

Fictive Re-imaginings: Revisionist Feminist History in Christina García's *Dreaming in Cuban*, Edwidge Danticat's *Krik? Krak!* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Interpreter of Maladies*

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Through a process of feminist historiography, Gayatri Spivak excavated historical documents from the archives of the East India Company with the objective of determining whether subaltern women could produce speech about themselves and their interests that is “ideologically transcendent” and potentially liberatory. The East India Company’s historical accounts of the widows who engaged in Sati, i.e. self-immolation, are adulterated and fragmented representations that pandered to the colonial paradigm of “white men saving brown women from brown men.” In this vein, subaltern women are flattened by the weight of colonial history and are archivally irretrievable and unknowable. In “The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory,” Hayden White maintains that “the story told in the narrative is a mimesis of the story lived in some region of historical reality, and insofar as it is an accurate imitation it is to be considered a truthful account thereof.” Historical fiction should therefore not be dismissed and displaced to make room for ‘objective’ historical non-fiction. Masculinized grand narratives of people from the Global South are inadequate sites of knowledge, not only because women have been flattened and erased, but also because the narratives are social constructions according to a range of geopolitical biases and imperialist interests. The patriarchal and imperial imprint on historical knowledge production about subaltern and other Global South women extends beyond India to other postcolonial societies. In this paper, I will determine the extent to which feminist historical fiction, according to Chandra Mohanty in *Feminism Without Borders*, can fill in the “gaps, fissures, and silences of hegemonic narratives” to disrupt this epistemically violent sleight of hand. I will demonstrate how ‘istwa’ – Haitian creole for history and story – when deployed through a feminist discursive praxis, is an important site of revisionist history that must be accompanied by the decolonization of the literary canon. In the absence of fully-realized historical accounts of women from the Global South and their day-to-day experiences, feminist historical fiction produces realistic reimaginings that provide polyphonic, surrogate voices. Revisionist feminist herstories, such as *Dreaming in Cuban* by Cristina García, *Krik? Krak!* by Edwidge Danticat and *The Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri are tools of resistance that not only centralize the experiences of Third World women but reinforce the viability of a feminist historical imaginary.

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