same, because they, like some scholars of colonial and postcolonial texts, so allow what they view as an acceptable or unacceptable politics to overwhelm their encounter with literary texts that attention to "the slow transformation of the mind" elicited by literature is bypassed, or repressed, in the interests of levying judgments in keeping with their politics. In so doing, they fail to recognize that pleasure has a strong affective component and is a site where a great deal of the ideological force of the text's values and beliefs is located—albeit "clandestine[ly]"; unrecognized or unacknowledged, these don't disappear but rather continue to exert their power surreptitiously. Equally, affect, and an openness to its operations, can be, and often is, the source of some of our more enduring commitments "for good or ill . . . perhaps always a bit of both" and therefore ought to be taken seriously (278).

For me, another attraction of Spivak's work are those instances where her theoretical investments are played out with such persuasive force in her close reading that they seem to emerge from the text being analyzed. Here I am alluding not (or not only) to the fit between theory and practice but rather to the symbiotic yet critical relation between the reader-teacher (Spivak) and the text as an instantiation of their overlapping, indeed mutually contaminating, commitments. Thus, in "Burden," if literature's ideological work is achieved through the "slow transformation of the mind" of its reader, "the goal of *teaching* such a thing as literature [or reading literature] is also epistemic" and ideological: to transform the "objects of knowledge" construed by literature by "mak[ing] visible" the structures through which they are constituted (281, 278). Critical reading, as advocated by (and enacted in) Spivak's model of reading, repeats the effects literature seeks but does so with a difference, enabling a critical take on what literature implicitly proffers. However, given the symbiotic relation between text and critical reader, does not analysis along the lines Spivak advocates open itself up to the same kind of critical scrutiny literature receives?

Spivak's is a hard act to follow, far less reproduce, because of the range and knowledge of texts she mobilizes, reading across and between texts from diverse literary and cultural formations in the interests of teaching her readers to become "inter-literary" as opposed to simply "Comparative" (295). In "Burden" she "stages a collision between Kipling [*Kim*] and Tagore [*Gora*], Didi [the Tagore short story she analyzes at length] and Binodini [*Amar Katha*], [Mahasweta Devi's] 'Mary Oraon' and [Hanif Kureishi's] 'Karim'" (295). When my students (and I) mournfully wonder whether "becoming 'inter-literary'" on Spivak's terms is even possible for people without her erudition, without her way with texts, I say to them (and myself): let her erudition and interpretation of literary texts be a goad, an incitement to try to measure up to something that approximates Spivak's performance. But let it also signal our limits as readers, not to engender paralysis or despair but rather to bring pressure to bear on our readings, making them more qualified, less invulnerable.

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The (Teleo)Poiesis of Singularity

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's vast oeuvre as literary translator, cultural critic, deconstructionist, and feminist Marxist political theorist would not bear summary in any circumstance. I will debate aspects of "Can the Subaltern Speak?," arguably her most famous essay.[1] Spivak's practice of interruptive reading renders her texts simultaneously

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vulnerable and transcendental. Spivak needs to be read with care; her rhetoric frequently defies paraphrase. She is a rare combination of permanent (self-)critique and continued hospitality to the other, the two prongs of all progressive politics. Her scruples demand that we critically question her, not just her objects of analysis.

Spivak's essays are Frankensteinian wrestling matches between a sustained desire for poiesis (or teleopoiesis, imaginative making at a distance) and an empirical self-cancellation bordering on solipsism that dashes the philosophical reverie to the ground.[2] Spivakian conceptual tendencies orbit each other like twin stars: *poiesis* and *istoria*, the catachrestical and the empirical, the humanistic and the social scientific, the free and the constrained, the desiring transgression and the ethical recoil, or simply the subjective and the objective.[3]

Take Bhubaneswari Bhaduri, who appears in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" as a figure that intentionally exceeds the rhetorical function she is assigned. The pathos of her suicide leads to the final declaration that "the subaltern cannot speak" (308). Aware of the half-life of critical isotopes, Spivak half apologizes a decade later. It was "an inadvisable remark" written "in the accents of passionate lament" (*Critique* 308). I half disagree, and my reasons follow.

The example of Bhubaneswari allows Spivak to shift gears from the constative to the performative. "Woman," instead of functioning by predefined law as "neglected syntagm of the semiosis of subalternity,"[4] actively supplements a postcolonial jeremiad against disavowals of representation as proxy by the French master theorists Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. Brought in to clinch the argument in the last section, Bhubaneswari is the test case for critical responsibility rather than abnegation. Indeed, woman might well be a pterodactyl flying into the eye of the sun.[5] But if she speaks (although she doesn't really), Bhubaneswari's citation of sati (if it is a citation) generalizes the specific past of ritually sanctioned sati into the cryptic possibility of feminist resistance in hegemonic nationalism. For readers to experience the effect and affect Spivak intended Bhubaneswari's character to produce, they have to be informed by Thompson and Kane about the discourse of the reconstruction of sati. Against this background, Bhubaneswari can be read and framed. This kind of framing shows off literary criticism at its best. Bhubaneswari exemplifies the *nachträglich* ("retroactive") nature of reading. Her agency is unearthed by the deferred action of reading for subalternity, a rendering legible of the South Asian historical palimpsest after sixty years by the metropolitan migrant.[6]

Spivak's bravura interpretation makes Bhubaneswari into a singular figure of absence, silence, and loss. The bereaved family doesn't interpret Bhubaneswari's suicide as being in an indirect dialogue with the reception of sati. The implications of the suicide become potentially political through self-exoneration by the labor of the negative. Whatever the causes of her suicide, the fact that Bhubaneswari waits for the onset of menstruation ensures that she is not escaping any scandal that would have ensued from pregnancy. Unable to kill another, she makes herself both agent and target of violence.[7] However, the political content of her defiance remains an enigma until Spivak constructs a complexly positive textual reading of the incident as revealing the surprising agency that could issue from the vilified practice of sati. This example, proffered at the end of the essay, is pure poiesis, a supplementary text shuttled out of family anecdotes and multiple rumors of intentions. This brilliant thought experiment of feminist world making uses subalternity catachrestically rather than empirically—in other words, as a concept metaphor "for which no historically adequate referent can be advanced from postcolonial space" (*Outside* 281). But then accountability had to follow, since Bhubaneswari was middle-class.[8] In the later version, Spivak tacks to the empirical away from the catachrestic, allowing identity to trump imaginative identification.

Spivak suggests that this contamination by the empirical is the double bind of affirmative deconstruction, which moves toward the political. Is this also a move away from the literary?

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Bhubaneswari was always a teleopoiesis. She was literarily reconstructed by the preliminary *sruti* ("heard") and *smriti* ("remembered") traditions of family history, topped off by the secondary elaborations of *Nachträglichkeit*. A certain *sastric* ("scriptural") construction, from scholarship if not scripture, follows on through Thompson and Kane (let's not forget that Spivak used the Sanskritized name "Bhuvaneswari" in the earlier version of the essay, whereas the revision consistently empiricizes and vernacularizes her as "Bhubaneswari," moving finally to the family nickname, "Talu," which places her in memoriam). We see the same kind of shuttling between Draupadi and Dopdi take place in another instance ("Draupadi"), and perhaps this is the postclassical *vyavaharik* ("performed-in-exchange") manner in which Spivak produces the literary figure or character by practicing detranscendentalizing textual reading while interrogating multiple historical archives.[9] I am always inspired by the boldness of such Spivakian poiesis and am slightly discomfited by her self-correcting moves to the empirical. Are these concessions wasted on positivists who would (pardon my skepticism) run screaming from the project of teleopoiesis anyway? As Spivak reminds us, "[L]iterary training [is] the irony [permanent parabasis] of the social sciences" (*Death* 52). Bhuvaneswari or Bhubaneswari (take your pick) is the seam between transcendental and conjunctural, metaphysical and empirical, historical and personal, and necessary and accidental.

The later version of "Can the Subaltern Speak?" marks new historical ironies, chastizing the great-grandniece as complicit financializer for new empire who believes in natural childbirth and wears only cotton (311). Cheap shot? Not necessarily. The insurgent critic could not help murmuring quietly, "Talu hanged herself in vain." While the yoking of Bhubaneswari to the Rani of Sirmur forces an apology in the later version concerning the practice of reading for subalternity through the silences of elite women, the apology comes because poiesis is being asked for its identity papers. Literary imagination is interrogated by demography and, indeed, democracy. Why be interpellated? My desiring identification speaks here for the earlier position taken by Spivak, without guarantee.

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Notes

1. Possibly Spivak's most widely read literary essay is "Three Women's Texts." "Subaltern" intervenes in interdisciplinary debates in the humanities, social sciences, and political theory.

2. For teleopoiesis, see Derrida.

3. Spivak's doubles follow a Derridean focus on internal splitting. See her "Echo"; Irigaray, *Democracy* and *This Sex*; Malamoud.

4. See Spivak, "Subaltern Studies" 217. Spivak conducts a feminist critique of the neglect of gendered analysis in the poststructuralist language of the Subaltern Studies Group.

5. See Devi.

6. For an application of this approach to a broader Enlightenment context, see Aravamudan.

7. Could it be proved that the seventeen-year-old Bhubaneswari knew the scripturally defined menstrual conditions under which sati could and could not take place as a ritually sanctioned activity? Or did she intuit these conditions as habitus because of the context of menstrual orthopraxy in the household? This is an empirical question about the conscious level at which the axiomatics of sati determined Bhubaneswari's action. The answer is unknowable, but Spivak's guess is persuasive.

8. Spivak assigns Bhubaneswari to Ranajit Guha's third category of indigenous and local elites in the modified Gramscian framework, after which she turns her attention to subalterns of the majority population who would be in the undifferentiated fourth category.

9. For *sruti*, *smriti*, *sastra*, and *vyavahara*, the four-part episteme of Hindu law, see Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 281.

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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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