



## SYMPOSIUM

### Shirts and Hearts

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this extraordinary archive. Writing on the land of the Arapaho, Cheyenne and Ute nations, at the convergence of the Platte River and Cherry Creek, I want to share how this archive recontextualized for me a well-circulated part of this archive: “Intellectuals and Power.” As I suspect is true for many, my reading of this piece owes much to Gayatri Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

This time, through this archive of the work of the GIP, much of what Foucault and Deleuze discuss took on different form, as, for instance, I understood anew which “Maoists” they meant. Spivak diagnoses: “Maoism here simply creates an aura of narrative specificity, which would be a harmless rhetorical banality were it not that the innocent appropriation of the proper name ‘Maoism’ for the eccentric phenomenon of French intellectual ‘Maoism’ and subsequent ‘New Philosophy’ symptomatically renders ‘Asia’ transparent.”<sup>1</sup> I agree with this diagnosis. Yet, as I read it this time, it is also clear that Foucault and Deleuze referred to people they knew, people the GIP organized sometimes against and sometimes with as the situation developed.<sup>2</sup> I note this in the spirit of the macrological project Spivak urges, while putting an emphasis on the micrological work of the GIP onto which *Intolerable* gives us a window.

I could catalogue this experience of reading at length and proliferate examples. But instead, to traverse this tension between the micro- and macrological, I turn to recent and long-unfolding events, trying to stay attuned to the troublesome slippage Spivak identifies in Foucault’s work from “rendering visible the mechanism to rendering vocal the individual.”<sup>3</sup> She questions what the GIP called giving the floor (*donner la parole*).

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<sup>1</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (1988), 67.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Daniel Defert, “The Emergence of a New Front: The Prisons,” in *Intolerable: Writings from Michel Foucault and the Prisons Information Group (1970–1980)*, ed. Kevin Thompson and Perry Zurn (2021), 35–54.

<sup>3</sup> Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” 81.

Phyllis (Jack) Webstad (Northern Secwepemc (Shuswap) from the Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation Canoe Creek Indian Band), executive director of the Orange Shirt Society, and Canadian residential school survivor begins her story this way:

I went to the Mission for one school year in 1973/1974. I had just turned 6 years old. I lived with my grandmother on the Dog Creek reserve. We never had very much money, but somehow my granny managed to buy me a new outfit to go to the Mission school. I remember going to Robinson's store and picking out a shiny orange shirt. It had string laced up in front, and was so bright and exciting—just like I felt to be going to school!

When I got to the Mission, they stripped me, and took away my clothes, including the orange shirt! I never wore it again. I didn't understand why they wouldn't give it back to me, it was mine! The color orange has always reminded me of that and how my feelings didn't matter, how no one cared and how I felt like I was worth nothing. All of us little children were crying and no one cared.<sup>4</sup>

Webstad's account is circulating anew after the confirmation of two mass graves of children this summer. The first confirmation by radar was of 215 bodies at the Kamloops Indian Residential School, the grounds of which were searched by the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation. The second, of 751, was at the Marieval Indian Residential School in a search conducted by the Cowesses First Nation.<sup>5</sup>

Deleuze comments in "Intellectuals and Power": "If the protests of children were heard in kindergarten, if their questions were attended to, it would be enough to explode the entire educational system."<sup>6</sup> As Spivak did with Deleuze's reference to "*the workers' struggle*," we might call this "baleful in its very innocence."<sup>7</sup> Which children in which kindergarten? And what do we mean by "explode"?

In conversation with Spivak, Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma) observes: "The Indian model, like the nomad, assembles for Deleuze the site of movement, escape, difference—it is a stateless war machine, existing outside of and rupturing the state."<sup>8</sup> And, further: "What we imagine to be outside and rupturing to the state, through Deleuze, already depends upon paradigmatic Indianness that arises from colonialist discourses justifying expropriation of lands through removal and genocide."<sup>9</sup>

I am trying to bring together the Indian and the kindergartener in order to consider these graves, to at least raise the question of their consideration. Or as Byrd writes: "The question now has become how, and by what and whom, is the subaltern silenced."<sup>10</sup> The

<sup>4</sup> Phyllis (Jack) Webstad, "Phyllis' Story: The Original Orange Shirt," Orange Shirt Day. <https://www.angeshirtday.org/phyllis-story.html> (accessed July 2, 2021).

<sup>5</sup> Ian Austen and Amber Bracken, "With Discovery of Unmarked Graves, Canada's Indigenous Seek Reckoning," *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/26/world/canada/indigenous-residential-schools-grave.html> (accessed June 26, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, "Intellectuals and Power," in *Intolerable: Writings from Michel Foucault and the Prisons Information Group (1970–1980)*, ed. Kevin Thompson and Perry Zurn (2021), 282.

<sup>7</sup> "Can the Subaltern Speak?," 67.

<sup>8</sup> Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (2011), 14.

<sup>9</sup> Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, 14.

<sup>10</sup> *The Transit of Empire*, xxxi.

kindergarten radiates with the innocence of the settler project, so it is easy to think that Webstad's account and the graves point to its abuse, its misuse, its miscarriage.<sup>11</sup> That the settler project let itself down.

In his response to Deleuze, Foucault asserts: "Prison is the only place where power is manifested in its naked state, in its most excessive form, and where it is justified as moral force. ...What is fascinating about prisons is that, for once, power doesn't hide or mask itself; it is cynical and at the same time pure and entirely 'justified,' because its practice can be totally formulated within the framework of morality. Its brutal tyranny consequently appears as serene domination of Good over Evil, of order over disorder."<sup>12</sup>

Deleuze's response denies the singularity of prisons, calling, once again, on children: "Yes, and the reverse is equally true. Not only are prisoners treated like children, but children are treated like prisoners."<sup>13</sup> These mass graves are sites of a cynical and at the same time pure and entirely "justified" brutality, formulated under the banner of morality. The residential schools were meant to, in the words of Captain Richard H. Pratt, progenitor of the US system: "kill the Indian, and save the man."<sup>14</sup> Webstad gives us insight into the mechanics of how boarding schools made kindergartners out of Northern Secwepemc and Cowesses children and the children of hundreds of other nations. The graves evidencing, once again, that creating—in order to eliminate—the Indian was always the centerpiece of the project.<sup>15</sup> Foucault's gloss of prisons is too singular, Deleuze's reversal too easy. We must attend, as Spivak calls us to, to the specificities of the mechanisms; to the giving and taking of a shirt as part of "imperialist subject-constitution."<sup>16</sup>

In an action that attests to the relationship between the Mission schools, prisons, and the ongoing colonial making of Canada, as well as the startling ability of people to make themselves into a collective, on "Canada Day" this year, July 1, people imprisoned in seven institutions in Canada went on a hunger strike and hung orange hearts in their cells.

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<sup>11</sup> Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1:1 (2012), 1–40.

<sup>12</sup> Foucault and Deleuze, "Intellectuals and Power," 283.

<sup>13</sup> Foucault and Deleuze, 283.

<sup>14</sup> My preliminary understanding of the boarding schools, and assimilationist projects, as well as this specific phrase of Pratt's as eliminatory owes much to Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8:4 (2006), 397. That understanding has been deepened by Nick Estes, "American Indian Boarding Schools with Denise Lajimodiere," The Red Nation podcast, <https://podm8.com/episodes/the-red-nation-podcast/american-indian-boarding-schools-w-denise-lajimodiere-90DQI6C-W> (accessed August 31, 2021) and the second of season of Rebecca Nagle's "This Land" podcast, <https://crooked.com/podcast-series/this-land/> (accessed August 31, 2021).

<sup>15</sup> Natalie Cisneros has developed the concept of "massive elimination" in Foucault's work while investigating the specific mechanisms of immigrant detention, deportation of migrants, and the illegalization of migration in the contemporary US as a strategy of massive elimination. Her work to connect these practices to the intolerable theorized by Foucault and the GIP skillfully navigates the terrain of the micro- and macrological to advance our understanding of imperialism, see Natalie Cisneros, "Resisting 'Massive Elimination': Foucault, Immigration, and the GIP," in *Active Intolerance*, ed. Perry Zurn and Andrew Dilts (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016), 241–57, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137510679\\_17](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137510679_17).

<sup>16</sup> Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," 90.

They were responding to the discovery of the mass graves and participating in the Orange Shirt Day movement Webstad helped create.<sup>17</sup>

Deleuze asks: “But how are we to define the networks, the transversal links between these active and discontinuous points, from one country to another or within a single country?”<sup>18</sup> Foucault’s answers by contrasting fighting against exploitation with fighting against power. Suggesting the first framing positions the proletariat as the leaders and definers of the fight.<sup>19</sup> Of the second framing, he argues: “But if the fight is directed against power, then all those on whom power is exercised to their detriment, all who find it intolerable, can begin to struggle on their own terrain and on the basis of their proper activity (or passivity.)”<sup>20</sup> As Andrew Dilts has glossed this passage, Foucault suggests that what is continuous in this second framing is the intolerable power against which people struggle.<sup>21</sup>

Spivak critiques Foucault in this passage for missing “the broader narratives of imperialism” — the macrological.<sup>22</sup> I think Spivak is being arch when she says: “That Deleuze and Foucault ignore both the epistemic violence of imperialism and the international division of labor would matter less if they did not, in closing, touch on third-world issues.”<sup>23</sup> For, after all, her critique is that Deleuze elsewhere and Foucault here, in his theorization of fighting against power, in what she calls “an admirable program of localized resistance,” miss the macrological.<sup>24</sup> It is hard to imagine that what they ignore — the places rendered the third- (and fourth-) world in its macrological relation to their work with the GIP — really would matter less to her critique for being passed over in silence. Perhaps it is worth saying that when I first read all of this, I didn’t even know any of it could be funny.<sup>25</sup>

I cannot fault Spivak’s critique. Reading this archive of the GIP, however and moreover, has given me insight into the micrological such that I appreciate now that Spivak leaves room for it, as necessary to the macrological work. Reading those orange hearts in Canadian prisons is not so simple a task. In another place, years after “Intellectuals and Power,” in a sort of exasperated defense, Foucault explains: “One of our principles was in some way to make it so that prisoners and, around them, an entire fringe of the

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<sup>17</sup> “Coordinated Hunger Strike Across Seven Canada Prisons Honours Indigenous Children,” *Perilous* (blog). <https://perilouschronicle.com/2021/07/01/coordinated-hunger-strike-across-six-canada-prisons-honours-indigenous-children/> (accessed July 1, 2021).

<sup>18</sup> Foucault and Deleuze, “Intellectuals and Power,” 288.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Personal correspondence.

<sup>22</sup> “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” 86.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>25</sup> Gilles Deleuze, “Foucault and Prisons,” in *Intolerable: Writings from Michel Foucault and the Prisons Information Group (1970–1980)*, ed. Kevin Thompson and Perry Zurn (2021), 385.

population, could express themselves. The GIP texts were not the elaborations of a noxious intellectual, but the result of this attempt.”<sup>26</sup>

Because of this archive, I now read “*donner la parole*” as a shorthand for “in some way” and for “the attempt.” Spivak is right to question giving the floor. Through this collection, we can see that the attempt, shot through with failure, can nonetheless be generative, inviting us to consider the ground upon which we stand and our relationships to it. I am grateful for the opportunity to think this all anew.

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<sup>26</sup> Jean-Marie Domenach, Michel Foucault, and Paul Thibaud, “Still Prisons,” in *Intolerable: Writings from Michel Foucault and the Prisons Information Group (1970–1980)*, ed. Kevin Thompson and Perry Zurn (2021), 379.

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