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Reply

I will first thank the five women for paying such close attention to my work and then cut to the eight-minute chase alphabetically by last name.

Susan: I confined myself to the United States in *Death of a Discipline* not because I believe in nation-states but because actual educational systems are still sufficiently marked by the country of location. It is in the United States that I have participated in the story of comparative literature through four years of graduate study and forty-two years of full-time teaching. I cannot presume to tell Africa, Asia, or Latin America how to clean their houses. But my rovings through Iowa, Texas, Atlanta, Pittsburgh, and New York City and my innumerable teaching stints on the West Coast have, I believe, earned me some right to address the United States.

This brings me to the idea that we live in a globalized world. In fact, only capital and data—the abstract as such—can be globalized. The rest is recoding a diversity of materials in the interest of globalization. The general examples of globalized culture are simply the odd juxtapositions thrown up by this situation. Because there is little understanding of this, universities are now globalizing the curriculum and corporatizing the model of E. D. Hirsch's old "cultural literacy" project and integrating the international civil society into the syllabus. No. The way to manage the crisis of capitalist or socialist globalization is through deep language learning. And there, Susan, I am with you. I would propose language-learning consortia all over the country on the model of the many regional MLAs. But my experience tells me that the battle for faculty and administration development will be tough. Statements like "Students learn Wolof to work in Senegal" or "We are eradicating poverty and disease in Africa without any language learning" are hard to penetrate when spoken with the authority of sanctioned ignorance. To globalize is to think a manageable world. To think of ourselves as planetary is to remember that if we live a hundred years, even a devastated planet lives a billion, without us.

Rashmi: How wonderful of you to place me in Marx. Yes, the value form makes commensurable. Our entire enterprise—teaching, writing, speaking—is to put not only literature but the literary, filmic, hypertextual, and generally social into the value form. Here we are confined to forms that Marx would call defective for the analysis of capital. When we are ourselves evaluated—for appointment, for tenure, for promotion, for salary, for honors—we connect to money, the general equivalent, but only indirectly to capital. The connection to the general equivalent is subjectively mediated. We used to think that that was the most destructive connection to the value form in the academy. But now, obliged to compete for capital to survive, the humanities must groom their critical edge, as domesticated animals are groomed in tooth and claw. I will speak of the opposition of the individual and the collective just before I end.

You point to the textuality of the economic. Indeed, it is in the incessant recoding

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and reterritorializing of capital that the textuality or the weblike quality of economies appears. The current misuse, abuse, and overuse of the rubric *cosmopolitanism* to recode labor export is a case in point.

Anuradha: I thank you especially for speaking of teaching. If there is anything I want to do well, it is teaching. People often speak solemnly about my elementary schools in rural Birbhum as a species of good works. I always remind them that what I do in the villages and what I do at Columbia are the same thing: teaching. As you know, I think the humanities classroom is the best model of the formation of collectivities. How can I forget that in May 1968 the students cried, "Long live the imagination!" The thought that you pass this spirit on to your students is a special joy for me. Humanities teaching is teaching reading, and it has been so since long before the disciplinarization of literature, if one thinks of "reading the world." Combine it with deep language learning, and you have comparativist intertextuality, what you are kind enough to notice in my work.

Sangeeta: You are right to worry about drawing a direct line from perceiving the ethical in literature to engaging with it in the social text. You put it by way of the opposition of the individual and the collective: "the question that keeps coming back to haunt me is whether such a poiesis, even when grounded not in transcendent claims but in the ways these claims are read by and have meaning for others, can help us move from the emphasis on individual interactions to an articulation of collective responsibility as right." Where do you put the classroom? Individual or collective? For me the problem is in thinking that one establishes a necessarily ethical relation to literature. Literature is not a substitute for the ethical. If we learn to read the text as the text of the other rather than as a representation of identities where narrative is a direct allegory of politics, it is practice for welcoming the interruption of the ethical in our epistemological projects. It is not really a project of knowing the other—an event that one hopes and waits for. On the other hand, there is also a task of placing oneself in the way of the ethical that has rather little to do with being a member of the Modern Language Association. I tried to talk about this in a piece I wrote about Rabindranath Tagore and J. M. Coetzee for *Diacritics*.

Ellen's glance at "learning to learn from below" segues into Sangeeta's question. In my own stereotype of my life, I have placed myself in the way of the ethical where this has been crucial. To learn from below is much like reading, for the historically disenfranchised below has its intelligence systematically disabled and therefore does not have the expository force to teach. For nearly twenty years, I have been learning here by making mistakes in reading. I wish I could have some influence here, but I don't find recruits. In the last phrase of your paper, Ellen, you've got my game: there "will always be something else." And now I go back to something I said to Rashmi about the literary and the value form. As we attempt to make the literary commensurable from encyclopedism to period studies, genre theory, and all the other serious tools of our trade, something escapes. When we attempt to be political, we study literature as a constituted disciplinary object. But literature (and the literary—performance in the general sense) also escapes the conventions of such constitution. And it is there that the literary can be a vehicle of change. Indeed, this theory of change is unconnected to planning and policy, which I by no means repudiate. As a culture, literary studies in the world are no longer much open to the changeful march of the "something else," the "preemergent" that emerges as something else. This is where our struggle lies. It signals toward what Marx called the realm of freedom.

None of you has dwelled on feminism, though Rashmi and Ellen mentioned it. Yet my self-stereotype places my work in the track of reproductive heteronormativity, an institution that was global before anyone could conceive the globe. I think of it whenever I sing that eighteenth-century line addressed to Kali: *Brahmando chhilo na jokhon mundomala kothay peli* ("Where did you get your necklace of

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severed heads when there was no universe [lit. God's egg]")? Of course, the egg is ovoid rather than spheroid, but you know what I mean. Here Melanie Klein is incredible, using reproductive heteronormativity as ingredient for an ethical semiosis that sees birth as life and death. Let me quote the paragraph that Ellen likes:

> The human infant grabs on to some one thing and then things. This grabbing [*begreifen*] of an outside indistinguishable from an inside constitutes an inside, going back and forth and coding everything into a sign-system by the thing(s) grasped. One can call this crude coding a "translation." In this never-ending weaving, violence translates into conscience and vice versa. From birth to death this "natural" machine, programming the mind perhaps as genetic instructions program the body (where does body stop and mind begin?) is partly metapsychological and therefore outside the grasp of the mind. Thus "nature" passes and repasses into "culture," in a work or shuttling site of violence (deprivation—evil—shocks the infant system-in-the-making more than satisfaction): the violent production of the precarious subject of reparation and responsibility. (qtd. in Spivak 17)

To plot this weave, the reader (in my estimation, Klein was more a reader than an analyst in the strict Freudian sense), translating the incessant translating shuttle into that which is read, must have the most intimate knowledge of the rules of representation and permissible narratives that make up the substance of a culture and must also become responsible for and accountable to the writing/translating of the presupposed original. The subject in the shuttling Klein describes is something that will have happened, not something that definitely happens, because, first, it is not under the control of the I that we think of as the subject and, second, there is such a thing as a world out there, however discursive.

With reproductive heteronormativity we are in a double bind. In *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, Gregory Bateson devised a description of the double bind so that schizophrenia would not be treated only clinically. But "double bind" in a general sense may be the name of practice itself: to be able to remain in play, honoring and punished by a set of contradictory instructions. Nothing makes this more explicit than reproductive heteronormativity, but in fact this cuts across the entire field of practice. I think I first bound myself when, twenty years ago, I thought of imperialism as an "enabling violation." Today double bind is again and again reduced to the calculus of "sustainability." We forget what we are sustaining and end up counting success as the maintenance of capitalism as development.

Srinivas: You joined the respondents after the convention. Your excellent response locates the double bind between the contamination of the empirical and the safe haven of the literary in all affirmative deconstruction, although you are critical of it. I will let the readers choose.

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