Ideology, Power And Desire: Views From The Margins

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Abstract *: This survey paper discusses the intellectual history of power and desire in imagining the social and the political. To do so, the paper argues, it is essential to look at ideology first. Ideology is discussed in structuralist-Marxist and postmarxist terms, explicitly and implicitly affecting the discourses of gender and power in Western and transnational places. While discussing the latter two—gender and power—attention is given to the construction of colonial/ postcolonial conditions in the production and circulation of desire and sexualities. A range of authors are discussed in this context: Gayatri Spivak, Laura Ann Stoler, Anne McClintock, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Lawrence Cohen, Gayatri Reddy, Bhaskar Mukhopadhyay and others. In conclusion, the importance of the survey lies in assessing the epistemological-theoretical, historical, and ethnographic premises of the postcolonial margins. The force-field of postcolonial margins, however, is far from unified, which makes a survey paper such as this rather challenging.*

Key Words : *ideology, power, desire, psychoanalysis, sex/gender, discourse, politics, social, culture/cultural, ethnography, margins, colonial/postcolonial, South Asia.*

'Marx could hold *The Science of Logic* and the *Blue Books* together; but that was still only Europe, and in the doing it came undone.'[1]

Spivak, *A critique of postcolonial reason: towards a history of the vanishing present* (1990)

What is at stake in studying power and desire from the margins?

In this interlocking survey of the discourses of power and desire from the margins, I begin by briefly discussing ideology to add a critical dimension to the notion of the margins. The margins belong to feminism, cultural anthropology, and other political discourses, drawing their materials from the collisions and contradictions of labor, capitalism and desire. I argue that these material histories have left indelible marks on the discourses and practices of civil society or *sushil samaj*—which usually accommodates a range of social and sexual practices. But first, let us look briefly at what role ideology—the unnoticed category—has in the explicit and implicit construction of these discourses. To do so, we first take a look at the works of Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci, and Slavoj Žizek who have dealt with ideology as an idea, concept, and practice in social and political life.

Rethinking Ideology, Hegemony, And Practice: Gramsci, Althusser, Žizek

While explaining ideology, Gramsci, Althusser, and Žizek often take us back to Marx and Engels's *The German Ideology* (1846) with express views to engage dialectical thought. Marx and Engels had argued that ideology resides in the superstructure[2] of civilization in the form of institutions and conventions such as law, police, norms, and family; and culture in the form of art, religion, legal, political, scientific practice, etc. These constitute the dominant ideas of society, usually determined by the ruling class and by the histories of class and state.[3] In traditional Marxist thought, since ideology belongs to the superstructure, it is characterized as false-consciousness. It follows that the notion of ideology as false-consciousness necessitates a supersession by the true-consciousness, authored arguably by the proletarian universal subject in a future socialist society. However, not until the 1920s do hegemony and ideology come to bear positive meanings in the context of praxis or practice, when Gramsci, the Italian Marxist, critiques orthodox Marxist belief in the mode of production to gain proletarian and subaltern consciousness.[4]

a) Gramsci's correction: ideology as culture

Gramsci, in his revisionist writings on Machiavelli in *The Modern Prince* in 1933-34 and his reflections on culture in *Prison Notebooks* (1926-32),[5] had argued that ideology in Marx has been 'erroneously' read in a negative way, while in fact there is something positive in it. Jorge Larrain, Althusser, and Michele Barrett maintain that Gramsci was interested in a 'positive' rather than a 'critical' view of ideology.[6] Althusser stated that Gramsci's 'subtle' reading of Marx had a larger implication in treating Marx's historical materialism as a *theory* of practice (emphasis mine). Thus, for Althusser, like Larrain, Gramsci's 'absolute historicism' of the 'philosophy of praxis' was not a historicist idea but in many important respects a positive one, where Gramsci consciously and theoretically engaged at the level of politics and practice.[7] Gramsci's Marxist consciousness acknowledged 'historically organic ideologies' that were 'necessary' because they had psychological validity. The expression, 'historically organic ideologies' in Gramsci refers to culture in civil society (*sushil samaj* in Bangla). Ideology is therefore already present in human society in the form of culture. Culture belongs to the superstructure, where competing levels of hegemony characterize society. For Gramsci, it was therefore necessary that civil society—where gradualist reform should occur—produce its own intellectuals[8] from amongst the subaltern groups to create the conditions for cultural hegemony. This was the basis for Gramsci's essay, 'The Intellectuals' (1927). Gramsci's revolutionary emphasis on culture and civil society as the site for hegemonic struggle, rather than the mode of production, thus posits interesting questions for the subaltern subject in the context of the Party's role in creating a Marxist national popular society. Gramsci's status as a Western Marxist has probably diminished over time, but his influence on the Subaltern Studies Collective in India raises interesting questions about the intellectual legacies of Marxism outside Europe in the postcolonial age.

b) Althusser's problematic: Ideological State Apparatus

Like Gramsci, Althusser declared in *Lenin after Philosophy* (1977) that ideology was the " 'lived' relation between men and their world, or a reflected

form of this unconscious relation, for instance a 'philosophy'…". Althusser distinguished ideology from the science of class (and labor) not through positivism, but through practico-social determinants over the theoretical.[9] By assigning ideology a status resembling 'relative autonomy to the base,'[10] Althusser effectively approximates ideology to both Gramsci's emphasis on 'psychological validity' of culture and to Lacan's psychoanalytic understanding of 'reality.'[11] Unlike Gramsci's 'absolute historicist' positions, Althusser's project applies certain key Lacanian psychoanalytic terms such as the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real as discussed in Lacan's classic, *Language and the Self* (1931). Lacan's ideas were indebted to Freud's idea of the unconscious, with one difference: in Lacan, the materiality of the psyche, at least in its developed stages, was discernible in language—the latter theorized by Saussure in structural terms in 1915[12]. Althusser uses all three of Lacan's ideas in his structural analysis of ideology—its nature, function and social effect.[13] Althusser's premise for a structuralist reading of Marx's works lies in his overall rejection of holistic thought in Marxism, evident in *For Marx* (1965) and *Reading Capital* (1968). In both works, he emphasizes the need to understand structures and levels of Marxism in general scientific terms. Etienne Balibar writes in 'Althusser's Object' that Althusser advocates Marxist science that conceives of knowledge as a form of theoretical production and one that penetrates beneath surface appearances not to an underlying essence but to a structural causality. The importance of such a science lies in its first constructing a problematic, then proceeding to theorize it. Thus, labor and capital are neither purely economic terms nor are they entirely historically determined by acting subjects. Instead, they are *signifiers*, which are held in a relational capacity to their corresponding signifying fields (emphasis, mine). This process does not have a particular beginning or end.

But ideology as an unconscious process does not always clearly explain the inevitability of contradiction in the process of subject formation. Essentially, this brings us to the question of recognition of group, class and subjectivity, which Althusser does not necessarily engage. Critics since Hegel have fiercely argued over the struggle for recognition involving

individuals, groups, classes, and communities for without this struggle, no moral and ethical order of the social is possible. In fact, without this struggle, there can be no place for politics. The problem, as indicated earlier, can be located in the idea of subject-formation, as Axel Honneth discusses in his influential book, *The Struggle for Recognition* (1995).[14]

c) Žizek: the sublime 'object' of ideology and subjectivity

Earlier, while discussing the relationship between ideology and subject-formation, the notable materialist linguist, Michel Pecheux, in an essay called 'The Mechanism of Ideological (Mis) Recognition' (1994) and the philosopher and cultural theorist, Slavoj Žizek, in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989) and *Tarrying with the Negative* (1993) had advanced the questions of the relationship of ideology, subjectivity, and subject-formation. Pecheux advances three possible positions for the individual subject in relation to the dominant ideology of society: identification, counter-identification, and disidentification. The good subject identifies, the bad subject opposes, and a subject in the works becomes a figure of "transformation-displacement". The third effect, in Pecheux's terms, is the subject who changes as well as effects changes in actual power relations, thereby maintaining autonomy as an acting subject.[15]

On the question of the subject's autonomy and subjectivity, Žizek, Lacan's disciple and philosopher of desire, continues the ideology debate in the context of philosophy, psychoanalysis, Marxism, and cultural criticism. He revisits Marx's 'invention' of the symptom in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* to highlight the critical, symbolic, and reproductive questions that Marx raised in *The German Ideology*. He associates Althusser's notion of interpellation with that of Foucault's notion of discursive practice and micro-power.[16] Like Althusser, Žizek's reading of ideology is Lacanian in that he considers the question of subjectivity essential to ideology. In Žizekian terms, the self's representation does not follow from a simple identity of the object that resides outside the self. The self, or the 'I', is neither represented, nor dialectically totalized, but is filled by the symbolic, which has ideological valence. In the first chapter of *Tarrying with the Negative*,

'I or He or It (the Thing) Which Thinks,' Žizek shows that the Cartesian subject of the 'I' to whom 'I' appears, is actually empty. This is an example of Lacanian emptiness, where the positive empirical content is nothing but 'a contingent variable' (29). Here, the 'I' is neither reflective nor constitutive of reality but a void to be 'filled' by material from 'the big Other.' This big Other is the symbolic order of tradition and ideology (69, 76-78). But when that order breaks down, we become aware of the emptiness at the heart not only of our moral world, but also of ourselves. The contingency of meaning becomes apparent. Under these circumstances, theory—more appropriately, theorizing—can mediate that truth. Žizek's work therefore exemplifies the importance of theorizing contemporary cultures in a poststructuralist environment of knowledge—the latter characterized by openness to using deconstruction, philosophy, and cultural anthropology as means of analyzing the experience of culture.

Having identified the position of ideology and the self as an empty 'I' in Western critiques of representation, it is now important to move to the center of the debate: how do these questions appear to the new philosophers and cultural historians of the margins?

The following survey gives a sense of the key texts, concepts, and contexts in the colonial and the postcolonial margins. The themes cover a range of ideas: from Spivak's well-known essay on the gendered subaltern, the subject of national erotics, the masculine space of the Bengali *adda*, the hot contestations of homoeroticism in Ramakrishna, and the *hijras* or the third sex in South Asia.

For Marx: Spivak

In the early 1980s, Spivak addressed the problematic stature of the discourse and representation of the gendered subject in light of the 'subaltern' in her extremely influential essay, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1984). Her central argument in the essay is that the gendered subaltern exists in a colonial, capitalist power/knowledge nexus, which creates the opportunity to examine the 'theory of interest' and its relation to the 'desiring Subject'.[17] Drawing on Marx's conceptions of class and ideology, Spivak showed how class

exists on the level of the superstructure such as family and community. The latter two entities—family and community—exist under the conditions of bourgeois economics, and is therefore invariably conflicted at the subjective level of consciousness and reality. According to her, Marx does not presume a natural coincidence or collapse of interest and desire in a single subject who can represent her desire in a simple act of labor and consciousness (276-80). (Note Spivak changes the universal subject of discussion from 'he/him' to 'she/her'—a move that indicates the direction of feminist critical discourse towards a question of identity, to begin with.) Thus, there is no class instinct—such instincts, if they exist, can be located within the structure of families and communities, where the rules of discourse often transcend economic interests. Spivak warns that this does not mean we can ignore the importance of the economic interest in these matters—far from it.[18] But Spivak's theorizing on the question of subject and subject-formation in the first section of her essay affects her subsequent reading of the practice of the 'third world' woman as subject in colonial and imperial contexts. Her *bricoleur*-like presentation of sati, Hindu social reform, and the challenges to subjectivity in light of the dominant European as well as colonial male elite 'Other' challenges the discourse of Western philosophical projects of power and ideology critique. According to her, the Western philosophical projects do not truly engage imperialism and law, technology, and subject formation of the non-Western gendered subaltern subject of power and identity. For example, in the case of the nineteenth-century *sati*, the figure of the 'third-world woman' occurs between 'patriarchy and imperialism [and] subject-constitution and object-formation,' where the net result is a 'violent shuttling' between 'tradition and modernization' (307). These spell out the conditions of 'epistemic violence' —a characteristically Foucauldian notion (280-6),[19] which indicates a radical rupture in discourse and practice, as evident in the colonial codification of native laws such as the *sati*. In *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a Critique of the Vanishing Present* (1999), Spivak's deconstructive critique of the gendered subaltern subject focuses on 'culture' in the eponymous chapter, 'Culture.' This, according to Spivak, is the place for theorizing the conditions of possibilities

for an articulated subject.[20] Spivak's reading of the problem of a gendered subaltern subject therefore leaves us with the question of effectiveness of the analytical categories and concepts of third world gender studies which are heavily reliant on Western discourses of knowledge and related categories. As an alternative reading, Spivak discusses the need for 'strategic essentialism.' 'Strategic essentialism' is a normative ethical position based on the idea of how to act, morally speaking. This is interesting mainly for deepening the discourse of the problems of and from the margins that summarily rejects the idea of a fixed center. 'Strategic essentialism,' refers to a sort of temporary solidarity based on ethical needs for the purpose of social action. For example, the attitude that women's groups have many different agendas makes it difficult for feminists to work for common causes. 'Strategic essentialism' is therefore about the need to accept temporarily an 'essentialist' position, often explicit in its communicative forms—a surprisingly uncharacteristic Habermasian moment in Spivak[21]—in order to be able to act.[22] But where is this act located in the context of the production of desire in colonial femininity and masculinity? Below, I discuss key authors in that debate: Laura Ann Stoler, Anne McClintock, and Dipesh Chakrabarty. For the purpose of this essay, their works serve as an entry point into the historical discourses of colonial/postcolonial sexuality, desire, and power.

Race, colonialism, sexualities, and the production of desire

a) Laura Ann Stoler: race and the education of desire

In *Race and the Education of Desire* (1995), Ann Stoler's critique of Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality Vol I* (1978) and the 1976 Lectures in the College de France complicates Foucault's reading of the discourse of European bourgeois sexuality by introducing the colony as a key site that intimately affected the production of discourse of sexuality in Europe. Concomitantly, Stoler disturbs the notions of race, class, and colonial identities in the colonies and the metropole, while reintroducing racialized categories as essential to the relationship between the bourgeois society in Europe and its colonies (121-123). Foucault remains central to Stoler's

understanding of colonialism: 'No single analytic framework has saturated the field of colonial studies so completely over the last decade as that of Foucault' (Stoler 1995:1). And yet, she laments, none of his commentators and admirers has advanced the question of Foucault's treatment of modern racism *qua* biopolitics, which left its mark on the species and reproduction (20-21). It is worth quoting Michel Foucault on biopolitics at length here:

> Unlike discipline, which is addressed to bodies, the new non-disciplinary power is applied not to man-as-living-being; ultimately, if you like, to man-as-species. To be more specific, I would say that disciplines tries to rule a multiplicity of men to the extent that their multiplicity can and must be dissolved into individual bodies that can be kept under surveillance, trained, used, and if needs be, punished. And that the new technology that is being established is addressed to a multiplicity of men, not to the extent that they are nothing more than their individual bodies, but to the extent that they form, on the contrary, a global mass that is affected by overall process characteristic of birth, death, production, illness, and so on. So after a first seizure of power over the body in an individualizing mode, we have a second seizure of power that is not individualizing but, if you like, massifying, that is directed not at man-as-body but as man-as-species. After the anatomo-politics of the human body established in the course of the eighteenth century, we have, at the end of that century, no longer an anatomo-politics of the human body, but what I would call a 'biopolitics' of the human race.[23]

Stoler intends to complicate the relationship between biopolitics and racialization and racism—a historical fact via the colonial archive. In an attempt to deal with the two contentious positions—race and sex—in colonial studies, she turns her critical eyes to *The History of Sexuality Vol. I*. First, she says, like other cultural, political and economic assertions, the emergent discourses of race and sex in Europe in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries cannot be charted in Europe alone. She says that in 'short-circuiting Empire'

(7), Foucault misses certain key sites in the production of the discourse of sexuality. Thus, the disentanglement of the bourgeois self from its imperial excesses, racialized contexts, and various forms of relational encodings are virtually impossible. Her second reason, amplified in Chapter 2 ('Placing Race' 19-54), is that for Foucault, race is a theme and not a subject of analysis (52). Foucault, according to Stoler, did not engage with the discourse that he himself helped construct. Later in Chapter 3 ('Bourgeois Bodies and Racial Selves', 95-136), she would elaborate her concerns she had hinted at in Chapter 2 namely, how nineteenth-century Europe populated by Eurasians, *mestizos*, *Indos* etc. were the center of liberalist debates vis-à-vis the question of equality of rights, based on citizenship participation. She says that they quickly became contaminated by the scientific and medical practices of 'blood origins', as well as a folk theory of contamination based on 'cultural contagions' and not 'biological taintings' that 'distinguished true members from the body politic from those who were not' (Stoler 52). Stoler's reading of Foucualt resituates the colonial archive as an ideology that actively participated in subject-formation of the European bourgeois in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries.

b) Anne McClintock: race, gender, and sexuality

If Stoler questions Foucault's treatment of the colonial as a necessary category to locate the origins of the history of sexuality in Europe, according to Anne McClintock in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1995), race, gender and class are in themselves more decentered than it looks at first. According to McClintock, the discourses of race, gender, and class are 'articulated categories' (McClintock 4-9), having no fixed point of origin. This is probably best illustrated by her use of the 1899 'Pears Soap ad' (McClintock 33) to articulate what she calls '*commodity racism*' (33), also known as scientific racism. This form of racism is exemplified by Foucault's illustrations of medical literature, scientific and medical reports and journals, which belong to public discourse of race and sex and were meant only for the experts, the educated, and the interested. The place of experts was gradually replaced—as well as supplemented, one may add—by commodities in the specific form of

photography and advertisement, the Imperial Expositions, and the museum movement. Together the narrative of imperial Progress was converted into mass-produced *consumer spectacles* (33, emphases author's). Further, as examples of racist, classist and sexist social relations, her description of Arthur Munby/Hannah Cullwick affair (76) opens the opportunity to explore the complex interface of work/labor and sexuality in a neurotic Victorian industrial social set-up (77). She emphasizes the neurotic, highly private, and fantastical relationship that Munby generates in his urban projects and one that brings out the master/slave relationship between Victorian men and working-class women.

Like the colonial natives, the logic of domination and control lies at the hands of the imperial male. Cullwick's illustrations of Munby's voyeurisms and hand fetish, of photographing and exhibiting working class women indicate 'voyeuristic control of spectacle' and 'money' (129) that are described as 'private stock of the imaginary capital that he hoarded in secret' (*ibid.*). While the logics of Munby's male, voyeuristic, and fetishist control mechanisms are clear, Cullwick's diaries representing 'theatrical submissions' to Munby are assumed to be negotiating power over Munby. The relationship between fetish dependency, S/M and Christianity in Cullwick's life cannot be exaggerated, but the paradoxical arrangements as wife and laborer in Munby's universe has a historical context—namely the production of middle-class leisure and the invisible servant (158-160). The rationalizing of domesticity, as McClintock calls it, gave a lease of power to individuals such as Cullwick to exercise some amount of negotiating powers, even though the realm of that power is irrevocably male because of the expanding imperial economic powers of the Victorian male. But how is the Victorian male's world translated into the world of post-Enlightenment Bengali male?

c) Dipesh Chakrabarty: masculinity and the public sphere in Bengal

In the context of the provincialized Bengali male, masculine desire is central to the production of discourse of coloniality in Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* (2000). Chakrabarty's first example relates to

widowhood and social reform, and the second belongs to *adda*, sociality, and social labor in the 19th century. Social reformers such as Vidyasagar and Rammmohan, who were known for their public display of 'compassion' of *shahanubhuti* for the plight of widows, critically questioned compassion's status as equal in every man. Instead, as a *sahriday vyakti* (person with a heart), Vidyasagar qualifies as someone who does not hesitate to bare his heart for the cause of suffering of the oppressed woman in caste-ridden Bengali society in the 19th century. Suffering, an innate female virtue in Victorian Bengal, but never a part of reflections on the practical functions of the individual in the state, now forms the core of compassion and personhood in figures like Vidyasagar and Rammohan, for example. Chakrabarty suggests that the hermeneutics of the social appears very different when one looks at the rational project of social reform as having an essentially internal realm. Internal realms are mysterious, liminal, psycho-sexual, and often unvocalized, as many examples of the *antarmahal* in the Bengali literary and cultural texts of the mid-19th century show. Chakrabarty is not advocating a dyadic reading of the inside/outside, unlike his peer, Partha Chatterjee in *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (1993). Chakrabarty advocates instead that people like Vidyasagar recognized that the split between the inside and the outside in Bengali and Indian society is confusing, and cannot be entirely understood by rational choice theories of the state, law, reform, market, and so on. Instead, the inarticulate, the virtual, the unthinkable, the untested, must be accommodated alongside the known, which is the actual act itself—Act for the Remarriage of Hindu Widows (1856), for example.[24] Similarly, Chakrabarty's ethnography of the *adda* is less about the community—although the community forms a critical point of departure for male constructions of desire through Tocquevillian associations.[25] Chakrabarty is instead more focused on sociality and publics, through hybrid constructions of ribaldry, literariness, ubiquitous political sensibilities, drinking, theatricality, urban living, and male homosocial relations. Friendship is emphasized in the *adda* of the 19th through the 20th centuries as Chakrabarty specifically identifies the 'connection between orality and a certain kind of aesthetic/

communal pleasure,' (206) evident in the parsing of the syntax of *adda*. As he takes us through the tabloid structure of *adda*, the pleasure of conversation reminds us once again of the confusing nature of the *Öffentlichkeit* (public sphere) in colonial/postcolonial socialities. Chakrabarty seems to be stressing the 'publicness' rather than the public sphere idea—the latter idea introduced in a historico-theoretical format by Jürgen Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere* (1962)—aspect of *adda* in its peculiar and particular form.[26]

Critique of the historical archive, national erotics and literary affects, deviance and the outside, homosexuality and spirituality, and the third gender in south asia

a) Spivak and Arondekar: the critique of the historical archive

Since the Subaltern Studies Collective in the 1980s and colonial/postcolonial studies and anthropology since the 1990s, a lot of scholarly and even popular attention around the subject of sexuality and gender in the context of public culture has been visible in South Asia. The question usually surrounds the uncomfortable topic of sex/gender, types and kinds of sexualities, sexual cultures, the dialectic of the domestic and the public, national erotics and ultimately, the state's role as a regulating body in matters of sex. In this sense, for example, the subject of sex/gender *qua* public culture has an important place in the study of labor in Bengal. If labor and the mode of production are related dialectically, sex/gender is related to the production and reproduction of labor itself, as Engels famously studied in *The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884). Besides, the transformative image of the body through the coexistence of different kinds of normative bodies and images in coloniality/postcoloniality also alters one's perceptions and relations to labor, family, and community. In this specific sense, like ideology, sex/gender is always already present in a wide spectrum of human activity—from the domestic to the political. Thus, from the well-documented *adda* to the recently documented cultures of servitude, sexuality and gender in public culture form essential links to the study of culture and society in South Asia (Chakrabarty 2000, Arondekar 2005, etc.). What is

evident in these works is the questioning of a certain idea of history, which is usually located in the archive for the construction of historiographies of women, gender, sexuality, etc. As Gayatri Spivak says in the *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999), the archive does not often yield what one is seeking.[27]

Several questions surface in Anjali Arondekar's *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (2005). Arondekar poses criticisms of the subaltern project's uncomplicated views of sexuality. Arondekar has several parallel interests in the problem of archives, sexuality and secrecy/openness, sexuality studies and colonial body and subjectivity, and of course, colonial law in India, as enacted by the British since the 19th century. In critiquing received notions of the archive as 'epistemic arrangements' (Introduction, p. 1) derived mainly from Foucault and Derrida, Arondekar invokes Spivak's extended analysis of the archival search for the Rani of Sirmur (Introduction, p. 1). In order to situate the object of intellectual labor, the colonial archive, especially in the case of South Asia, has endless promise, because it is not a fixed, but plural site (2), and which has been subject to interrogation by the subalterns and the early postcolonial thinkers such as Spivak. Arondekar recognizes the self-reflexivity of the subaltern and postcolonial studies agenda as it continually expands, interrogates, and experiences the outcome of its own critique of the historical archive.

However, Spivak also critiques this very colonial historiography as a site where subjectivity cannot be situated. Arondekar echoes Spivak in suggesting that no matter how the archive has expanded (popular culture, oral history, marginal literatures, etc.), it still remains teleological in the specific sense that knowledge is produced by the archive, however luminous and brilliant. Counter-histories are present in histories/archives—one has to look closely inside local histories of subjects (sexuality, prostitution, thuggery, betrayal, petty-court cases, widows, aging, and innumerable subjects of imperial constructions). That may lead us to another set of constructions of difference and deviance, where these texts and contexts propose a different logic(s) of archive entirely. The construction of difference

and of deviance therefore requires new sets of tools of analysis.

b) Charu Gupta: national erotics and the literary affect

In *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India* (2002), Charu Gupta encapsulates the ways in which the literary could be used as affective discourse to expand upon the colonial encounter of sexualities, obscenities, and the fear of the Muslim—all three counteracting in some form or the other the Hindu Enlightenment project of spiritual and nationalist awakening. Reminiscent in a limited way of Michelle Rosaldo's Victorian Heritage II project[28], Gupta studies the rise of cheap erotica and its quick disciplining by the colonial state as obscene in north India since the mid-19th century. Through the subject of mass and the elite, cheap/erotic and high literature, reformers and ordinary subjects, she opens the space to examine the colonial disciplining of the subject and the sexualization of women as moral subjects, who were designed for reproductive activities and male desire (45-6). Male desire and sexuality are understood as repressed in early and high nationalist period—a phenomenon that can be associated with the Gandhian idea of the *ashram—where brahmancharya* is advocated as the desired goal. Ironically, the manufacture, circulation, and advertising of aphrodisiacs since the high point of nationalist struggle in the early twentieth century remains a thorny issue, and one that points to a critical reading of advertisement fliers in newspapers. Gupta illustrates the conditions in which such sexualities are produced, reproduced, and funneled through the discourse of the public/private dyad.

On the subject of *brahmacharya* and the 'extraordinary everydayness' (983) of Gandhian thought, Ajay Skaria, 'Gandhi's Politics: Liberalism & the Question of the Ashram' (2002) is noteworthy. Skaria's reading can be contrasted to previous other readings, namely Partha Chatterjee's consideration of Gandhian moral precepts in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (1993). Chatterjee thinks that Gandhi's moral precepts is primarily political. Instead, Skaria analytically considers the ways in which this very Gandhian morality provides a critique of the ontological status of civil society in liberal modernity, i.e., in its secular

status. He parses the Gandhian 'moral,' which put forward a different ordering of civil society that is not merely based on an epistemic critique of liberal modernity, but which also works its ways through the ontological implications of those moral concepts as conceived and lived in everyday life based on the conduct of politics. The ways of being in the world, and not only of knowing it, effect the politics of neighborliness that Skaria suggests mark the 'extraordinary everydayness' of Gandhi's thought (983). It is indeed in this sense that the political is suffused with the religious in Gandhi's thought. The religious transforms the terrain of the political in many ways, according to Skaria. On the one hand, there is the practice of *ahimsa* which 'is directed against civil society instead of, like civil disobedience, seeking its extension.' In that regard, 'Gandhi's politics of ahimsa sought to institute protocols for antagonisms to encounter one another without a middle term' (973). Emerging from the concept of *ahimsa* and consequent to it are the concepts of kinship, conceived in the non-exclusionary sense of the word (that also implies the non-nationalist sense), and the various modes of neighborliness depending on friendship, service, and *satyagraha.*

c) Bhaskar Mukhopadhyay: the scandal of homosexuality and spirituality in Ramakrishna

A scholarly work on religion published in the mid-1990s—Jeffrey Kripal's *Kali's Child: the Mystical and the Erotic Life of the Teachings of Ramakrishna* (1995)—became controversial soon after its publication. As John Hawley reports, the Hindu right in the US, UK, and India, and the Vedanta Society in the US and India immediately slammed Kripal.[29] These critics argued that Kripal's work showed the Bengali *sadhak* Ramakrishna as a closet homosexual seeking same-sex love amongst his men and boy followers. Ramakrishna, a well-known spiritual figure in the mid-19th century in Bengal, was a tantric, and a worshipper of Kali. Ramakrishna's influential role among early nationalists and the Brahmo elite such as Keshab Chandra Sen is legendary. Kripal's work draws on psychoanalysis and suggests that Ramakrishna's teachings, which were witty and often involved mystical play, was characterized by *vyakulata* (roughly translated, anxiety/desire) for men and boys belonging to his spiritual circuit. Their homoerotic appeal

is intensified when one considers that Ramakrishna was allegedly repelled by women.

In a short review, Bhaskar Mukhopadhyay criticizes Kripal's methods of research without rejecting the possibility that Ramakrishna may have been a homosexual—a matter of less significance, if one considers the epistemological problems that Kripal may have invited for himself. He criticizes Kripal's omission of the 'diffused' nature of Indian cultural conceptions around sex, while sexualizing Ramakrishna's body and his metaphors as veiled homosexuality. According to Mukhopadhyay, Kripal confuses sexuality with erotics in his work on Ramakrishna. He says, sexuality is a Western construct—a 'science' as Foucault articulated in *History of Sexuality* (1978)—while erotics is not, as treatises on love-making in ancient Greece and India show. Treatises on sex and pleasure are instances of aesthetics rather than sexual disciplining to be used by the state as such. However, Mukhopadhyay is not so naïve as to believe that sexuality is exclusively the domain of the West. On the contrary, he believes that in modern India, sex/gender is embedded in ways that are not often apparent, and hence require theorizing. His recent work on pornography as 'immaterial' and 'specular' commodity and its relations to visuality, image fetish, consumption, and voyeurism in the context of globalization makes evident the need to theorize the vernacular within an aesthetics of erotics, techno-folk, media anthropology, and what he calls 'visual subalternity'.[30] Here, Mukhopadhyay is interested in showing that globalization is not limited to market capitalism, but has both intrinsic and extrinsic connections with cultures of sex and sexualities, produced and consumed in often radically different forms, where 'de- and re-territorialization of images' create 'structural disjunctions in the visual field'.[31] Further, Mukhopadhyay says that Lawrence Cohen's 'Holi in Banaras: The Mahaland of Modernity' is one of the few studies of the tradition of graphic pornographic caricatures published and circulated among the men of the community during the *Holi* festival in Banaras. This brings me to the last sub-category of this piece: the third gender.

d) Lawrence Cohen: deviance and the outside: the discourse of the

'third gender': *hijra*s and the LGBT scene

But what about the deviant, sexual pervert, the third boundary resident of bad sex?—Rubin, *Thinking Sex*

Lawrence Cohen, Evan Towle and Lynn M. Morgan, and Gayatri Reddy argue against the easy categorizations of the multiple, cross-cultural, urban-centric migrant transgendered community of India in 'Romancing the transgender native' (2002). In contemporary contexts, the site of the Indian transgenderd and/or 'third sex' (Towle and Morgan 2002), known as *hijra* has exploded onto the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) scene. The *hijra* as the site for transgendered discourse has become prominent following American transgendered activism interests based on appropriated medical/surgical technological practices that define the site in nonhegemonic binary terms. They have begun to notice how *hijra* practices are based on language and powerful religion (Cohen 280). Importantly, it keeps open the possibilities of particularizing the nature of local politics of the 'third gender' while retaining some of the activist critique of the notion of 'transgender' as perceived in Euro-American gender binaries and cultural pressures to conform to functionally open-ended cultural norms of gender (Towle and Morgan 487-8).

Cohen and Reddy theorize through their respective ethnographies of *hijra*s (trans-sexuals), *jankhas* (transvestites) and the differential relationships that they have with straight men, other trans-sexuals and transvestites from their communities in contemporary postcolonial metropolises in Delhi, Lucknow and Benares in North India (Cohen 1995), and Hyderabad in South India (Reddy 2005).

In 'Castration,' the differentiation between *hijra* and *jankha* (Cohen 276), the academic theorization of the third gender is problematic because of the insensitivity to the bodies that social theory plays upon (Cohen 7). Further, the invocation of the politics of deep love as in *pyar-mohabbat* (Cohen 279) and in 'Kothi wars,' the construction of the *hijra* nation (274-9), the American transgender activism movement finding potential allies among the *hijra* community (280), and the ethnography of the kothi as black box based on 1994 Mumbai debate over the relation between AIDS

funding and the promotion of for-profit gay parties are posited at a particular moment in India's neoliberal polity. It is a polity that has opened up to disinvestment of the public sectors, privatization of public sectors, and increased NGO-based governance in a nation of unequal social, political, economic, and sexual rights. Cohen's engagement with the *hijra* community as the site for the appropriation for the 'third gender' critique is neither homogenous nor indicative of a functionalism a la Garber's *Vested Interests* (1997: 290). At the same time it is not a reenactment of a liminal Gandhian androgyne a la Ashish Nandy's *The Intimate Enemy* (291). Since both Garber and Nandy are unmindful of patriarchal difference, their works are by default unaware of the *hijra* epistemology of the true and false androgyne based on gender difference, and not a mere medicalization of sex. Cohen is mindful of the practical becoming of the *hijra*, as is Reddy in her ethnography of the *hijras* of Hyderabad. Politics of the third gender is constitutive of a set of relations that are governed by language, ritual, practice, and engagement in a live context of contemporary sexuality that slips from national to regional to local and is intensely symbolic of the fight for *izzat*—a phenomenally South Asian notion of social respect.

Gayatri Reddy's ethnographic work in *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity* (2005) announces that in the predominantly urban middle class setting of Hyderabad, the *hijras* continue a long tradition of being phenotypic men who wear female clothing and, ideally, renounce their sexual desire and practice by undergoing a sacrificial emasculation dedicated to the goddess Bedhraj Mata (Reddy 2). While the *hijra*s have waded through *firang* curiosity over their life, language, and ritual practices, the pertinent question for Reddy is to characterize the meaning of *izzat* in a non-libidinized South Asian context from antiquity until colonial times, when certain classes and castes began to earn the disrepute of criminals (27), and hence were required to be disciplined. Criminality is a reason for classification and categorization of the *hijra* community, and one that has brought about deep structural changes in the body for law is directed at the body for the purpose of order. The relationship between the *hijra* body and the *hijra* self is shot through a multiplicity of discourses and power relations,

including the critical debate on gender and its production (121). Enactment, practice and performance are crucial as the *hijra* being neither man nor woman (even though the desire to be a woman is the goal), claps her hands, flashes her genitalia and remains ambiguous in terms of sex and gender in the Indian cultural context (122). Through the technologies of surgery, facial bleaching, use of pills for breast enlargement, use of *saurams* and other such items, femininity is performed. Especially long hair is considered to be the mark of *izzat* among the community (129). This brings us back to the construction of the notion of *izzat* in the *hijra* community, which is otherwise lacking in *izzat* in the hetero-normative family and domestic sphere in the Indian cultural contexts. Reddy's ethnographic work takes us through the *hijra* life and worlds, especially the complex forms of socialization of the *guru-cela* (177), the focus on *rit-riwaaz* (177), and the kinship relations within the *koti* or *kothi* (176), or the *koti's* opposition to the *panti* (*ibid*). The complexity of *hijra* rituals, their use of the verb-form *aise-ich hain* for *izzat*, while the *ghumna phirna* of *kada-catla-koti* and their different interpretation of *izzat* reconfirms Reddy's acceptance of Cohen's understanding of the third sex as not being alike (228). In practical terms, the third sex is being incorporated by the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) movements locally, nationally, transnationally, and globally, thereby giving *hijras* a new and modern idiom and a public domain that cuts across national (electoral and representative) and international politics (AIDS ngos, transgendered politics). And yet, the sad reality is that the *hijras* are dying of AIDS in India in droves. The rapid decimation of the *hijras* as a result of AIDS constitutes Reddy's postscript.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude by suggesting how through this survey from the margins of the colonial/postcolonial, the ethnographies of sexuality, desire, and gender come across as far from unified and how, since the 1960s, the field of sexuality and gender in coloniality/postcoloniality and South Asia has shifted from a systems-based analytic to a combination of hermeneutic-discursive and reflective-critical approaches. As a result of this shift, the

interrogation of critical subjectivities have been made possible as evident in feminist anthropology and Marxism, the discourse of deviant sexualities, homosexuality and homosocialities, the discourse of transgendered or transsexual or third sex, and so on. In all this, however, the privileging of the empty 'I' —the necessary evil of representation and ideology—is evident in more ways than one.

Notes and References

1. *On the Statistics in the Blue Book*. Source: *MECW*, Volume 20, p. 424; Delivered: July 23, 1867; First published: in *The Bee-Hive Newspaper,* July 27, 1867 and *The Working Man,* July 27, 1867.
2. When Marx and Engels used the term 'ideology' in *The German Ideology* [1932(1846)], it was still relatively new—the term having been coined by Antoine Destutt de Tracy during the National Convention of 1792-5, referring to the 'science of ideas' as opposed to 'metaphysics.' For Marx, the superstructure is generally dependent on the modes of production that dominate in a given period. See George Lichtheim, 'The Concept of Ideology', *History and Theory*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1965), 164-195; Althusser, 'Ideology,' 120.
3. Žizek says in 'Introduction,' *Mapping Ideology* (London and New York: Verso, 1997), conventions and cultures are the products of ideology, produced by bourgeois-capitalist mode of production. The proletariat has sense of traditional norms of duty, and responsibility in abstract capitalist exchanges (1-33).
4. Louis Althusser, *Reading Capital* [London and New York: Verso, 1999 (1968)], 110-111. Also see, Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
5. Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 2008, 1971, original).
6. Cited in Michele Barrett's 'Ideology, Politics, Hegemony: From Gramsci to Laclau and Mouffe', in *Mapping Ideology*, 236.
7. Althusser, 'Marxism is not a Historicism', *Reading Capital*, 140-50. In a footnote in the same chapter, Althusser cites Gramsci's 'astonishing pages' on science in *Il materialismo storico*: 'But in reality science, too, is a superstructure, an ideology', 147.
8. For a comprehensive overview of the sociology of intellectuals and their relationship to the social production of class as well as their transcendental

positions within society, see Charles Kurzman and Lynn Owens, 'The Sociology of Intellectuals', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2002. 28:63–90 (doi: 10.1146/annurev.soc.28.110601.140745)

9. Althusser, 'Glossary', *For Marx,* Trans. Ben Brewster [Harmondsworth: The Penguin Press, 1969 (1965)], 251.
10. Althuser, *Reading Capital*, 110; and 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,' 105.
11. Lacan, Jacques. Trans., Alan Sheridan. 1977. 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience'; and 'Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis'. *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Norton, 1-7, 30-114. In the 'Mirror Stage', Lacan calls the projection of psychical realities on mirrors as 'heterogeneous' (3). In Althusser, the mirror plays a key role in determining reality in 'Ideology'.
12. Lacan, 'Interpretation and Temporality,' *The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis* (Trans. Anthony Wilden, New York: Delta, 1968), 73.
13. Alison Assister 'Althusser and Structuralism.' *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Jun., 1984), 272-296.
14. See Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition. The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. (Cambridge, MA: 1996, original 1995).
15. Michel Pecheux, 'The Mechanism of Ideological (Mis) Recognition', *Mapping Ideology*, 141-151.
16. Žizek, 'Introduction', *Mapping Ideology*, 13.
17. In 'Can the Subaltern Speak,' Spivak rejects western schematizations of ideology by reassessing the Althusser and Foucault-Deleuze debate on denegation, Deleuzian psychoanalytic object-orientedness of desire, and Foucauldian microphysics of power. Instead, dwelling rather long on Marx's reflections on *Vertreung* (political and economic representation) and *Darstellung* (philosophical representation as re-presentation) to definitively state that Marx's notes on class in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* (1851-52) is not an undifferentiated one.
18. As Althusser says of the economic, 'in the last instance' in *Reading Capital* (1968).
19. Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' *The Postcolonial Studies Reader,* Bill Ashcroft, et al eds. (Oxford: Routledge, 1995), 39-42.
20. Spivak, 'Culture,' *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, This is achieved by the category of 'strategic essentialism', which presents a conceptual

challenge to Western feminism's historical complicity with imperialism. Spivak's understanding of the term, however, is strictly defined in terms of cultural negotiations. Thus transnational feminist work not only identifies patriarchal institutional control of women but also explores the ways in which gendered, cultural, and political identities can be mobilized as part of a strategic proposal to patriarchy.

21. Drawing on Aristotle's distinction between 'techne' and 'praxis,' Habermas explains that technical rationalities and instrumental reason alone do not determine human interest in society. That interest is tied to the notion of practice, which create norms for action, and which determine the question of validity of norms through reason. This reason is communicative—the seat of practice and politics. See Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 2, 7.
22. The Subaltern Studies group, for example, succeeds in unraveling official Indian history by particularizing its narrative: 'a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest' (*The Spivak Reader*, 214). This is also the way Spivak uses deconstruction, for example, without fully subscribing to it as a viable philosophic system or practice, much less a political program. Or, as she puts it, '[Deconstruction] is not the exposure of error. It is constantly and persistently looking into how truths are produced.' (Arteaga interview) 'Although I make specific use of deconstruction, I'm not a Deconstructivist' (*Post-Colonial Critic*). The misuse of the concept of 'strategic essentialism' is that less 'scrupulous' practitioners ignore the element of strategy, and treat it as simply 'a union ticket for essentialism. As to what is meant by strategy, no-one wondered about that.' She claims to have given up on the phrase, though not the concept (Danius and Jonsson interview).
23. See, Michel Foucault, 'Society Must Be Defended,' *Lectures at the College de France, 1975-76*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 242-3.
24. Chakrabarty, 122-127.
25. Alexis de Tocqueville, 'Relation Of Civil to Political Associations,' *Democracy in America*, Creation of machine-readable version: Electronic edition deposited and marked-up by ASGRP, the American Studies Programs at the University of Virginia, June 1, 1997 <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper/DETOC/ch2_07.htm>
26. The notion of publics has gained in importance since Michael Warner's critical work, *Publics and Counterpublics* (2002). Warner takes a close look at the notion and reality of the publics and counterpublics to understand the

associative quality of gay and lesbian identities. Publics—the chief material of states and nations since the Enlightenment, which was founded on the notions of property, patriarchy, and liberty—remains outside the scope of definitions. It is understood as a social totality (65), and is quite different from a 'crowd', 'audience', 'people' or 'group' (67). Warner suggests that the notion of publics is a text-based entity, capable of organizing itself around other texts. Visual, aural, and sensory cultures can organize what is essentially a self-organizing textual system. The circularity and difficulty of the argument is played out throughout the text with numerous illustrations. Crucially, it is in contradistinction to Habermas's notion of public opinion that in due course of technological rationalities and advanced social communication is collapsed into a face-to-face communication (thereby forming the crux of communicative rationality). Such a movement, according to Warner, makes disappear any special context of publics from analysis. Such an erosion of publics is necessarily detrimental to understanding gender and sexuality (56). Warner proposes a stronger modification that Habermas has not encouraged in his own thought. He says that the publics can be identified within a larger public, where alternative protocols and dispositions are structured. Such a kind of public is known as counterpublics. Warner walks us through the various sexual activist movements, camps, and their relations and differences with subcultures (*ibid*) and subalterns (57). Warner is far from dismissive of Habermas's rich account of the norms and practices of publicness in modernity (57). That in itself is a site for exploring relations between the personal and the political. The pragmatic way, if I may add, Warner suggests, is one in which counterpublics can more than represent gender and sexualized subjects. It can mediate the most intimate and private meanings, associations, styles of embodiment, etc. to the public—being indebted to the bourgeois public sphere for its set of background and conditions but not in terms of its rational-critical structures (due to identity-formations through domestic-private family norms). The crucial difference lies in understanding the associative quality of counterpublics of gay and lesbian people that they author as an elaborative process, and in which social markers are situated within the counterpublics (120). In short, membership in counterpublics happens at one's own risk (121) for there are no given subalternities, but membership forms and transforms the subject's identities within the associative discourse.

27. 'There were no papers, the ostensible reason for my visit, and of course, no trace of the Rani. Again, a reaching and an un-grasping.' Gayatri Spivak,

'History,' *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 242.

28. See Jane Collier, 'Victorian Visions,' *Gender Matters: Rereading Michelle Z. Rosaldo* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 145.
29. John S Hawley, 'The Damage of Separation: Krishna's Loves and Kali's Child', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion,* June 2004, 72:2, 369-393.
30. Bhaskar Mukhopadhyay, 'Virtual Flesh: *Desi* Netporn, 'Fat Aunty' and the Techno-folk Vernacular Desire in the Age of the World Wide Web,' *The Rumour of Globalization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 141-174.
31. In an earlier essay, 'The Rumour of Globalization: Globalism, Counterworks, and the Location of Commodity' (2005), *Dialectical Anthropology*, Mukhopadhyay departs from Arjun Appadurai's notion of methodological fetishism or the 'semioticity' of things, where he challenges the idea that materiality must be restored to some form of original innocence or the Marxian use-value. "As Marxists, they worked hard to peel off the 'ideological' layers of meaning surrounding things, hoping to reach its kernel – a degree zero – where the thing would be equal to itself. Released from the burden of representation, it was hoped, the thing will reappear in its primordial clarity whose *locus classicus* was laid out by the Cartesian *res* as modified by the Kantian ontological bipolarity of the transcendental ego and the mute thing-in-itself. … The materiality implicated in the Marxist critique of 'commodity fetishism' understood as an 'objective illusion,' is the materiality of the *res*. It demands that things be restored to their primal innocence (use-value) by being related directly and transparently to their master, man, without the mediation of market. This nostalgia for a world of simple objects is grounded in a myth of presence, which informs much of contemporary 'materialist' idealism. It is my contention that materiality must be understood as materiality effect – the *res* is a worldless no-thing" (36-7). Further, Mukhopadhyay refers to male socialities the context of *Holi*, various *pujas*, and other contexts. During these occasions, in wayside tea-shacks, in street-corners, in *Pada* (community) 'clubs' (but never inside the familial setting), [male] ribaldry still plays a major role in reinforcing male solidarity and a sense of community. See Lawrence Cohen's study of the tradition of graphic pornographic caricatures published and circulated among men of the community during the *Holi* festival in Banaras in 'Holi in Banaras: the Mahaland of Modernity'.

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