. No wonder that modernism appropriates this tradition and produces a *synthetic space* and its field of operation: postcolonized minds having no roots, that is to say, a false notion of roots.

It is interesting that the notion of *synthetic space* has a striking similarity with Bhabha's notion of *third space*, a notion of hybridity arousing contradictory affects in different quarters: of hate, love, hate-and-love. The first two affects are familiar. The last one seems new and more interesting, discursively. In the next section we would take this issue of an approving account of hybrid culture by Bhabha to be later on contested by our notion of *synthetic space*.

III. Bhabha's Notion of Hybridity

Bhabha (1994) works on two related but distinct planes of discourse: on the plane of postcolonialism and that of colonialism. The thrust of his argument is on postcolonialism, though the parallel, brief and fictive treatment of colonialism shows flashes of incisive insight. The voice that speaks through Bhabha is one of an immigrant — or more precisely that of a stranger. A stranger wandering among the

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[36] The modification of Althusser's notion of overdetermination in order to locate in it a theoretical space for tradition, as in Resnick-Wolff's treatment of overdetermination provides a convenient point of departure. We have discussed it in our Chapter Three.

wonders of an alien land, and thus coming to terms with it, and discovering in it a new land that resists being pigeon-holed into the labels of either 'foreign' or 'native'. This new land transcends the familiar categories to liberate a new space — the *third space* — the key concept in Bhabha.

This *third space* transcends the known categories and the familiar (familial) affects, recognizing neither roots nor rootlessness, causing neither hate nor love nor hate-and-love towards itself and hurls one simultaneously into nowhere and the now and here. In short the subject here is a *nomadic* identity.

It might be more helpful to grasp Bhabha's imaginary of *third space* in terms of one of our key concepts, namely overdetermination. However, Bhabha does not write exactly in its terms, though he makes a few oblique references to it. Imagine a cultural space overdetermined by modernism and tradition. Because they determine and constitute each other, both modernism and tradition gather surplus meanings, thereby interpreting, intercepting, and intersecting themselves, in short, transcending the notes accorded to them. And in a land where one is neither modern nor traditional, one cannot have roots or, for that matter, rootlessness. One is neither alien nor allied, lying everywhere and nowhere.

Here we miss the familiar affects much paraded on in the avant-garde post-World-War-II literature (alienation, rootlessness, etc). A segment of avant-gardism turns out to be a done thing, overdone — or worse — part of an intellectual soap opera. Characters in the *third space* are on a look-out for an author who can read and write their new affects, a playwright having the guts to put dialogues into their mouths. We might recall that this is precisely the sentiments that the imaginary of the *synthetic space* evokes: a person rendered refugee in his own homeland — becoming an immigrant without a migration. But that had a different discursive setting: a colonial scenario and a colonized site (sight).

If *synthetic space* is inhabited by refugees in their homelands, a *third space* narrates the corresponding story of an immigrant transcending himself and being at home in a foreign land, but within a postcolonial context. This, in short, captures the spirit of Bhabha's *third space*.

From our perspective of *synthetic space* we find it difficult to visualize Bhabha's time-bound (historicist) concept of postcolonial space, where his postcolonial immigrant subject discovers a kind of new homeland. An immigrant settling himself during the postcolonial period: that unsettles us, who have been condemned to be un-set, hybridized, nomadic — in a word, synthetic — for about two centuries and a half. While empires declined and fell, nation-states emerged and refined people crossed borders of nations to re-find home. If borders of nations can fall, why not the borders of time as when both people and time flight and fly over them into *third space*, breaking the boundaries between colonialism and postcolonialism. Look: the border — the 'post' of postcolonialism. As if colonialism crossed the border of time and space, extensified and intensified it, refined and re-found it into a larger space and over a longer time to turn a new visage. The visage of postcolonialism — which is always already colonial, that is synthetic: that is to say postcolonial *third space*. Then, what is specific to postcolonialism as a discursive space?

Let us explore further the categories leading into Bhabha's *third space* to see whether we can find in it a few traits specific to a discursive category that is related to but distinct from colonialism. Distinct, so that we can put a name — a new name — to it, such as postcolonialism.

In pursuit of a theoretical grounding of *third space* Bhabha starts with the usual postmodern diatribe against 'binarisms of different orders' and 'totalizing utopian visions of being and history' in his essay 'commitment to theory'. Against the economic, political, and resultantly ideological hegemonizing of the 'spurious internationalisms' of the multinational corporations that actually maps the *first world* capital into the cheap *third world* labor, Bhabha proceeds to enunciate the 'role of theory in today's world-order'. In doing this the cultural and historical hybridities with their shifting margins of cultural displacement simply confounding any profound/authentic concept of national culture stand as the paradigmatic point of departure of his discourse. He uses the categories called 'cultural diversity' and 'cultural difference' in this direction.

Cultural difference is Bhabha's name of the very game of shifting margin. The game of crossing the borders of cultural identities and enunciation of culture itself as 'knowledgeable'. Whereas *cultural diversity* is the traditional category of comparison residing in the 'recognition of pre-given cultural contents and customs' that works through the very separation of totalized cultures. The concept of cultural diversity builds upon the utopianism of a mythic memory of a unique collective identity.

'Cultural difference' is the authoritative process of signification through which statements of/on culture differentiate, discriminate, and authorize the production of fields of force, reference, applicability, and capacity creating the limit or the limit-text where different meanings meet. Cultural difference symbolizes the ambivalence of the cultural authority that is itself produced only in the moment of differentiation.

And this moment entails a split: a struggle between a mythical temporality and the new meanings of the new cultural codes. the systems of meanings and strategies of the political present of these new cultural codes transgress all the earlier certitudes in the traditional cultural categories. This transgression represents a struggle of the politics of negotiation over the authoritative narrative of tradition. This split, according to Bhabha, problematizes all the binary categorizations of past-present, tradition-modernity, and so on. And it is this split that renders the past-ness as a strategy of representing authority that actually assumes the very content of historical memory, which does really exist no more. This liberates a new cultural space beyond all national identities that Bhabha names as *third space*.

In place of the essentialist concept of cultural diversity that evokes the false memory of national cultures, cultural difference emerges out, encompassing a complex discursive field of 'negotiation rather than negation'. Bhabha's 'negotiation' conveys a temporality with a new dialectic that no longer presupposes a 'teleological or transcendental history'. The temporality of 'negotiation' or 'translation' has two main advantages.

1) The acknowledgment of the historical connected-ness between the subject and the object of critique.
2) The perception of heterogeneous emergence of radical critique making us aware of the absence of any primordiality on part of the political referents and the heterogeneity of the political object.

Bhabha considers each one of the different positions within the political discourse as a process of translation and transference of meanings from other positions. And each political object is determined in relation to other objects, getting displaced in the act of critique.

But, this 'translation' or 'transformation' is possible only with the understanding of the tension within the critical theory between 'institutional containment' and its 'revisionary force' as a necessary precondition, according to Bhabha. To demonstrate the territory of this process — 'the other site of theory' — he reminds us two points:

1) Many poststructuralist ideas are themselves opposed to enlightenment humanism and aesthetics; and
2) The requirement of re-historicizing the moment of 'the emergence of sign' or 'the question of the subject' or 'the discursive construction of social reality', as the popular topics go.

This re-historicizing can only happen through relocating 'the referential and institutional demands of such theoretical work in the field of cultural difference — not cultural diversity'.

The process of cultural difference presumes that there is no one-alone existence of a culture, it exists in plurality. But this plurality does not come into being through any humanist totalization. And not again through any ethical relativism. The cultural text does exist along with all such texts through the process of difference. 'The place of utterance — is crossed by the difference of meaning', as all cultures exist in the form of differences in the structures of symbolic representation.

This difference is a communication between spaces and hence needs a *third space* for the production of meaning.

This enunciative split destroys the logic of synchronicity and evolution behind authority in cultural knowledge. And thus, it intervenes into the expanding universe of totalizing cultural codes as represented by the traditional western cultural texts.

Bhabha renders all cultural statements as representing the contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation leading to the creation of the third space. The space which, though un-representable in itself, 'constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensures that the meanings and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity'.

'It is the inter — ', the cutting edge of translation, and negotiation, the in-between space that carries 'the burden of meaning of culture'. Bhabha invites us to explore this *third space*.

This is the point where the crucial question leaps out of Bhabha's texts: what it is that ensures this privileged position of the immigrant: the celebrated subject of postcoloniality? What gives him that pride of place that was obviously absent on part of his colonial cousin?

Here, let us remember, once again, 'The Aleph' by Borges. The Aleph is there, waiting — in the basement, on the untrodden, unheeded underside of the under-lit staircase. You witness it, or deprive yourself of it, the Aleph is there, bidding its time for anyone who slips on the stair and falls to discover it. The Aleph, the eternal in the zero, with its space that comprises all the spaces, a time that looms and lingers over all the times, a reality that entails all the realities. This Aleph is in your basement, in everyone's basement. Now one no longer has to become an immigrant to transcend over the specific space-time-continuum assigned to oneself. No such continuum exists any more. Women have become intrinsically immigrant: no non-immigrant does live at all on the face of this globe. Any configuration of space and

time is all configurations of space and time. The continuum of space and time has globalized enough each and every one of the villages: every village is a globe — the Globe. Any commodity that is present on the rack of a wayside store stands for the supermarket — the museum where all times and spaces are frozen and displayed on meticulously ordered arrays. and the order of the arrays itself has become a sign: a display of signs.

The apicality attached with the immigrant by Bhabha is itself a misconception of postcoloniality that becomes readily transparent in his discourse on colonized mind as presented in the essay 'Mimicry and man'. The concept of metonymy has played an important role in this paper, and this role is going to become pivotal in *our* exposition of the problem. So, let us recall that, metonymy is positing one sign in place of another closely associated one, like the 'scepter' for the 'king'. The relationship between the scepter and the king can be termed as 'same but not quite' — the presence of the king in the scepter is something of a partial kind. *Metonymy* represents for us this category of *partial presence*.

Bhabha wants to ground this particular kind of partial presence in colonial culture that strived to become identical with the colonizer's culture, and precisely in and by this action of strife became distinctly non-identical. Colonizer's culture, that is, the chain of signifiers — the structure of the codes, or, for that matter, signals — are always present there, in the colonized's paradigm. But this presence, partial in its very tendency, in its very desire to a become a complete presence, is bound to be a mimic presence.

Bhabha calls this phenomenon of mimic presence in the colonial context as 'mimicry'. Bhabha posits *mimicry* as a discursive strategy of colonial power and knowledge — the desire for a reformed and recognizable other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite. Mimicry explains an indeterminacy: a difference that is a disavowal of itself — a complex strategy of partial presence directed towards the appropriation of the other. The missionary education, and, through it, a sequel of political and moral reforms: the English schooling as a whole reformed the colonial subject into a mimic woman. This process of reform problematized the signs of racial and cultural priority, and rendered the colonized woman non-actional as the colonizer white woman has started to represent her/his self-esteem. This is what Bhabha calls as 'double vision' that discloses the ambivalence of colonial discourse and also disrupts its authority with the production of that partial representation, or the 'metonymy of presence'.

Grant's colonial as the partial imitator, Macaulay's translator and Naipaul's colonial politician — they are all objects of a colonial chain of command, the otherness of colonial power, and hence part-objects of a metonymy of colonial desire. This desire, through the repetition of mimicry, articulates the disturbances of cultural, racial and historical differences. Differences that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority and reverse in part the colonial appropriation. And produce a partial vision of the colonizer's presence: a gaze of other-ness that liberates the marginal elements and shatters the unity of woman's being through which she extends her/his sovereignty.

Bhabha relates this colonial mimicry with the 'partial nature of fantasy' of the individuals coming from mixed and split origins. They resemble 'White-men', but

betray their 'colored descent' by some 'striking feature' and therefore they are excluded from the society and enjoy no privileges.

Bhabha points out mimicry to be that striking feature, which is itself an interdictory desire. This desire to become 'white' is a striking feature of the 'black', and makes him blacker.

Bhabha considers it as a collective catharsis related with a confusion of the metaphoric and metonymic axes of the cultural production of meanings. Cross-referring to Lacan's 'camouflage', Bhabha considers mimicry 'not as a harmonization but a resemblance that is not presence'. It carries an in-built fear towards the colonizer.

Mimicry is the encounter between white presence and its black semblance presenting the ambivalence of mimicry as a problematic of colonial subjection that destroys the 'narcissistic authority' through the slippage of difference and desire. Under cover of *camouflage* mimicry re-values the normative knowledge of the 'priority of race, writing and history', and thus re-articulates the presence in terms of its other-ness. Bhabha points out a resultant split of the colonial discourse representing two attitudes towards the external reality:

1) The view that takes reality into consideration; and
2) The view that disavows it and replaces it by a product of desire that repeats reality as a mimicry.

This ambivalence of colonial authority turns from mimicry to menace through the twine figures of narcissism and paranoia.

Thus emerges *sly civility*. At some point of history of all colonial powers. From this repeating of reality as a mimicry, as the very form of desire to fulfill the gap between a colonial power and its partial presence in the colonial woman. *Sly civility*: the culture of recordation that repeats the reality and thus celebrates the partial presence. It is this mechanism that brings *recordation* in place of *representation* of the colonial people that *could happen but did not*. This act of recordation is itself the gap between presence and its partiality that it wants to bridge. And hence, in this process of colonial metonymy the act of recordation gives rise to a colonial hybridity — a colonial *third space* — if formulated in Bhabha's terms.

Let us start with Bhabha's rendition of the colonial hybridity that gets created through the presence that is 'same but not quite'. A sympathetic reading of Bhabha gives us the possibility of *third space* in the colonial context. It is the 'metonymic presence' that makes the colonized non-identical with the colonizer. So the colonial space becomes something that is neither the West, nor its other, the phenomenon of mimicry just destroying its other-ness. Hence this space is 'neither the one thing nor the other', opening up a new discursive field of *third space*.

Here the question that we had raised in context of Borges' Aleph becomes more crucial. Now, what is the *specificity* of postcolonialism that gives the immigrant the pride of place that was absent for his colonial counterpart?

In fact, this phenomenon of colonial hybridity needs to be explained in terms of an overdetermined framework. How the gap between the presence and its partiality is filled in by tradition — a tradition that is indeed no longer a tradition — that has already become altered, displaced, overdetermined by other facets of postmodern reality. Anyway, Bhabha does not go into its details which constitute Bhabha's gap and his misconception of *third space* as a specific feature of postcolonialism. Of course there are reasons to believe why Bhabha might miss this point — we are

coming to that in context of our critique of Bhabha's mimicry as a *mimicry of mimicry*.

To return to the point, the metonymy of presence can be very well interpreted by the Lacanian concept of *Gap* that stands for the lack of self-esteem on part of the colonized, which is precisely the 'striking feature' of non-whiteness. But does this sympathetic reading stand in correspondence with Bhabha's own concept of postcolonial hybridity as presented in 'Commitment to Theory'? A distinct break of logic creeps in here which we are going to resolve.

Bhabha's 'mimicry' is a process that renders the Anglicized colonial man 'same but not quite' English. It is a partial, that is, metonymic, representation. The colonizer, on his part, puts forward a metonymic presence that grants the colonial man the same right: same but not quite the same right as a British subject. So the colonizer does not allow any real representation on part of the colonized, but, instead, gives him the right of recordation, a partial presence as a substitute of representation.

This process of recordation, in its turn, brings even the direct agencies of colonial power under a kind of threat. Everything is being properly noted and written down which, later, makes the agencies answerable. Any Lord Clive that behaves badly will someday be put to task. The principle of recordation upgrades the status of British as a ruler ruling with *social justice*. A discourse in black and white is always there that looms above everything and everyone to prove, later, whether one is remaining within the jurisdiction of fair-play or not. On account of this, the English look better than the French in the role of colonial ruler. The French do anything they like; the British, at least, record them down. Thus, the colonial ruler enables itself to win over not just the land of the colonized, but the heart too, and thus cometh hegemony.

What comes of the viewpoint of the colonized? *Swadeshi*-s — the colonial revolutionaries of India — convinced themselves that they were getting at least *some* justice: same but not quite British civil rights. *Some justice must be there since the best nation in the world is ruling us*.

So, it is the partial representation of recordation in place of representation proper that contributes to build the British colonial hegemony. In the same way, the series of reforms under the British rule, is also of a partial nature, pushing the social to the same but not quite British standard of enlightened reason. They do not hurt the religious and other feelings of the colonized, whose existence itself has become *partial*: in an altered form, a metonymic presence.

Metonymy of presence implies representing something more (other) than presence, that is, *presence of a lack of presence*. Every metonymic presence implies a *gap* or a *lack*, giving rise to a strife towards the *real*. This real in this case is modernism, and democracy. This desire towards the real, the real justice of the British, precisely, is the basis of the hegemony of modernism. So, modernism in the colonies actually rules through its metonymic presence: its lack of presence. From this lack grows the desire. Modernism rules, with the seduction of 'real'-modernism hanging before the eyes of the colonized. The seductive modernism and its metonymic presence (in everything) creates the desire towards the real. An actual presence could have led to the possibility of rejection, a rejection of the *actual* — the *total* — the *real*. This does not happen in this case where the desire generated by the partial presence towards the real protects the British rule from the danger of rejection. On Bhabha's scheme enlightened colonized mind is a mere hankering towards the real modernism.

So, the scheme of Bhabha actually misses the link between the colonial space (of mimicry) and the postcolonial space (of hybridity). Because, he does not follow through the consequences of mimicry on the colonized field to see how a *third space* is always already produced within a colonial space.

Bhabha discovers the mechanism of mimicry as the partial presence of 'almost same but not quite', 'almost same but not white', leading to a partial diffusion of colonial culture that reinforces and builds the structure of colonial dependence. And, this partial diffusion renders the urge for colonial independence, the urge for the real in place of the substitute, as a desiral fixation of the metonymic colonial gaze. But, Bhabha misses how this very desiral mechanism of metonymic colonial gaze actualizes into a series of colonial part-objects and part-events opening up a field of partial discourse of partial communication between the colonial power and its part-subjects. He misses how this partial presence, instead of producing an urge for the *real*, produces an alternative desire to produce a *complex space* that is part-colonial (science, but not their religion) and part-native (religion, tradition, etc). This metonymic gaze and the desire for the real precipitate into producing a complex hegemonic space. That is precisely what Partha Chatterjee does not miss in his analysis of nationalism (particularly of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay).

Complex hegemonic space, we have already shown, is the traditional Gramscian situation where the real universal does not happen to be produced and power rules through a surrogate synthesis. The essentialist Hegelian logic gets displaced into a Gramscian field of surrogate (constructed) universal dispensing the idea of the universal and presents elements as binary opposites fighting each other and yet getting united at the level of a surrogate synthesis.

For instance, modernism and tradition are two mutually exclusive opposites that, according to Partha Chatterjee, get united in colonial (as well as postcolonial) India at the level of surrogate synthesis. This unification, for Chatterjee, happens via a concept of nation: nationalism here binds the opposites such as modernism and tradition[37]. But, actually, the passive revolution (and the consequent *complex space*) turns into a *synthetic space* setting into motion a passive re-evaluation of modernism and tradition. The surplus meanings of modernism and tradition overflow from each into the other, negotiate between them (rather than negating each other) to constitute a synthetic (*third*) space. Where both modernism and tradition lose their (prior) meanings and get transformed into in-between categories. A colonial space is always already a *third* (synthetic) space. Bhabha misses this point: he needs *third space* as a phenomenon specific to the postcolonial period while mimicry is its colonial counterpart.

Why does Bhabha miss this simple point? Because he implicitly assumes that mimicry occurs on a colonial setting in a void: the colonized mimics the colonizer in an empty space. But the marks of the partial presence of the colonizer — its metonyms — do occur in a space endowed with a culture that does interact with these marks setting into motion a whole series of changes. These changes lead into the formation of a *third* (synthetic) *space* in a colonial context. Bhabha stops short of reading these marks of partial presence of the colonizer on the colonized. Partha Chatterjee moves one step forward and reads how and why this partial presence of modernism could coexist with tradition. But Chatterjee too does not follow through the full consequences of this argument: how this coexistence alters the meanings of

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[37] We have, in section II, invoked Chaudhury (1994) or Chaudhury and Sanyal (1997) to argue how passive revolution (and the consequent *complex space*) turns into a *synthetic space*.

tradition and modernism? How it turns them into in-between categories constituting a third (synthetic) space in a colonial context which Bhabha could only (falsely) identify as a specific postcolonial trait?

And if *third space* cuts across colonialism and postcolonialism, then what is specific to postcolonialism? We address this question in the following section.

IV. Colonial Difference and Colonial Equality

We begin this section with a nod to Bhabha. Bhabha's concept of *mimicry* — the way he translates it from Lacan and bends it to suit his purposes — has given postcolonial cultural studies its *gaze*.

Indeed, all through our rendition of colonial hegemony, we were groping for and grappling with this concept. Recall the way we have located the source of colonial hegemony: a *condensation* of the *displaced* persuasive principles of the colonized. Displacement and condensation: these two categories come out to be very important in our discussion on colonial hegemony.

Note: a *displacement* of the persuasive principles of the colonizing subject. Displacement, because the colonizing subject's principles, in their original form, can neither be applied on nor communicated to the colonized subject. Therefore, they must be deployed in their altered forms. In short, they must undergo a process of displacement.

The Lacanian concept — *metonymy* — will be a more appropriate term in this context. Not only substitutes of the original persuasive principles that *displacement* signifies, but a dwindled and dwarfed substitute of the original, its metonymic transformation: that is what is at stake in the formation of colonial hegemony.

And metonymy in this context turns out to produce the effect of mimicry. *Representation* for the colonizing subject and *recordation* for the colonized: this involves a metonymic transformation of the concept of equality as it traverses the field of colonial subjectivity. Consequently, one observes legislative and administrative set-up in the colonized field that are same as that in the metropolis, that is the First World, but not quite. What the colonized are handed over is a mimicry of the original.

Mimicry serves to produce and sustain colonial hegemony in a three-fold manner.

First, it transplants into colonized subjectivity a feeling of lack and a desire for the real.

Secondly, this circuit: real$\rightarrow$ lack$\rightarrow$ desire does not happen in a void space. Like the metaphysical Ether, the surrounding medium is not at all that neutral that it was assumed to be. The tradition, that is the cultural space of the colonized itself becomes a weapon of modernism in this process of hegemonizing through a lack of hegemony.

Thirdly, on part of the colonized, the dream for equality gets replaced by another dream: a dream for *colonial equality*. The colonized no more strive towards the true equality or true democracy. The lack of any true equality is already sanctioned. Many often take to task the nationalists, the *Swadeshi*-s, for not appreciating what it meant to be ruled by the British and not by another European nation (such as Spain, Portugal, or for that matter, France). But, even, this *colonial equality*, in its turn, does have its own limits. Limits beyond which surfaces the symptom of colonial equality. And, therefore, a corresponding resistance of the colonized — at least for the elite section of the colonized nation.

One enlightened section of the colonized subjectivity carries a hankering for the democracy of the colonizing power — OK, we don't demand the true equality, but at least grant us our share — our quota of colonial equality.

It is interesting to draw a parallel between Bhabha and Guha in this context. Guha points to the aspect of partial representation of the colonized subjectivity in the administrative set-up as an index of lack of hegemony of the colonizing subject. But one might read Bhabha's rendition of mimicry to re-read in such 'lack of hegemony in Guha's sense' a sign of hegemony: it promotes a desire for true modernism — that is to say, the hegemony of modernism.

Mimicry re-affirms colonial hegemony through the establishment of this colonial equality by this mechanism of desire that we have already discussed. Rabindranath Tagore – who was awarded Nobel Prize in 1913 — may be an interesting case-study here, in this context of colonial subjectivity before colonial equality.

When the publication of *Pather-daabi*, a novel in Bengali by Sharatchandra Chattopadhyay, hailing nationalist terrorism, was banned by the British Government in India, Tagore in fact admired the magnanimity of the British. That it only banned the publication of a novel and did not arrest the novelist. Such examples abound. It is not hard to see the point in Tagore. Mimicry in a colonial context has two moments: *colonial difference* and *colonial equality*. During a colonial rule, some *colonial difference* is only expected and does not deliver any additional shock to the colonial subjectivity. Therefore, what gets highlighted, and maybe glorified, by the patrician as well as by the plebian is the moment of *colonial equality*. But before we go into further details of this subtle concept, let us have a close view of its other — *colonial difference* — the concept that gets a lot of prominence in the current literature on postcolonial cultural studies. Unlike its counterpart: *colonial equality*.

We have noted that Guha points to *colonial difference* as an index of lack of hegemony on part of the colonizing subject. But Guha does not go into the detail of that which constitutes *colonial difference*. Chatterjee (1993), with his erudition and his characteristic lucid style, provides us with some of these details.

Chatterjee is somewhat surprised to discover that a particular theme in colonial discourse until the earlier half of this century was the steadfast refusal to admit the universality of the colonizer's persuasive principles in its rule over the colonized. These persuasive principles include freedom of speech, equal right in the representation in bureaucracy and government etc. In support of his argument, Chatterjee quotes Vincent Smith who argues that British persuasive principles *should not* and *cannot* be *applied* to rule colonial India. *Should not*, because it would be a violence to the moral principles of the Indian people who adore a personal king and not an impersonal government. *Cannot*, because,

i. British principles of equality (democracy) and Indian caste-system based on hierarchy do not go together; and
ii. Therefore its application to the Indian situation would be a coercion on the colonized leading to a mutiny.

In the context of a discussion on this issue, Chatterjee puts forward three possible positions in this regard.

1) These persuasive principles must apply in principle to all societies irrespective of historical or cultural specificities.

2) The principle is inescapably tied to the specific history and culture of western societies and cannot be exported elsewhere.
3) The historical and cultural differences, although an impediment in the beginning, can be eventually overcome by a suitable process of training and education.

Chatterjee produces evidence from the history of colonial India that the British persuasive principles were only partially applied in colonial India. He characterizes this partial application of these persuasive principles on the colonizer's part as *colonial difference*.

Perhaps Chatterjee misses the point that *colonial difference* was not a policy deliberately chosen by the British; they had to choose it. For Chatterjee, it appears as a choice because of his empiricist way of listing the three possible positions in this regard which appear to him as exhaustive. But what is at issue there is not the possibility of exporting the governing principles from one social context to another. But the possibility of transmission of a specific set of governing rules (suffused with the principle of equality) into a colonial field marked by a declared master-servant relationship. We will understand *colonial difference* here as the logical expression of a particular difference in the context of an evident master-servant relationship. In other words, *colonial difference* is what Lacan-Žižek will call a *symptom*: a displacement of the unreason implicit within the reason of the colonizer — as the unreason of the colonized. *Colonial difference* is a condition at a certain point of time in colonial history for hegemony by the colonizing nation.

In fact, colonialism itself implies certain measure of compromise with the principles of modernist reason: the colonized cannot choose their own master (cannot form their own government). Colonialism is premised on this basic assumption. So, the concept of *colonial difference* actually represents a crucial question of proliferation or transmission of this *original sin* — the conquest of a nation leading to a denial of sovereignty to it. Will this original sin be transmitted to the other spheres of the government (for instance, in the representation of the colonized at the level of bureaucracy) and the terrain of civil society? A theoretical answer to this question depends on a critical theorist's epistemological *entry-point* concept. If this *entry-point* is overdetermination (as in our case), then the answer will be 'yes'. Since overdetermination presumes that different instances of society mutually constitute and determine one another, the constitutive principle of one instance of society as a *lack* (of equality) — the original sin — will also constitute other instances of society. We are not 'surprised', like Chatterjee, to find some measure of this *lack* in all spheres of society under a colonial regime.

So the question that concerns us is not whether there were colonial differences in different realms of social life, but the theoretical and empirical consequences of these colonial differences: how these differences negotiate among themselves? Can these colonial differences negotiate upon each other to neutralize the initial differences and thus produce *colonial indifference*? And colonial hegemony? What is involved here is a theoretical question, and not an empiricist narrative of colonial differences. *Colonial equality* emerges out of such *colonial indifference*.

Colonial power, in order to be effective, must make some discrimination between the colonizing subject and the colonized subject — the point is obvious enough. Call it colonial difference as Partha Chatterjee does or whatever suits your whim. The important question in a colonial context is not this colonial difference as such, but its limits, if any.

Are there limits to colonial discrimination? Where are the limits? *Are the limits declared and recorded? Do the colonized subjects receive equal treatment from the colonizing power outside this limit?*

An affirmative answer to the last two above questions signals *colonial equality*. Particularly the last one that built up colonial hegemony for the middle class.

"Where is my coat?", the Sahib asked Ashutosh Mukherjee, while travelling together by first-class in a train. "Gone to fetch my shoes", quipped Ashutosh Mukherjee, the colonized subject. He had thrown away the Sahib's coat in retaliation against the Sahib's doing the same for his shoes. And the Sahib, the colonizing subject, could do nothing but keep mum.

Such were the popular tales and fables and gossips and myths that built up British colonial hegemony in India. A hegemony that continues into the present time. Another popular story, for instance:

"Is the Red Road prohibited for the natives?" asked Ashutosh, to the Governor General.

"Not for you", was the reply.

"You — in singular or plural?"

"Plural, OK?", said the Governor General.

The white-skinned police did not let Ashutosh travel by the Red Road, conventionally an exclusive privilege for the white people in colonial Calcutta. But the supreme boss of the white police had to lift this unrecorded ban — this sign of discrimination. Not only for Ashutosh alone, but, finally, for the native people as a whole, as this fable goes, after this showdown by Ashutosh.

Such stories of *colonial equality* abound.[38]

For instance, the fable of impertinence of Bidyasagar, talking with his feet stationed on the table, even when a Sahib boss entered in his room, is a fable that we Bengalis learn by heart, may be from before our birth. A story of heroism — "yes, we also can". This fable, thus, sung the glory of the British. A glory that is bigger than Jesus. The glory of a nation of shopkeepers that lifts a plebian pundit much above the elite lords of a colonized nation, occasionally transforms the plebian into a god by default.

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[38] Ironically, Partha Chatterjee himself *salebrates* this notion of colonial equality without being aware of it. We have in mind his idea of 'our equality' grounded on a notion of community (Chatterjee, 1993). Our position is premised on our key proposition elaborated in detail in the following two chapters: that the idea of (market) equality is what Žižek calls an *ideological fantasy* invoked to encounter (evade, defer, displace) the *symptom* of modern society. The second proposition follows from the first: what the colonized (*third world*) inherit from the wisdom of enlightenment is the metonym of this equality. Which leads to the final proposition: Partha Chatterjee's concept of 'our equality' grounded on a grand notion of community is a product of the *condensation* of metonym of western equality (an ideological fantasy) and the values of a traditional society. Pranab Bose (1999) deals with the details of this proposition taking off from the arguments of the Supplement of this book. As far as this final proposition goes, we leave the readers in suspense: suspended.

A god that transmits the reflected glory of the gods that be — the colonizing ones.

But, the novel, that is, the narrative of postcoloniality — does that exhaust there, in the episodes and stories of such colonial equality? What is the limit, or, are the limits of such colonial equality?

Note: the colonial denizen was never a *citizen* in the true, that is, the modernist sense of the term. In the name of the French Revolution's slogan of equality it was *colonial equality* finally served out to her/him. But, even this colonial equality had its end too. She, who was never a citizen, at most a *subject*, though a colonial one — did also have a fair quota of darkness at noon, colonial noon, high-tides of colonial equality. Did not she bleed, at regular intervals, by *les dents du midi* — the teeth and nails of enlightening West? When the Western colonial equality — colonizers' equality for the colonized — turns back on itself. And all the slogans of Bastille and song of Marseilles, that earlier inspired the songs of martyrdom in colonial India, all of a sudden, start to play to the tune of British bullets. British French Portuguese German, Spanish.

And the colonial subject, till now possessed by the specters of Kant-Locke-Hume, starts to gush with blood and pain to discover the limits of this scanty subject-hood. The possession metamorphoses into a numb hallucination.

> … something happened that did not bring on fright but a kind of hallucination. The captain gave the order to fire and fourteen machine guns answered at once. But it all seemed like a farce. It was as if the machine guns had been loaded with caps, because their panting rattle could be heard and their incandescent spitting could be seen, but not the slightest reaction was perceived, not a cry, not even a sigh among the compact crowd that seemed petrified by an instantaneous invulnerability. Suddenly, on one side of the station, a cry of death tore open the enchantment: 'Aaaagh, Mother'. A seismic voice, a volcanic breath, the roar of a cataclysm broke out in the center of the crowd with a great potential of expansion. …
> 'Get down! Get down!'
> The people in front had already done so, swept down by the wave of bullets. The survivors, instead of getting down tried to go back to the small square, and the panic became a dragon's tail as one compact wave ran against another which was moving in the opposite direction, towards the other dragon's tail in the street across the way, where the machine guns were also firing without cease. They were penned in, swirling about in a gigantic whirlwind that little by little was being reduced to its epicenter as the edges were systematically being cut off all around like an onion being peeled by the insatiable and methodical shears of the machine guns.

Any Indian reader can instantly recognize in the above paragraphs a vivid though incomplete and partial description of Jalianwalabagh massacre of

April 13, 1919. Though, incidentally, this is a quote from Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude.*

Even by the statistics of the then British Government in India, 379 people were killed, and more than 1200 seriously wounded, many of whom died later. The local British commander Gen. Sir Reginald Dwyer called out his troops and without giving the demonstrators any warning had the men fire on an unarmed mob. The square where the demonstrators gathered had only one exit. And Dwyer was stalled precisely at that point. After determining the fate of the people gathered there for peaceful demonstration in demand of Indian self-government, the British went in rampage over all the adjacent areas. Many of the nearby villages came under fire that fateful night.

The reaction of the elite Indian after this incident that the British tried hard to conceal marks a sense of betrayal. Sir Rabindranath Tagore was no more a Sir, that is, a titled knight, titled by the British — he discarded this title in a gesture of resistance. Note the word: *betrayal.* Betrayal from what? Obviously, the innocent belief in the norms and forms of colonial equality. And this Jalianwalabagh incident was an arrival of the unexpected. Read: return of the repressed.

Conceive *colonial hegemony* in a Laclau-Mouffe framework that involves usual interplay between the notions. This play that cannot go on forever on the plane of theory, needs a strategic closure — a concept that we have discussed repeatedly in the earlier chapters of this book. In the case of the colonial subject, the concept of colonial equality delivered this closure. A closure, a limit, a boundary. An entry-point concept in the Resnick-Wolff sense of the term.

Colonial equality that is equality but not quite.

Equality that inscribes itself in the right of *recordation* on part of the colonized in place of right of *representation.* His right of representation was already denied. That is why the very Jalianwalabagh demonstration took place — in demand for Indian self-government. Then, even, in the endeavor to conceal the incident, the right of recordation was denied too. So, this massacre actually stands for the limit of colonial equality. The breaking down of the whole rubric of westernized notions of equality. Thus came the sense of betrayal. Remember the Lacanian concept of symptom. The *Other* proclaims itself from beyond and inscribes itself on the certain and confident positing of the *Real.*

Therefore, the incidents like Jalianwalabagh stand for the symptom of colonial reality — colonial equality — the limits beyond which the colonial subject does no more remain a subject.

Five

Margin of Margin:

Profile of an

Unrepentant Postcolonial Collaborator

I.

Postmodernism, or, more importantly for us, postcolonialism in its postmodern veins, has usurped from the oppressed humanity its own reality. If there is no essence, there cannot be any consideration of deviations from it. The quotidian words that inform its vocabulary — exploitation, oppression, dominance, hegemony — get exiled. Postmodernism underwrites a morality where everything goes — good, bad, and ugly — as difference.

Our efforts have been, throughout the previous chapters, to reclaim reality for the oppressed, but within a space circumscribed by postmodernism. For postmodernism is here — central, present and upon us. We cannot wish it away.

All through the previous pages, we have engaged with an exploration of a postmodern space that can nuance a subspace within it capable of re-articulating the idioms of the oppressed. Our concept of *synthetic space* embodies such a space. *Synthetic space* as distinct from third space that Bhabha and his acolytes talk about. Synthetic space marks what third space masks: subterranean power relations flowing through a hybrid space, in short, mimicry of overdetermination.

Let us recall (elaborate on, add to, expand) our concept of synthetic space. We build this category on the Hegelian concept of determinate being, with, of course, modifications to fit it in with our problematic of strategic essentialism. We might recall that Richard Wolff too, the high-priest of strategic essentialism, problematizes strategic essentialism in the idiom of determinate being.

We suppose that a quick recap of Hegel's logic will be helpful. One must be sure how we make use of and distance ourselves from Hegel in order to articulate our concept of synthetic space.

II. Hegel's Logic

Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* builds on *desire* as its primary (originary) category. Desire is the urge of a human being to annihilate, consume and thereby internalize its *other*. Hegel's *man of nature* is not only a voyeur — a viewer of its other: he falls for it, acts upon it, intercourses with it until the other loses its otherness and becomes the same. A death drive — to kill the other — is always already inscribed in the originary

category of desire prompting Hegel's man from behind and urging him to act. He sees the fruit hanging on a tree, pulls it down, and devours it.

His desire knows and honors no limit — after acting upon inert objects he now proceeds into the domain of alert human beings as his others. But in the role of others, human beings and inert objects are not quite the same. The inert objects do not react as desire acts upon it, but the human beings do.

Hence follows a struggle of life-and-death between the two human beings. Both of them strive to annul its other, until the weaker one faces death and surrenders. Because, life — being alive — is, perhaps, more desirable than desire. In that twilight zone of life and death, the weak and defeated one, in a way, transcends the war, transcends desire and gains the first flicker of consciousness — of death, and thereby, of life. She chooses to be a servant. What follows is a master/servant relation — the first leap beyond desire, into a stream of consciousness.

The master, by the victory, is condemned to remain what she was: a being goaded by mindless and formless desire: who cannot bear with the others, and hence, cannot learn from them. The others, for the master, recede into the vanishing point and melt into nothingness, that is, sameness, as she comes across them.

The servant now bears the torch and ushers womankind into the world of consciousness. She goes on learning, as she eyes the movements of the master: as the other — an embodiment of freedom, a living statue of liberty. The servant that read life in death now gets the first glimpse of freedom inscribed in bondage as she looks at the master, works for, and thinks of the reality — the master's reality.

This glimpse of freedom — behold, but you can never get there — teaches him to think — to think of freedom, to realize the reality. And the servant gets the revelation — that he is *free* — free to think. Freedom resides there — in the terrain of thought. Hegel gives a name to this first moment of freedom: *stoicism*.

Let us quickly state a few higher moments of freedom that servant would encounter in the itinerary through the steps of consciousness. The next moment of consciousness is *skepticism*, which teaches servant to doubt the freedom of the *stoic*, for she remains bonded in corporeal life. Skepticism is a negation of stoic's freedom. The negation of negation occurs at a still higher moment of consciousness — that Hegel calls *unhappy consciousness* — that earns for servant a kingdom of freedom. The freedom of the other world, another world — where she could remain free not just in the terrain of thought but in the flesh-and-blood real life too.

Unhappy consciousness unites the moments of stoicism and skepticism. It negates skepticism because the concept of this other world signals for servant a freedom that can be attained in real (albeit, otherworldly) life. But the moment of doubt — skepticism — lingers on, for she is chained here and now — in this world. Hegel's concept of Reason actualizes only when God marches on this world and everyone becomes free in real life — here and now.

Consider the three successive moments of Hegel's concept of Reason:

i.   Stoicism
ii.   Skepticism
iii.   Unhappy unconsciousness

One might say that stoicism is the thesis, skepticism is the anti-thesis and unhappy consciousness is their synthesis that annihilates the anti-thesis to lift it up to a higher form of existence.

A distinguishing feature of early Hegel is its overt historicism: inscribed in it are the moments of *rational order*, *telos* and *dynamics*. The concept of *supersession* catches at and captures these aspects. Hegelian *totality* is a *contradictory* totality that evolves, develops and unfolds itself in the course of history, its higher moments superseding the lower moments — the anti-thesis annihilating the thesis to form a new synthesis — until the universal spirit, that is, history, reaches its terminus. This terminus in Hegel inscribes upon itself a special name: the *idea* — signaling the *end of history*.

The concepts of *dialectic* and *contradiction* in Marxist construction of historical materialism are directly appropriated from Hegel. To recap, the Hegelian *dialectic* is constituted by a triad-affirmation (of essence), negation (of essence) and negation of negation (of essence). The dialectic from the very beginning to the end is the development of the same essence that represents itself from the lower to higher moments via the alienation of the original simple totality. This simple totality that is driving the complex totality develops by alienating (negating) itself to represent an ever increasing complex totality. Thus, essence always has its negative within itself. This is what we call *contradiction*.

As one can see, this contradiction is simple, defined as the negativity of the essence. The contradiction does not lead to the destruction of the totality but rather to its supersession. This supersession epitomizes the development of the original simple totality to a new higher form. Each complex totality (affirmation) is contradictory, meaning that, it contains within itself the seeds of dissolution (negation) leading to the creation of a more complex totality and also the seeds of the dissolution of that totality as well (negation of negation). The contradictory aspect is captured by the negative of essence. The Hegelian dialectic is law-like and natural. This *auto-development of simple original totality*, as Althusser (1969) calls it, represented in each successive stage as ever-increasing complex totality, is the core of Hegelian dialectics.

Hegel divides real history constituting the subject (*world spirit*/ Reason)—object (nature) duality into three stages:

a) Undifferentiated unity (when man and nature are indistinguishable but man does not know nature).
b) Differentiated disunity (when man realizes he is different from nature but cannot conquer it).
c) Differentiated unity (when man knows he is different from nature and understands nature completely).

If world spirit is the essence of history then its negative or appearance is nature. History moves from one stage to another through the mechanism of dialectics. Starting from undifferentiated unity (affirmation), history moves to negate it by differentiated disunity which in turn is negated by differentiated unity. Thus, the law of motion (dialectics) is driven by the Hegelian triad of *affirmation→ negation→ negation of negation*. Within each period the world spirit confronts its contradictory other — nature — only to move on to a new higher stage where the contradiction takes a higher form. Each subsequent stage gives a higher understanding of world spirit.

This auto-development of world spirit goes on until it attains its true self where it overcomes its contradiction.

At that juncture, time (history) can no longer have its usual chronological moments capable of being superseded, and thus, it ceases to be the historical time. The onus, then, falls upon Hegel to discover and innovate a new logic that can bring to light the dialectics running through what might be called a synchronic structure. In what follows, we will try to grasp this logic — Hegel's logic — and follow through its consequences in the context of reading Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and Marx's *Capital*.

This reading of Hegel involves a distortion: we read Hegel in Marx's light, so that, in the follow-through, we can have a Hegelian reading of Marx. Therefore, we start straightaway from Hegel's discourse on *determinate being*. That is to say, we leave out categories like *Being*, *Becoming* and *Nothing*.

To illustrate Hegel's logic, we begin with a notion of unity, then produce differences out of it; and then produce another unity of a higher form. And, then again, produce differences which lead into another unity. This sequence goes on and on, until one reaches the idea — where no further change is possible. Hegel's logic (also Hegel's History), then, comes to an end. Thus, we produce the sequence:

UNITY → DIFFERENCE → UNITY
DIFFERENCE → UNITY → DIFFERENCE
DIFFERENCE → IDEA

Hegel's object is to explain this world. Therefore one must presuppose that the world *is*. This, in turn, presupposes the notion of *isness* or *pure being*, independent of this or that world. But the notion of isness conveys nothing. Therefore, to produce something out of this void *being*, one must negate it. And negation presupposes its concept, that is, the notion of *nothing*. Negate *pure being* — so that it becomes a *determinate being*. This, in turn, presupposes the notion of *becoming*. Therefore one gets the triad:

BEING → BECOMING → NOTHING

Do not get upset, if you find it Greek. That is the way Hegel argues; for us it is a (mere) pedantic exercise. We can see this world by our eyes — we need not produce it out of some isness. Therefore ignore the initial (constructed) *unity*, that is, the notion of *pure being* and start straightway from the material reality before our eyes, that is, *many determinate beings*, with *differences*.

A determinate being is nothing but a being with a specific determination or quality (shape, color). A determinate being is defined by what it is (its *reality/being-by-self*) and what it is not (its *negation/being-for-another*). We understand *being* as *something* — it is *this* thing and not *that* thing. In short, we see beings as different beings, apparently unrelated, separated from one another — without any unity.

We then look for a unifying principle that connects *this being* and *that being* as moments of a greater (larger) being. In technical terms: we posit a self-determined being (*being-for-self*) whose *reality* includes its *negation*. This being-for-self constitutes the unifying principle — the *One* — that makes all the different beings qualitatively equal to one. The determinate beings flow from this *one* as *many*.

One, many — these two categories come out to be very important in Hegel's logic. The basic point is that the world we live in is a unity with differences (opposites). Hegel's logic tries to capture the implications of this contradictory unity at different levels. In the *Doctrine of Being* we understand this unity as *one*

(appearing as *many*): *one* represents unity, and *many* stands for (quantitative) differences.

Therefore, the quantitative differences must be defined in a homogenous space — a space that renders the *many* as qualitatively *one*. More: this homogeneous space is an ordered space in which the different quantities of the (many) beings are capable of being ranked, either cardinally or ordinally. This implies that there must be a *measure* in terms of which the ranking is done: *measure* is a unity of quality and quantity.

To sum up: we begin from a unity (*pure being*), produce difference out of it (*being-by-self*, *being-for-another*). Then we produce another unity (*being-for-self/One*) implying differences (*many*). Embedded in the concept of *many* are *quantity* and *measure*. Thus we get the sequence:

UNITY (*pure being*)→
DIFFERENCE (*determinate being: being-by-self & being-for-another*)→
UNITY (*Being-for-self/One*)→
DIFFERENCE (*many*)

The *one* appears as *many* — unity expresses itself as *differences*. The reality that we encounter does represent, simultaneously, *one* and *many*, *unity* and *differences*. These are apparently contradictory (opposite) categories; nevertheless they form a unity. Therefore we can say: the reality we encounter is a *unity* of *unity and differences*. Hegel calls this *higher unity* as *ground*. Its two moments — unity (one) and difference (many) — are called *positive* and *negative*. Thus we get three new categories:

GROUND (*higher unity*)

POSITIVE (*unity*)   NEGATIVE (*difference*)

But note that: *ground* is not an empirical category, we logically posit it. Since reality represents both unity and differences, there must be a higher unity (ground) which includes unity and differences as its moments.

But in Hegel what is logical must show (shine) forth. Therefore, the ground must appear, as an *existent* (*thing*). We must be in a position to say: this *thing* represents the ground. Or this ground represents the *thing*, and how it comes into being. But the ground we point to does not always explain the *thing* fully. For example, one can say that the chair is grounded on the wood. But the wood does not explain the becoming of the chair: other things (labor, organization) are equally important. In this case, we encounter an *insufficient ground*. We, gradually, that is to say, systematically, hit upon the *sufficient ground* that fully explains the *thing*.

The *ground* and the *thing* have two important names in Hegel: *essence* and *appearance*. It is not that the appearance is false and the essence is true. Both essence and appearance are true. *Appearance is the appearance of essence*. But bear in mind: the essence (ground) that we encounter is an insufficient essence (ground) which does not fully explain the thing. Or, the ground, to begin with, does not fully express itself in terms of the thing. That is to say, there must be other things; this thing, not alone, actually, belongs to a plural world of things.

In other words, things are *parts* of a *whole*. That is not to say that the whole is a sum total (collection, aggregation) of parts. In fact the whole is prior to parts, like the ground is prior to things: parts (things) flow from a common conceptual unity which is called whole. For example, society is not a (mere) collection of individuals. One must presuppose society in order to explain (situate) individuals. Similarly,

parts, in order to be explained, must presuppose a whole which define their content, parts being the form through which this content expresses itself.

Thus our analysis reveals the world of existents as parts of a whole. This whole/part relationship may be necessary or contingent upon circumstances. For example, the classroom is a whole with students, teachers, tables, chairs, etc as its parts. In a moment, the bell will ring and this will no longer be a classroom, but a room. As its conditions of existence disappear, parts will fall apart. But sometimes parts must necessarily be the parts of a whole. For example, we — the parts — cannot be outside society.

When the parts are necessary parts of a whole, parts conform to reason. Recall: in Hegel what is reasonable (logical) must show forth, that is, be actual. Like the way the ground expresses itself in the form of a thing, the whole, in this case, must become an *actuality*. This actuality is represented in thought in terms of a universal.

Therefore: when the parts are necessarily parts of a whole, the whole is called the universal with the parts flowing from it as particulars. The unity of the universal and the particular is *singular*, which represents the universal as a particular existent. There are, of course, contradictions among the particulars, and, between the universal and the particular. The universal itself is contradictory; changing over time with its lower moments being superseded by their higher moments until it reaches its idea when the universal ceases to change. (Hegel's) history, then, comes to an end.

III. Hegel sans Essence

We, of course, do not buy Hegel's idea of end of history. Neither his essentialism.

Which means we do not share his concept of *universal* as a *source* or *origin* from which the Hegelian *particulars* flow, constituting an essentialist totality. We abjure the idea of universal or *sufficient essence* that grounds the Hegelian totality.

More precisely, our contestation of Hegel begins from his very doctrine of Being: we call into question his very concept of being-for-self (one, infinity) whose *reality* includes its own *negation*. How do we arrive at such an *infinity*? Through revelation, Hegel would say.

And we do not believe in revelation. So, for us, there are only determinate beings with their realities and negations.

Our detour is from such an idea of determinate which has its reality as well as its negation — that which constitutes what it is and that which designates what it is not. This ontological premise (promise) of being will later on come out to be very important for our problematization of synthetic space. Some build on a concept of being that has only *reality* and explore how plural realities interact to constitute a *complex reality*. Others — postmoderns — build on only negations to map out their concept of totality. Both, for us, are one-eyed views of beings.

Now, recall our epistemological entry-point concept: overdetermination. With our commitment to the premise of overdetermination, we can no longer view, as Hegel does, *reality* and *negation* as binary opposites. For us, they would overdetermine each other.

Now, imagine such multiple determinate beings interacting with one another. *Synthetic space is an overdetermined unity of such plural determinate beings which, in turn, are themselves overdetermined unities of their realities and negations.*

But this begs the question: what is reality? Such a question is less important in the Hegelian context, for *reality* there is only a moment in his logic leading to an

understanding of *sufficient essence* or *universal*. As such, Hegel can leave his concept of reality non-transparent in that Hegelian *reality* itself designates *something* undefined.

But we do not share Hegel's idea of essence. So, it is important for us, to lay out precisely how we image *reality*.

Reality, for us, is a *hegemonic formation* in the sense of Laclau-Mouffe — a set of floating signifiers structured around a nodal point privileging a subset of signifiers whose metonymic surplus meanings constitute the hegemonic reality of the entire set. At issue here is the question: how do two hegemonic formations interact with, interpret and compensate for each other.

We depart from Laclau-Mouffe in two important ways. First, our focus is on the course of encounter of two hegemonic formations, while Laclau-Mouffe's central concern is to problematize a single hegemonic formation. Secondly, while problematizing hegemonic formation, we foreground the instance of *negation* or *exclusion* that any hegemonic formation, in our opinion, entails. The other important differences derive from these two crucial differences in our setting up of the problematic.

The question that intrigues us is: given an overdetermined structure of two hegemonic formations — in other words, the synthetic space — how does one locate, theoretically, a space of dominance and subordination (hegemony) in it? Our concept of mimicry of overdetermination captures such a space.

The above is a question that has been asked neither by Laclau-Mouffe nor in postcolonial culture studies of the postmodern genre that Homi Bhabha's concept of third space inaugurates. Laclau-Mouffe's construction, for the first time, dislocates the Gramscian logic of *hegemony* from its essentialist locale. But this same action corrodes away many of the angular and attacking points of the Gramscian theory. Gramsci's concept of hegemony foregrounds how one group dominates, culturally, over another group. A disengagement from the essentialist connotations, on the part of Laclau-Mouffe, writes off, simultaneously, the space that can lodge such a question. On the other side, their consideration of hegemonic formation as a single space (albeit contingent) precludes the possibility of putting in a question such as how one space dominates another space. The concept of synthetic space mobilizes such possibilities in that it includes multiple hegemonic formations.

The concept of *third space*, on the other side, forecloses the possibility of an articulation of dominance in it by way of its one-sided emphasis on the instance of *negation* putting under erasure the aspect of *reality* in beings. But, dominance means dominance of something — of a determinate being — by the reality of something else, in whatever way one might problematize the concept of reality. Laclau-Mouffe's concept of hegemonic formations helps us to reclaim *reality* in postcolonial cultural space. The ground is ready then to stage an encounter between disparate

realities leading to the dominance of one by another that we articulate in terms of the concept of mimicry of overdetermination.

The concept of hybrid space as an umbrella concept that we encounter in postcolonial cultural studies serves only to hide the moment of mimicry in it. For this *instance* to be articulated, one needs a more theoretically nuanced formulation of the concept of hybrid space. Hybrid space, as such, signifies an array of too many spaces: *complex space*, *third space*, *synthetic space*. Of these, only synthetic space lodges the concept of mimicry of overdetermination.

The reader will have noticed that mimicry of overdetermination issues from *qualitative unequal exchange* (as distinct from its quantitative counterpart) between two spaces. If surplus metonymic meanings flow from space A to space B to be followed by a counter-flow of surplus metaphoric meanings from space B to space A, then space A is said to be dominating space B within a context of overdetermination between the two spaces. Mimicry of overdetermination designates such dominance.

Recall that metaphors serve to make clear what is hidden and metonyms hide. So, this kind of negotiation now enables space A to explain itself to its other through the metaphors of space B. On the contrary, such negotiation disables space B because space B carries space A unconsciously — metonyms of space A can thus subvert space B, surreptitiously, from within.

So, mimicry of overdetermination, as we have already said, applies to a subspace within a hybrid space. Here mutual constitution — or, *reciprocal exchange* as we call it — gives rise to qualitatively different determinations giving way to *unreciprocated exchange*. One element in this subspace lies on top of its other and laughs at overdetermination or reciprocity relation, without abandoning the overall play of overdetermination or reciprocity.

Look: mimicry of overdetermination unhooks the concept of (hegemonic) power from its essentialist engagement as in Foucault. It is thus an intervention in current cultural studies exploring (hegemonic) power relations along a Foucauldian line. The sole emphasis of such studies building on Foucault is on the *extra-discursive* as the source of power. Therefore, their focus is on the exploration of the institutional sites where the hegemonic discourses are produced. They consequently look for instruments of dissemination, for attempts to enforce disciplinary norms through institutional practices, and most crucially, for the evidence of contests over these practices. By focussing on an exploration of these contests over institutional sites, they hope to highlight the moments of power.

We appreciate such attempts to pinpoint the source of power. We, of course, will not look for the source of power. That, for us, is an essentialist wild goose chase. But, we will definitely seek to map out the locus and direction of power. But, in the first place, we would like to ask: what is (hegemonic) power? And we contend: (hegemonic) power resides within the discursive. We have only to unmask it. The concept of mimicry of overdetermination does precisely that. The issue of the extra-discursive can figure only at a later stage of the discourse to foreground how it reaffirms, appropriates and distributes power.

Again, in Foucault's vision, power is all-embracing and permeates the entire space. We contest Foucault's stance and contend that power has its limit, that is an outside beyond the gaze of power. Because he leaves his concept of power undefined and indefinite, he images power to be infinite. In Foucault, discourse (knowledge) is power. We intervene here and contend that power originates within the discursive and pinpoint how precisely it does so. And because Foucault loses from view how power originates within discourse, he cannot see where it ends. Power, for us, is like

waves in an ocean that is discourse. The ocean itself is not power. The business of critical theorist is to trace the locus of power that specifies its discontinuities, points of inflexion and the limits. Foucault talks about the margins within a power space, but not about its outside. The outside, qua outside (that is, the unsaid) does not enter into his analysis.

This denigration of the unsaid outside — indeed, its forgetfulness — is inherent in Foucault's professed neo-Kantianism that is overt and without pretense and penance. This neo-Kantianism turned the Kantian limits of Reason contingent and variable. These limits in the original Kant are fixed and immutable in order that one can speak that makes sense. But, though variable, these limits, even in this neo-Kantian version, are never dispensable. And also, in this Foucauldian order the age-old Kantian dictum is retained too, that says that the outside (in Kant, *thing-in-itself*) as such cannot be represented. Foucault just pushes the limits of *reason* outward in order to include a portion of the outside as redefined rarefied margins.

The flexible character of the margins assures this accumulation of the outside into the margins without fundamentally altering the status of the margin and the outside. These categories of *margin* and *outside* remain what they previously were: margins as co-opted voices and the outside as that which cannot be represented. In Foucault, at a point in time, there is a border that respects boundaries of what it includes (center and margins) and what it excludes (as outside). While Foucault is ready to stretch the border to include as much of the outside as feasible he is not ready to abandon the conceptual existence of the border and, consequently, that of the unsaid outside as an unknowable conceptual entity.

We opt for a different discursive model that can promise for margin a more honorable position. The margin in our model not only does collaborate with and resist but also determine and constitute the center and the outside as a voice (however feeble) that can speak. That can speak a speech that the ears of the center *have to* hear — as *symptom*.

While Foucault articulates the order of discourse building on a concept of border, we will indicate how the order of discourse overflows through the border into its outside — invisibly and surreptitiously. The *border* conceived by Foucault (or, Kant, for that matter) is not secured, immutable or sacred at any point in time. Now, if, exclusion of an unknowable outside is used to legitimize the concept of *border* then the dissolution of its unknowable nature brings about a crisis in the concept of *border* as we receive it from Foucault (or, Kant, for that matter).

Foucault's *Order of Discourse* reflects on how the principles of exclusion inhere and function in and through the concept of an *ordered discourse*. On Foucault's scheme, *discourse* is constituted by a relation between *desire* that wants *discourse* to be unrestricted (infinitely open) and the institutions that assert that *discourse* come into formation through constraints and restraints. *Desire* and *Institution* — this is one twosome inseparable: *discourse* forms and exists through the operation of the both — an urge that drives the pen and a body that controls and censors it and becomes its boss.

Foucault talks about three such kinds of bossing:

1) The social procedures of exclusion and prohibition comprising the *forbidden speech* of politics and sexuality, the *division* between reason and madness and the *distinction* between truth and falsehood that form the way in which knowledge is put to use in society.

2) Then comes the *double censoring* of meaning — by critics and readers — of the discourse as it comes into circulation. The effect is to dwindle the meaning of the

discourse and restrict its scope and exhaust its possibilities. Foucault calls this process 'rarefaction.' Foucault's emphasis is on the process of *rarefaction* that constitutes his key concept.

3) And above all there is the *gaze* of the institutions — the supervising professors and the referees of the journals showing red-cards and yellow-cards — maintaining, manipulating and modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the power and knowledge that they carry.

It might be useful to link up Foucault's insight in the *Order of Discourse* with the spirit of his later writings on Kant and enlightenment. Foucault points to Kant as the godfather of our lesser bosses dictating the course of the discourse. Kant sets the limit of the discourse so that the philosopher can speak with reason (and of course, without rhyme); he teaches philosophers to abstain from excesses and to observe these limits. They are the conditions of the existence of Reason — it can come into existence, function, propagate and be effective only through the observance of these limits.

Foucault finds these Kantian limits arbitrary, contingent and variable (but never, as we shall see, dispensable). He abides by the principle of Kantian limits of reason, but calls into question their ways of functioning in society. In his view, the limits of discourses that one observes and encounters in society do not always flow from Reason itself, but through the ways the philosophers in flesh-and-blood interpret and circumscribe reason; they stem from power and form power. The project of post-enlightenment should be, in his opinion, to break into these institutionally imposed limits on Reason.

On another plane — at the level of philosophy — Foucault argues that the Kantian limits of Reason are not given conclusively; they are contingent and variable. They are not only the conditions of existence of reason, but have reasons for their conditions of existence. Foucault's earlier writings and archaeology of knowledge explore these limits: their conditions of existence, mutation, coming into maturity and disappearance. And Foucault's later writings — his discourse on power — examine the effects of these limits as they function in discourses and society in their varied and variable forms.

The point of Foucault's critical reflection on power is to highlight the process of rarefaction that operates as these limits. The excluded — the leper, the insane, and the criminals — are now allowed visa into and green-cards in enlightened society, but in their dwindled forms: as marginal-s that are subordinates to the center. In Foucault's perception, enlightened society is a finite complex of center and margins, distinct from and opposed to one another as perhaps elite and subaltern. And there are the gates and gate-men of the world of enlightenment, entries from and exits into the outside. The outside remains what it was in Kant: unknowable, in the shadow of silence, mute and beyond the reaches of enlightenment. People of enlightened society hear about their stories as stories from the people of dark continents given visa into the New World, from people who are yellow and dark and pale and hectic red.

IV. Margin of Margin

Foucault was silent on people that were denied the visa into the Newland. We decipher the voice of those that were denied the visa. Their voices are also there in the New World, as traces that we have called symptoms.

But look: we have distorted Lacan too. We have bent it to fit in to our problematic. What interests us is *symptom* in the context of *strategic essentialism* and Lacan does not talk about that.

Strategic essentialism, we might recall, emanates from a tense but productive conjunction between modernism and postmodernism. A discursive (strategic) closure done to an otherwise ever-open overdetermined system gives birth to a strategically essentialist space. Therefore, such a space must leave an outside, by definition.

But the outside that strategic essentialism generates (liberates) is not exactly a Lacanian outside. In a Lacanian scheme, the outside, which Lacan calls the *real*, is the irresistible outside of critical theory — the irredeemable *unsaid* — that can only be shown to exist through symptoms: trace of the unsaid within the realm of what has been said. On the contrary, in our context, the outside, though beyond the gaze of power, and of all that which is founded on power, is not necessarily beyond the gaze of critical theory. In other words, it is, unlike in Lacan, capable of being problematized. *We call such an outside 'margin of margin', a space recalcitrant to absorption within the embrace of power.*

We believe Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* (1989) provides the parent model for an exploration of this space of margin of margin. In Nietzsche's model, the servant is negatively defined; the servant's conception of the world is an inversion of the master's world. For example, the servant considers the master *evil* and defines *good* as the *negative* of this evil.

Therefore, the servant is always vengeful. The master, on the contrary, is sure of himself, and considers himself *good*. He sees the servant as the negative of what is good, that is, *bad*; he does not consider the servant evil. Therefore, the master can *forget* the servant. It is important to note that *forgetfulness* is different from *suppression*. Suppression means putting below; forgetfulness implies keeping outside. The master can afford to keep the servant, temporarily, outside his mind.

But — and this is most important — Nietzsche's discourse on power simultaneously defines a theoretical space from which power relations are absent. If the master's mind can temporarily free itself from the servant's world, that also implies that the master can, sometimes, disentangle himself from power relations. Here, power relations *cease*. (Nietzsche, however, does not discuss the details of the issue.)

The current discourse on power — for example, Foucault's — does away with the notion of these small pockets from which power relations are absent. One may say that Foucault gives an exaggerated role to the notion of the *gaze*. Starting out from Bentham's notion of the *panopticon* — a tower at the center looking out at the servants' cells on the periphery — Foucault shows how this gaze is *interiorized* in postindustrial society.

The *great confinement* (of *Madness and Civilization*) of course, remains: by way of hospitals, lunatic asylums, schools, factories. The bosses — the doctor, the professor — watch the servant: the servant cannot escape the gaze of the boss. The gaze then reaches into the very grain of the individuals (including the bosses), touches their bodies, forms them, deforms them. *The gaze is interiorized.*

Look: we do not claim that Foucault reduces everything to power; that is far from Foucault's intention. He accords only a relative autonomy

to power relations. Neither does he claim that power is omniscient and omnipotent; the existence of different forms of surveillance — including the panopticon — only signifies that power has its limits.

Foucault only describes power as it is: how it functions, its conditions of existence, its limits, how it takes on different forms (including forms of resistance). Let us concede this. But Foucault does not describe the limits of power — the conditions under which the gaze of the master becomes ineffective. We invoke Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* here to point out these dark spots in Foucault's analysis which simultaneously are the dark spots in the master's world into which the gaze of the master cannot reach.

In Nietzsche's framework the master considers itself good; she considers the servant bad, and, therefore, forgets the servant. This means that the master upholds certain moral values that make one the master of the world (heroism, aggressiveness, competitiveness, dynamism, etc) and considers the servile values (cowardice, meekness, inflexibility, etc) as *bad.* Consequently, the master considers all those upholding servile moral values as bad too, and forgets them. But this zone of the master's *forgetfulness* simultaneously constitutes the zone of *ignorance.* (She does not know the structure of meekness). The master is not *informed* of this zone and therefore cannot *deform* it. *She can cope with violence, but not with nonviolence.* This zone is what we call margin of margin, an outside beyond the gaze of power.

If freedom is understood negatively, as the absence of the master, then freedom resides here, in this domain of forgetfulness from which the master is absent. Therefore, freedom on the servant's part requires an inversion of moral values: what the master considers bad is good for the servant. The master considers the servant lazy or a coward; so produce a world in the image of the cowardly man, the lazy. The master can intervene in a terrorist or revolutionary movement, but she might not cope with a nonviolent movement or peace movement. The master does not know peace. Thus, there can be two competing subaltern views of the world:

1) First, the master represents the servant as bad (coward/lazy). The servant claims that this involves a misrepresentation and inferiorization of the servant. Therefore, the servant tries to prove that she too is good (heroic, aggressive, etc), that is, she presents her/himself in the image of the master.

2) The competing view is that the servant rejects the master's notion of *goodness* and she chooses, deliberately, to be bad.

Consider a bad person — one of the most condemned persons in *modern* world, the *sati* — a woman ready to burn herself with the dead body of her husband before a crowd glorifying the sight. Needless to say that modern woman will not approve of this; and neither will the (postmodern) authors.

The first thing that the British did after they came into (conquered) India was to take legal action against the *sati* rite and the step was (and still is) applauded by the people of India. But we often miss the larger significance of this act of disapproval: when we condemn the *sati* rite we simultaneously condemn the right to commit suicide for a cause — before a crowd that witness this suicide. But this "immoral" act — committing suicide before a crowd — has significant implications for a nonviolent political movement and is one of its important *moments*.

Hunger strikes (often leading to death) and self-immolation (burning oneself before the crowd in daylight) are devices used in nonviolent political movements to produce a climax: one kills oneself, consciously, before a crowd, and thus, incites them.

Communist revolutionaries condemn nonviolent political movements and say: why kill yourself — kill your enemy! They miss the point that this nonviolence carries within it its other, the counterpart: the possibility of breathtaking violence. *It breeds the terrorism of suicide squads.* The man who can kill himself in cold blood for a cause can also kill his enemy at the cost of his own life.

On 21st May, 1991, Rajib Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India, the son of Indira Gandhi and the grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru (all former Prime ministers), was killed in a bomb blast by a suicide squad. The metal detector could not trace the dangerous bomb the terrorist carried within her. Beware of the meek: she can be the most dangerous and violent person under the sun.

Since the publication of Said's *Orientalism* (1978), the issue of divergence between the East and the West has reappeared in the forefront, that is, the Western front: they (the West) misrepresent — and inferiorize — us (the Orient). Therefore, questions like "Can we represent us?", or, "How can we represent us?", and so forth, have become very popular. We believe that there is a misplaced emphasis in this search for an identity on part of the Orient. The critique of Orientalism, too, accepts the dominant set of moral values and talks about the necessities of an alternative representation of the Orient in its terms. In this case, the exercise reduces itself to finding a different form in which the dominant set of moral values can express itself in the Orient.

We propose here an inversion of moral values to get us out of this trap. If a person does not share those values, he might accept them as a strategy. Let the meek speak. It is pointless to try to rediscover ourselves in a world where tradition is overdetermined by modernism — we can only interrogate or contest the master's hegemony. The attempt to rediscover ourselves, inasmuch as it projects a (negatively defined) conception of "We" (the Orient), displaces the Orient (or, for that matter, the Third World) and effaces the many heterogeneous identities in it.

White Orientalism is merely replaced by Brown Orientalism.

The point is that Orientalism is not a product of some vulgar Orientalists in the West. Orientalism is the necessary, that is, the logical, outcome of a discourse produced in a world where tradition is overdetermined by modernism. if a few Orientalists in the West are subject to these overdetermining influences, there are no reasons to suppose that we will be free of these same overdetermining influences. What is necessary is to invert the dominant moral values to show how apparent submissiveness carries within it the possibilities of resistance.

That, of course, does not alter fundamentally (that is, qualitatively) the material conditions of the servant; she remains what she is — a servant. At best, she can become the master — but the master-servant relations remain. That is a presupposition of this analysis. Our objective is to examine the *servant's* possible strategies within this problematic. We note that the inversion of moral values provides a new form of contesting the master's world which the master cannot understand — where the gaze of the master fails. This, simultaneously, interrogates those rebels in the servant's world whose heroism, in the final analysis, is often reduced to shouting in the language of the master. Resistance turns into its opposite: collaboration. Conversely, implicit in the servant's apparent submissiveness, we might find resistance.

What does sustain the servant? Let this remain an enigma for those who do not share the servant's values. For them suffice it to note that ordinary people will live on — like the ants and the roaches. The dinosaurs are dead. *Oh you, who turn the wheel and look to windward, consider those dinosaurs who were once taller than you*.

V. Synthetic Hegemony, Symptom, Margin of Margin: The Story of the Ramayana

Let us cite a scene from the *Ramayana*[39], the Indian epic. We are citing from an authentic Bengali translation of this epic by Hemchandra Bhattacharya.

> তখন সুলক্ষণা তারা মদবিহ্বল লোচনে স্খলিতগমনে লক্ষ্মণের নিকট চলিলেন। তাহার অঙ্গযষ্টি স্তনভারে সন্নত, এবং কাঞ্চীদাম লম্বিত হইয়া পড়িল। লক্ষ্মণ উহাকে দেখিয়া তটস্থ হইলেন এবং স্ত্রীলোকের সান্নিধ্যবশত ক্রোধ পরিত্যাগপূর্বক অবনতমুখে রহিলেন।
>
> তারা মদভরে নির্লজ্জা, তিনি লক্ষ্মণকে সুপ্রসন্ন দেখিয়া প্রণয় প্রদর্শনপূর্বক শান্তবাক্যে কহিলেন
> রাজকুমার। তোমার ক্রোধের কারণ কি?
> রাজকুমার তোমার ক্রোধের কারণ কি?

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[39]*Ramayana*, shorter of the two great Sanskrit epics of ancient India, the other being the *Mahabharata*. Rich in its descriptions and poetic language, the *Ramayana* consists of seven books and 24,000 couplets. It was probably begun in the 3rd century BC, with the beginning and possibly the ending added later. The *Ramayana* tells of Rama, a prince and the seventh incarnation of the god Vishnu, and his wife, Sita. Rama and Sita are widely revered as ideal embodiments of princely heroism and wifely devotion, respectively. Reciting the *Ramayana* is considered a religious act, and scenes from the epic are dramatized throughout India and Southeast Asia.

দেখিতেছি তুমি ক্রোধান্ধ, ইহাতেই বোধ হয় কামতন্ত্রে তোমার প্রবেশ নাই। কপিরাজ সুগ্রীব কামের বশে নিরন্তর আমার সন্নিহিত আছেন, এক্ষণে তাহার লজ্জাশরম আর কিছুই নাই। ধর্মশীল তাপসেরাও মোহবশত কামের বশীভূত হন। সুগ্রীব বানর এবং চপল, ভোগসুখে নিমগ্ন সে — তাহার স্মৃতিভ্রংশ হইয়াছে। তুমিই অন্দরমহলে আইস, তোমার চরিত্র পবিত্র। সুতরাং মিত্রভাবে পরস্ত্রীদর্শন তোমার পক্ষে অধর্মের হইবে না।

Or, in English:

Off ambled Tara towards Lakshmana, sexy and tipsy, her sylph-like body stooping under the weight of her ripe breasts, a cascade of hair rippling down her back. Bewitched and no more enraged, Lakshmana stood still with his eyes downcast.

Tara, drunk and unabashedly inviting, said gently, and amorously (as she found him well disposed): "Oh prince, what is the thing of your fury?"

"Oh, prince, what enrages you?"

"I see, you are blind with fury. That shows you are innocent of the art of love. Sugrib, the lascivious monkey-chief is ever after me. Right now he has neither sense nor decency. Even the devout Yogi-s succumb to lust. And Sugrib is only a monkey, swerving and deviating, he is over head and ears in carnal pleasure, oblivious of everything else. You are *pristine* — come on into the inner sanctum — the *harem*. It will be no sacrilege if you just come in and meet someone else's woman as a friend."

The above is a scene of seduction. And simultaneously a show of resistance.

Tara is the queen of the *Dravid*[40]. She lures Lakshmana, the Aryan prince. Into the *harem*. She does it in an un-queenly way. Tara is all drunk. And her clothes not in their right places. Showing off all the curves and waves of her body. She brings him in. So that Lakshmana can meet the *Dravid* king, Sugrib, all surrounded by the ravishing women of the world busy in their orgies. So that Lakshmana can realize that the one that rules the *Dravid* state is not Sugrib but Tara herself. Rama, the elder brother of Lakshmana, killed Bali, the former *Dravid* king and the elder brother of Sugrib to make Sugrib the king of the *Dravid* state. A conditional king. The condition that Sugrib would fight for Rama against Ravana, the king of *Sri-Lanka*, when the rains would be over.

And the rains are over. But there is no sign of help coming from Sugrib. Which drives Rama to send Lakshmana to the *Dravid* state to remind Sugrib of his promise and what going back upon his words would come to mean.

And there, Tara is greeting Lakshmana at the royal gate, to drive Lakshmana the point home what holds up Sugrib and who runs the *Dravid* state: Tara, the queen, her power of seduction. If Lakshmana were to seek help from the *Dravid* state he

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[40] *Dravid* or Dravidian, name applied to a linguistically related group of people in India composed mainly of the Tamil and the Telugu and the Malayalam, and a few more isolated highland tribes. The Dravidian language has remained relatively intact despite a considerable amount of contact and intermarriage with other peoples of the Indian subcontinent. Dravidian culture is very diverse, with some groups maintaining more traditional customs (such as totemism and tracing kinship through the female line) while others have adopted the lifestyles of a modern technological society, keeping its distinctness from the North-Indian, predominantly Brahmin or Aryan culture, living, in one form or another..

must beg it from her, whose husband Ram had killed, like a petty murderer, from behind a bush.

What will the queen do? Should she send back Lakshmana no matter what the consequences are — and she does not care a fig for consequences? Or, should she help Rama?

The questions intrigue Tara. For, Ravana had taken away, that is, dishonored, Sita, Rama's wife, and thereby dishonored the whole of the woman race. So, Tara must fight against Ravana. For Rama. Against *adharma*. When *dharma* is at stake, individual tragedies and specific injustices become issues of secondary importance. Addressing them and their redress can wait. But, whatever she chooses to do, she is condemned to do *adharma*. For, there is no *dharma* as a *totality*. But, there are *dharma*-s. and sometimes one is thrown into a situation where doing *dharma* to a *constituency* entails imparting *adharma* to another *constituency*. What is involved here is an existentialist problem: an agent is free to choose her/his *dharma*. And this freedom weighs upon the agent like a stone.

The story of the *Ramayana* thus pushes *dharma* to its limit and we see the beyond. The *symptom*. For, *dharma* speaks of and links up do-s and don't-s and seeks to make them parts of a whole, that is, of a totality. And a whole lot of episodes in the *Ramayana* conspire to prise open its cracks and fissures, highlighting that any totality must necessarily be a false totality. Thus, *dharma* can only be an edifice built on chaos. In the interior *dharma* reigns, with a well-built structure of do-s and don't-s logically linked with one another. But, only in the interior. Once *dharma* is pushed to its limit, we catch a glimpse of its outside: its *symptom*: *adharma* as destiny.

It is margin of margin that brings to surface such symptoms — here Tara, face to face with Lakshmana in and through her un-queenly (and in her hegemonic morality, unwomanly) attire and gestures, foregrounds the limits of queenly and womanly *dharma*. Through her surrender to Sugrib she shows off her power of seduction and that she is free to choose between queenly *dharma* and womanly *dharma*.

The current discourse on the *Ramayana* and the politics built on it by the ruling party BJP (*Bharatiya Janata Party*) — which, in our opinion, will also be the hegemonic reading of the *Ramayana* in India — puts under erasure the symptoms of any ideal (or the ideal state) that the story of the *Ramayana* reveals through a series of interconnected situations and events. It portrays *Ramrajya* — the concept of ideal state in the *Ramayana* — as a totality without any blemish and gaps, and with Rama as an avatar that cannot be questioned. And as we understand, the story of the Ramayana, its concepts of Rama and *Ramrajya* are precisely the opposite. We find here a Rama that faults and a *Ramrajya* that falls apart.

What occurs then is a *displacement* of Rama and *Ramrajya* constituted by a metonym of modernism: nation state. This structures as a nodal point, privileging a whole set of signifiers in Indian society. The fanatics — the fans of Rama — then fight for Rama against what they imagine to be anti-Rama as also against modernism. Moderns laugh at them at their back, for in doing so, the fanatics are only reaffirming modernism in that modernism resides in their very concept of Rama. The fanatics cannot see through the veil of synthetic hegemony of Rama that is modern. But, that is a long story — this synthetic hegemony structured around modern Rama — and is beyond the scope of this book. Let us focus on the symptoms that the story of the *Ramayana* throws off, repeatedly.

VI. How Sita Spoke to the Deaf

His mom is sleeping with Sugrib, the partner of his father's killer. And Sugrib, his uncle, is about to enter into a battle under the flag of the man who killed his father like a barbarian, from behind a bush. Such was Angad's lot.

Angad is no prince Hamlet: how does it matter if mom chooses to sleep with another guy. Other things are more important than his personal tragedies: Dharma is at stake.

Ravana had taken away, that is, dishonored Sita, Rama's wife, and thereby the whole of woman race. So, Angad must fight against Ravana — for Rama, against *adharma*. When he knew it fully well that Rama is the one that killed his father Bali, in a cowardly manner, disgracefully, from behind the bush.

Rama, too, had no choice. Rama, the son of king Dasaratha, came to stay in thee forest for fourteen years, with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana to keep up the word of his father. His father promised his stepmother that her son Bharata would be the king. The stepmother also demanded that Rama be sent to forest, for fourteen years. So, Rama was in the forest, so that the king did not prove to be a liar. Then it happened. Ravana, the king of Lanka, came and took away Sita.

Rama could not beg for help from Bali because he had done an identical crime as Ravana did. Both took away other's wives : Ravana — that of Rama and Bali — that of Sugrib, his brother. Therefore, Bali, too, must be punished. But, Rama did not have the option to challenge Bali into a duel. Bali, in all probability, would not accept that challenge and would attack him on his unguarded moments. Such was the way people like Bali used to fight. Rama knew it. And Rama was not in a position to fight Bali, a (kind of) tribal chief with an army. And Rama, no longer a king, was all alone, in the wilderness without an army, with only brother Lakshmana to help him. Rama was desperately looking for help.

Therefore Rama sought for help, form Sugrib. Bali had driven away Sugrib from the kingdom after (forcefully) taking away his wife Ruma. So, Rama entered a pact with Sugrib. Sugrib, the weaker party, would challenge Bali into a duel. If Sugrib were in danger, Rama would help him. That way Sugrib would get back his kingdom, and his wife Ruma. In return, Sugrib should help Rama in his fight against Ravana. Sugrib, obviously, was not strong enough to win the duel with Bali. So, Rama killed Bali from a hidden place, like a petty assassin. This, obviously, was most unbecoming of Rama.

Rama had two alternatives :

1) To preempt and execute what Bali himself would have done, that is, to kill him on his unguarded moments. Rama then would get the help from Sugrib to fight Ravana.
2) To bear with Ravana's, and also Bali's crime, that is, to bear with *adharma*.

So, the situation now was that whatever Rama did that would be *adharma* : the sword of *(a)dharma* cuts both ways.

This is important : that Rama, the person, is not to blame. The very concept of *dharma*, that is, totality, must be called in question. It is idle to hope that some God (statue of Liberty, Marx) would save us : God itself is impure. God can appear on earth only in an adulterated form.

This, obviously is a specific philosophical (religious) position, a compromise (*Mimangsha*) of two competing views of life. One view is that there is whole (party, state) which includes all the parts together, logically, as its parts. Hegel's philosophy records its highest development. The competing view will be its negative : there is no objective totality (*dharma*). And everything is subjective, built on *chaos*. The compromise solution will be that any totality is *myth(ya)* — false. However, what is *myth(ya)* is not untrue. *Myth(ya)* is situated in a different theoretical space, in poststructuralist terms — non-imaginary unreal space, which can accommodate a structured totality up to a point. But, only up to a point. Push it to its limit and you learn what it is : *myth(ya)*. One, then, sees the *beyond* — the symptom.

That was Shankara's[41] philosophy — Shankara, the greatest philosopher of India. Therefore, a totality, in the final analysis, is a *myth(ya)*. The project of the subaltern is to contest the very notion of totality itself, push it to its limit, into that twilight in which *dharma* is *adharma*. Therefore, the truth of subaltern politics must necessarily be micro-politics : he does not believe in totality. His participation in macro-politics is only accidental, contingent on circumstances. Like Angad's participation in Rama's battle.

Rama won the battle and got back Sita. But Rama's subjects would not have her : Sita had become impure. Rama knew that Sita was pure. Would Rama employ his coercive force, on his subjects, to compel them to accept Sita? That would be *adharma*. Or, should Rama leave Sita? That would again be *adharma*. Again, the sword of *(a)dharma* cuts both ways. And what would the queen Sita do? Should she force Rama to employ his coercive force on the masses and thus assert her superior position in the matrix of power? In this case, the masses were obviously wrong. Sita knew that she was pure. And Sita knew that Rama knew that she was pure. What would Sita do? How would she react?

Sita stood there. her hands folded. And her eyes wet. Those were pearls that were her tears. And when Rama looked at her Rama could not speak. And his eyes failed. He was neither living nor dead. And he knew nothing — looking into the heart of light, the silence. Yonder, they stood, the impudent imprudent crowd, howling for Sita's trial. It was clear sky and warm sunshine and autumn. Sita looked at the crowd. Those were not villains shouting for her trial. They were honest patriotic people who fought for the causes of the oppressed. No, Sita would not curse anyone — neither Rama nor his subjects. Sita was ready to go into the trial, again. She had already gone through it once, the masses would not believe it. That would save Sita, but not the masses. They would remain what they were: proud people, in the abysmal pit of ignorance. So, finally, Sita decided to sacrifice her life, in daylight, before the masses, to hammer it home that he people too can be wrong.

Who is the third who walks always beside you? When I count there are only two, you and me, husband and wife, the king and the subject. But

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[41] Shankara (788-820), Indian philosopher and religious thinker who developed *Advaita Vedanta*, a system of philosophical thought. According to tradition, Shankara was born into an upper-class family on the Malabar Coast of south India (now part of the state of Kerala). Shankara traveled across India, defending the principles of *Advaita*. He attracted many disciples and established religious communities and temples in all parts of India. Shankara's philosophical thought is preserved in his commentaries on Hindu religious texts such as the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and the *Vedanta Sutra*. He sought to revive what he believed to be the central message of the *Upanishads*, expressed in the statement *thou art that*. In Shankara's view, this meant that the individual soul or self is fundamentally identical with universal being (*Brahma*). Further, Shankara believed that since *Brahma* is absolute and undifferentiated from the self, without any predicates, the entire familiar world of experience has no independent reality. All creatures are tied to the familiar world by the bonds of *karma*, the accumulated consequences of actions in previous lives.

when I look ahead up the white road, there is always another one walking beside you gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded.   I do not know whether being or nothing or chaos — but who is that one on the other side of you?

So, Sita did withdraw, silently, into *silence.*

But that does not exonerate Rama.   He is responsible for Sita's death.   And he killed Bali — unethically, immorally, like a petty villain.

Rama had committed a crime.   Since, Rama represents *dharma*, he too represents falsehood.   Therefore, Rama must be punished.   But Angad must wait : Ravana must be punished first, and then, Rama.   The two crimes reside on different planes.   Ravana had committed an obvious crime, in the interior of *dharma*.   Rama's crime followed   from the limit of *dharma* itself.   Therefore Angad waits, for ages, and killed Rama, that is, Krishna, his avatar in a different *yuga* (time), when that God was sleeping, in his ripe old age, under a tree, all alone.   The hunter who killed Krishna was Angad himself.

So Rama and Krishna must go.   So too must Lenin.   And Marx.

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This book announces a paradigmatic break in the context of a postmodernist postcolonial discursive field. For the first time in the history of ideas, a *third world* discourse is proclaiming its own conceptual tools to articulate itself *positively* and hit hard at the dominant third-worldist postcolonial discourses in G-8 nations and their acolytes nearer home, rewriting, among other things, Marx's *Capital* and *Rama's Ramayana*.

Bigger than Marx and Lord *Rama*, the illegitimate children of Macaulay in Job Charnock's Calcutta are sending here their local voices to the distant global villages in a tonality, language and style that are not always very refined. A paradigmatic shift is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. A paradigmatic break is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class of writings overthrows another.