desires to read attempt to read, this late in history?" (1994: 15). He goes on to state, "We possess the Canon because we are mortal and also rather belated" (1994: 30). There simply is no room to list, much less read, all of the great works in literature and therefore, exclusion is not indicative of a lack of quality or importance.

Nevertheless, Bloom points out, the idea of belatedness is vital to late twentieth-century sensibilities because we live in a time in which nearly all of the world's literary traditions and genres are being resurrected from long ago, and showcased amid smaller canons parallel to the Canon if contemporary. He includes an appendix of significant twentieth-century works from a variety of nations and languages as testament to his belief.

Belatedness is also a cultural phenomenon that particularly lends itself to the Jewish diaspora; in fact, several studies of belatedness specifically mention Jewish writers and spirituality, and/or have been written by Jewish critics. Until the last fifty years or so, representation of Jewishness as a nationality has been alternately overlooked and denied. Those writers claiming Jewish origins were subsumed into the respective countries in which they resided. Since the formation of Israel in 1948, it is not only those Jewish writers living in Israel who are primarily identified and self-identifying as Jewish but also those living in the United States and other nations. Such affirmation represents belatedness for two reasons: restructuring of the canon(s) and questioning whether Jewish thought can be represented in a new way after the important contributions in the Old Testament in the Bible and the tenets of Kabbalism, a form of spirituality that parallels Judaism and which Bloom explores in his book *Kabbalah and Criticism* (1975). As the Jews wandered the earth throughout much of history, Bloom contends, "meaning wanders" as well.

Belatedness is an important idea within postmodernism for two reasons. Firstly, it calls into question "the canon" and its constituency, an action that is considered part of the postmodern movement. Secondly, belatedness addresses the matter of genres and subject matter: what can those who inhabit the postmodern landscape write about when everything seems to have already been written about?

TRACY CLARK

benevolence

Benevolence is a category of bourgeois culture and morality rooted in modern humanist Enlightenment philosophy. Although the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines benevolence as a natural disposition, its examples betray a word whose history in language is inscribed by class and gender differences: "The poor and dependent exercise our active benevolence"; "Let the man give unto the wife due benevolence" (1988: 803). Postmodern critiques of power and subject have approached benevolence in terms of the epistemological and moral–ideological production of an hegemonic humanist subject rather than a natural human disposition. For instance, turning punishment into a technology of reform is an apparently benevolent act, progress by humanism. However, delineating a connection between charity and confinement, Michel **Foucault**'s work on modern discipline, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, demonstrated that reformist benevolence has an eye to political and economic profit that it extracts from disciplined and productive bodies. Jacques **Derrida**'s **deconstruction** can also be read as a method of unmasking benevolent intention. Since deconstruction considers the subject as the effect of a textual network in the broadest sense, it offers to the subject the possibility of taking into account the structure of his/her own production and of reading his/her subjective investment in texts and narratives by drawing attention to their rhetorical nature and context (1976).

The most suggestive and persistent critique of benevolence in contemporary theoretical writing can be found in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's critique of neo-colonialism. For Spivak, Western humanist benevolence is an essential, constitutive part of the system and problematic of neo-colonial hegemony. Bringing together Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of metaphysics, feminist critique of **phallocentrism** and Marxist critique of imperialism in works such as *In Other Worlds*, and

The Post-Colonial Critic, Spivak argues that the benevolent subject's desire to do good and to promote the happiness of others involves "welcoming those others into his own understanding of the world, so that they too can be liberated and begin to inhabit a world that is the best of all possible worlds" (Spivak 1990: 19). US President Truman's inaugural address in 1949 is a good example of what Spivak means by benevolent subjectivity. First describing the emergent decolonized Third World as "inadequate," "primitive," and "stagnant," Truman then suggests that "we make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life" (quoted in Escobar 1995: 3). However, in the performance of such good intention, the norm remains the benevolent rationalist.

This benevolent humanist does not always need to be a representative of Western power. In neo-colonialism, secular bourgeois Third World governments might inscribe the tribal ethnic societies within their national borders by a similar rhetoric of benevolence. Brazilian goverment defines Amazonian tribals as "our Indians," "condemned to poverty and misery" because of their lifestyle, and considers it its "duty to help them emancipate themselves from servitude . . . to raise themselves to the dignity of Brazilian citizens, in order to participate fully in the development of national society and enjoy its benefits" (quoted in Clastres 1994: 45). Thus an "integrationist" strategy, already implied in Foucault's criticism, can also be found in neo-colonial or governmental benevolence towards the subaltern populations in non-Western countries.

The postmodern critique of neo-colonialism reveals benevolence as a denial of difference and constitution of hegemonic subject. The production of Western sovereign self is disguised by other-ing the Third World disenfranchised as lacking appropriate agency. Thus, in benevolent discourse, difference is accepted and denied at the same time, that is to say, it is made into a natural hierarchy. This is why, for the postmodern critic of benevolent subjectivity, discourses on Third World poor or the tribal minorities are never far from being problematic. Such designations as "stagnant," "lacking" or "primitive" are not merely objective factual descriptions but often rhetorical displacements of global socio-economic determinations into cultural or geographical traits. Rather than representing or helping the subaltern, benevolent discourse performs the hegemony of the neo-colonial subject and constitutes his/her world as naturally superior. This blocks the possibility of talking with the subaltern.

Benevolent humanism is not simply a legitimating ideology in the service of economic interests inscribed elsewhere. The International Monetary Fund's and World Bank's aid and development programs are instances of benevolence as forms of extraction of economic value. As these are essential to the system of neo-colonial exploitation, the so-called benevolent subjectivity and morality are inevitably politico-economic inscriptions.

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