ESSENTIAL DELIRIUM,
Negotiating the Texts of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

by

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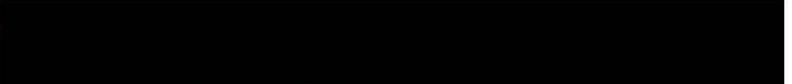

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ABSTRACT

The object of this thesis is to describe and determine a politics in the texts of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Also, the aim of this thesis is to consider the character that this politics takes on both in the writing and reading of her works. It is a preliminary project in which I seek to address the question of how one might read Spivak's vast and disparate array of works as a whole in the general field of critical theory. In this thesis I consider the internal logic of Spivak's writings and the claims that her texts make of her readers. It is my hope that this study may offer a strong basis upon which one may--with greater attention given to the general politics her works express--then read specific moments in Spivak's literature back into the respective debates from which they emerge.

The method of investigation which I employ in this thesis is textual analysis. I have taken care to study the majority of Spivak's writings and her published interviews--focusing on specific examples where I can. My interest here is to establish the general mode in which Spivak deals with her various interests. Through this practice I have attempted to weave together a reading of how

her multifaceted concerns express a comprehensive tenor and extended project.

In touching upon Spivak's work in the areas of deconstruction, postcolonial critique, feminism, gender, history, Marxism, and time, I consolidate themes in her texts into a discussion of problems in interpretation through to questions of political strategy. I attempt to narrate, in a somewhat continuous form, the critical space and practice which Spivak inherently outlines for herself. On the basis of this positive reading I then explore both the practical and theoretical implications of this critical politics and demonstrate the sort of relations that are privileged and produced in her texts.

Initially, I conclude that a study of Spivak's writings shows that she is not simply a theorist of politics. Her works disclose a charged politics and interventionist presence in themselves. Further, I conclude that there exist a specific discourse of time at the heart of this politics. Her texts remain interventionist to the extent that they ultimately serve to displace the security of location and geographical explanation in both political thought and activity.

My point is to show that Spivak's writings indicate a delirium in the political, in which the essential moment in any given phenomenon is its excess of meaning. I conclude that Spivak's politics involve a disclosure of an "essential

delirium," where the only thing that may be located in a given thing--its essence--is that it is unlocatable as such.

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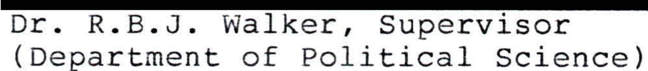

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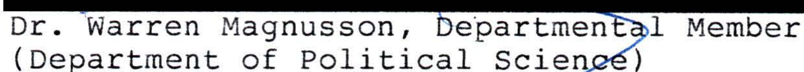

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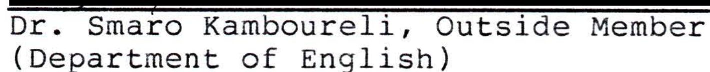

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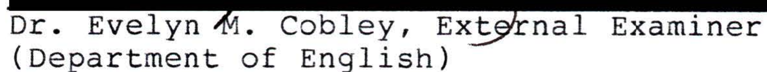

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Introduction

Reading Spivak Beyond Rumour and Reification

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is, to use one of her own representations, a Bengali woman "born just before Indian independence in a progressive bourgeoisie, nationist on-the-rebound, plain-living, high-thinking proto-feminist family."[1] She completed her undergraduate studies in English in Calcutta. From there Spivak entered Cornell University and, at the age of 25, graduated with her Ph.D in comparative literature under the supervision of Paul de Man. Spivak has taught at several mid-sized universities across the United States and has lectured in Canada, the U.K., Australia, Ireland, Saudi Arabia, France, and India. Recently she has taught as an Andrew W. Mellon Professor of comparative literature at the University of Pittsburgh, and now holds an adjunct position between the Departments of English and Philosophy at Columbia University in New York.

In her early writings, Spivak focuses largely on works in English literature. Her most notable writing in this

regard is her discussion of Yeats.[2] She is perhaps still best known for her translation of, and lengthy preface to Jacques Derrida's Of Grammatology,[3] also completed relatively early in her career. Since that landmark, Spivak has proven herself to be fluent with many areas of study and many groups of academics. For example, she has remained closely involved with Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee, Gyanendra Pandey and others in the "Subaltern Studies Group," contributing to and editing texts concerned with postcolonialism.[4] Spivak has also taken up debates around gender, feminism, Marxism, and political critique, all themes that are well represented both in her collection of essays published under the title of In Other Worlds,[5] and in the recently published collection of interviews edited by Sarah Harasym as The Post-colonial Critic.[6]

The diversity of interests and engagements, and therefore the difficulty of identifying and categorizing her work, has proved to be very puzzling and troubling for those who have sought to situate her place in contemporary critical thought. In his foreword to Spivak's In Other Worlds, for example, Colin MacCabe begins with the statement that "Gayatri Spivak is often called a feminist Marxist deconstructivist."[7] This label that MacCabe openly brought to bear on Spivak's writing is often registered as the primary point of departure into her texts.[8] Recalling

MacCabe's comments here in the initial moments of my own text, I also fall into step with those few others who have taken the time to consider Spivak's writing in any serious manner on paper since that reference was made. This label has remained a puzzling marker by which a few critics have attempted to fix a point of reference within Spivak's theoretical positioning so as to provide some sense of form to what repeatedly appears to be an exceptionally incongruous set of writings and intentions.

Spivak has stated that she finds MacCabe's sentence to be "rather unfortunate,"[9] not least because her interests also include and go well beyond such studies as psychoanalysis, philosophy, social and political activism, literary criticism, colonial and postcolonial interpretation, questions of representation, and debates surrounding pedagogical institutions and practices. MacCabe himself admits to the difficulties inherent in this labeling of Spivak and her writing. He goes on to say that identifying Spivak as a feminist Marxist deconstructivist serves to provide "a necessarily complex description, limning not an identity, but a network of multiple contradictions, traces, inscriptions."[10] He takes this awkward name, "feminist Marxist deconstructionist," as a way in which some readers have begun to identify a person who seems largely unidentifiable.

Despite the difficulty of identification, Spivak, has had an impact on recent debates in each of feminism, Marxism, and deconstruction as well as the rest of the disciplinary interests indicated above. The extent to which she has been invited to give lectures, present at conferences, and contribute to anthologies--all representative of the wide and varied disciplinary fields which she is in contact with--is testament enough to this.

To complicate matters, as a Bengali woman who is well-trained in Western intellectual and literary traditions she has been taken to represent the "Third-World-woman's" point of view on these contemporary Western debates and, simultaneously, taken to represent Third World women to Western Intellectuals. In interviews she has been known to bemoan the fact that she is so often invited to speak both as and for one or several of the possible subject positions that may be derived from both her professional and cultural backgrounds. As a result, Spivak has had to confront the fact that she is ideed a "somebody," and in many contexts.

With respect to those difficulties, one can see that Spivak does not simply make herself difficult in the writing of her texts but is also made difficult by those around her. She is continually taken to be someone who may represent or speak for a variety of positions and programs that remain thoroughly differentiated and heterogeneous, despite well-meaning attempts to coherently label them.

Robert Young takes this productive relationship between Spivak and her readers as his point of departure into her texts. In the final chapter to his White Mythologies, Young prefers to draw on this set of multiple relations and demands a fully radical reading of the actual processes in Spivak's texts. Young writes:

> Spivak's recognition of the extent to which different disciplines interrelate and implicate each other marks the difficulty and the challenge of her texts. Instead of staking out a single recognizable position, gradually refined and developed over the years, she has produced a series of essays that move restlessly across the spectrum of contemporary theoretical and political concerns, rejecting none of them according to the protocols of an oppositional mode, but rather questioning, reworking and reinflecting them in a particularly productive and disturbing way.... Spivak's work offers no position as such that can be quickly summarized: in the most sustained deconstructive mode, she resists critical taxonomies, avoids assuming master discourses. To read her work is not so much to confront a system as to encounter a series of events.[11]

In this manner Young initiates one of the more sophisticated interpretations of Spivak's texts, indicating the actual drama and politics of the texts themselves. Unfortunately, he does very little with this forceful impression. Young claims that Spivak's writings are remarkable in a way that goes well beyond disciplinary scope, and then proceeds to briefly discuss how it is that Spivak could be read as a postcolonial critic in the discipline of history.

Spivak's texts have been subjected to many unhelpful readings. In particular, Spivak's texts have been widely quoted by other authors, especially with respect to her work

on Jacques Derrida's deconstruction and what might be least awkwardly referred to as the "politics of difference." In this way her texts have been and are typically used as points of authority, with sentences often beginning simply: "As Spivak writes...." As expressions of authoritative representation, however, her writings have been left largely uncriticized.

Informed critical engagements with Spivak's writings are extremely difficult to find. In her "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse,"[12] Benita Parry appears to be one of the very few critics of Spivak to take her work seriously. Parry warns her readers of certain dangers in the critical posture Spivak presents, though she is not completely dismissive. More frequently, Spivak's works have been cited simply to demonstrate just how "deplorable" contemporary critical theory can get. One of the most stunning examples of this sort of citation is in Daphne Patai's short article, "Who's Calling Whom 'Subaltern'?," throughout which Patai, without considering what it is that is going on in Spivak's writing, describes Spivak's writing as rude, patronizing, elitist, abstract, and simply dismissive of research.[13]

It remains intriguing to consider why, aside from those few writings mentioned above, Spivak's writings have attracted so little critical attention. For someone who is

referred to in such a wide series of discourses and discussions there remains a conspicuous dearth of commentary on Spivak's texts. One is left wondering: what is the politics of her texts, and what politics within contemporary theory and analysis allows for this?

To be sure, the often daunting complexion of Spivak's writings is clear enough to anyone who has begun to read them. Any discussion of her works remains a labourious task. Yet, as MacCabe has noted, this difficulty does not arise from her inability to write in accessible language. Her language is, indeed, generally quite familiar and her prose succinct.[14] The difficulty of Spivak's texts is one of form and construction. Her writing style requires a very different manner of reading and a different understanding of what reading is than what most her readers are used to. Spivak's manner of writing, together with the disparate relationships among her texts, makes it very difficult to theorize the content and intent in her writing in any successful order.

Spivak herself, though, is not terribly concerned with the fact that some of her readers find faults or contradictions in her work.[15] She is also not concerned to find out whether she is being accurately represented or not. Rather, Spivak states that she is curious to know how her writings are being "negotiated" by others and historicized as such.[16] She is intrigued by how her texts are situated

in and enter into debates she addresses. Spivak is interested in what sort of a political life her texts and the name "Spivak" take on in contemporary theory and analysis, and in what is precipitated by such a life. She looks forward to seeing what the finding of faults and contradictions in her work will come to mean. In this way she hopes to learn more about herself as others see her. Spivak has left the door wide open with respect to how one might read her texts on the whole. And, she has seemingly left herself available to interpretation and invites her readers to resolve the character of her work both for her and themselves.

Spivak may expect these negotiations to take at least as many forms as there are facets to her works. There remains a potential competition of negotiations between the respective aspects, concerns, and interests that Spivak's writings take. However, regardless of her involvement in such a multiplicity of debates and disciplines, "Spivak" and the tangle of writings known as "the texts of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak" do indeed exist as cultural phenomena. As she appears in the wide field of critical theory and analysis as a "somebody," Spivak and her writings are also already negotiated in general terms.

In this thesis, then, I wish to pursue the question of how one might read her texts in terms of the singular corpus

in which they appear and are taken. I wish to examine what it is that her texts as a whole claim of her readers. In such a way, I hope to begin to disclose a specific politics that emerges in her writing, given the great mixture and disjuncture of activities that occur at those sites.

In responding to this question I recognize that no texts, particularly those of Spivak, are written outside of the circumstances of other writing. I also recognize that the statements she makes and the lines of analysis that Spivak pursues cannot be attributed solely to her independent thought and interests--quite the contrary. Spivak is constantly involved in implicit and explicit conversations with the European continental philosophical tradition. Her texts rely on questions posed by philosophers in early Greece, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, as well as many of those who are tossed under the rubrics of poststructuralism and postmodernism. Spivak's texts are directly concerned with the writings of postcolonial thinkers such as Edward Said, Ashis Nandy, and Homi Bhabha. She is also strongly influenced by the French feminist Luce Irigaray and remains embroiled with conversations within questions of gender sustained by such others as Judith Butler, Teresa de Lauretis, Toril Moi, Chris Weedon, Kaja Silverman, and Trinh T. Minh-ha. Spivak's texts can in no way be deemed "original."

However, although I will touch upon and consider as

much of Spivak's writing and published interviews as I dare in this short space, I will not consider at any length the writings of other authors who are engaged in debates similar to the ones Spivak writes on. My primary interest here is to consider the claims that her texts make upon her readers on the basis of the texts themselves. I wish to contemplate what sort of a politics, regardless of its "originality," Spivak's texts bring, as a collective, to broader circumstances of theory and analysis. It is my intent to examine what sort of criteria of reading her texts demand for themselves before submitting these works to the presupposed categories and manners of judgment and criticism that may occur in the various fields of inquiry in which she participates. (It is this latter practice, I fear, that has so often led to either the quick praise or dismissal of Spivak's texts that I have referred to above.)

My object here is to ascertain what a positive reading of Spivak's texts might produce. I wish to consider how this mixture of interests and influences ultimately comes to rest in her writing. Hopefully, this practice will offer a reading of how this multiplicity of critical inquiries and interests forms a politics within the texts of Spivak and how this politics can then be read. Thereby, I hope to initiate a study of her writings which subsequently can be critically read back into Spivak's interaction with other writers and her respective concerns.

This thesis will discuss some of the central themes of Spivak's work, as listed above, notably deconstruction, feminism, and postcolonial interpretation. However, my primary concern is to show that it is neither practical nor particularly helpful to simply determine how well Spivak measures up in her treatment of the content or objects of study that one may take up in relation to these themes.

In Chapter One I will discuss some of Spivak's engagements with Derridean deconstruction, the role of the critic in investigation, postcolonialism, and questions of culture, history, and time. In doing so, I will show that Spivak does not make, and has little interest in making, any positive statements regarding the reality of any of the topics she deals with. Rather, I will argue, the substantive content of her texts, despite the fact that Spivak indeed discloses incidental positions, has a fundamentally critical intent. In this chapter I will show that it is important for the reader of Spivak's writings not to focus on the location of Spivak's stance on any one debate but to consider how the practice that Spivak engages in complicates the possibility of taking a stand in any given debate in which she engages. Part of my argument, here, is to show that the difficulty of her texts work to expose the difficulty in _any_ text, to show that there is no such thing as a simple and obvious written work.

Spivak engages in a strategic play with the objective content of all her studies. It is this moment of strategy itself that becomes an important content in her writings. Indeed, strategy forms the basis for the very composition of her texts and the rationale for her own activism as a writer.

In Chapter Two I will describe the practical role that this complication of explicit assertions performs in her texts. Specifically, I will focus on Spivak's discussion of feminist politics, considering her references to essentialism, her interpretations of the writings of Virginia Woolf and Mahasweta Devi, and, most interestingly, Spivak's own proposal for a reading of the clitoris in sexual politics. Further, in this chapter I will outline what she views to be a necessary politics in reading and writing, given certain impossibilities in interpretation, and also indicate how it is that Spivak herself engages in this impossible politics.

Spivak must not be read solely as a theorist _of_ politics. Her texts outline and engage in a very serious politics in themselves; they maintain a powerful interventionist presence. This politics involves rupturing specific understandings of the dichotomies often perceived between reader and writer, on the one hand, and distinctions assumed between subject and object and between theory and practice, on the other. To underline this, Chapter Three

offers a focused reading of Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?,"[17] in which I will demonstrate how the politics that she depicts in terms of strategy are enacted in her texts through her reader. In this reading I will show how Spivak is actually able to adjust the roles of investigator and investigated through her framing of other authors and "historical fact." I will show how her acts of writing have the potential to intervene in the act of interpretation itself.

Finally, in Chapter Four I will consider the implications of this politics that I read in Spivak's texts. I will explore what is at play in these writings and what sort of a terrain they open up between the reader and the script before the reader. In doing so, I will show that Spivak's texts ultimately rely on and privilege a politics of time, rather than location in space. Her texts serve to thwart the security of locating the essential meaning in any phenomenon. They operate to demonstrate that what is essential in any given phenomenon is its excess of meaning. Thus, I argue, Spivak's politics involve a disclosure of an "essential delirium," where the only thing that may be located in a given thing--its essence--is that it is unlocatable as such.

In the end, it is my hope that the politics of my own text will be to draw an interested awareness to the sorts of

radical critique and practice Spivak is potentially bringing to bear on her concerns and the respective deliberations of her readers. In particular, I wish to demonstrate the prolific and irreducible productivity both in her texts and in the reading of her texts. Through the readers of my own text, I would like to open up spaces in the areas of debate that Spivak addresses in such a way that the strengths of her texts and the critical moves she follows are neither so easily swallowed nor expectorated as they have been in the commentaries on her work so far.

Notes From Introduction:

[1]Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Gayatri Spivak on the Politics of the Subaltern," Socialist Review, 20:3, July-September 1990, 85.

[2]Spivak, Myself Must I Remake: The Life and Poetry of W.B. Yeats (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1974).

[3]Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, trans. Spivak (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

[4]See, for example: Ranajit Guha and Spivak, eds., Selected Subaltern Studies (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[5]Spivak, In Other Worlds, Essays in Cultural Politics (New York and London: Routledge, 1988).

[6]Spivak, The Post-colonial Critic, Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York and London: Routledge, 1990).

[7]Colin MacCabe, "Foreword," in Spivak, In Other Worlds, Essays in Cultural Politics (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), ix.

[8]See, for example: Robert Young, White Mythologies, Writing History and the West (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 157; and Howard Winant, "Gayatri Spivak on the Politics of the Subaltern," 81.

[9]Spivak, "In a Word. Interview," differences, 1:2, Summer 1989, 141.

[10]MacCabe, "Foreword," ix.

[11]Young, White Mythologies, 157.

[12]Benita Parry, "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse," The Oxford Literary Review, 9:1-2, 1987, 27-58.

[13]Daphne Patai, "Who's Calling Whom 'Subaltern'?," Women and Language, 11:2, 23-26.

[14]MacCabe, "Foreword," ix.

[15]Spivak, "Strategy, Identity, Writing," The Post-

colonial Critic, 36-37.

[16]Spivak, "Naming Gayatri Spivak," Stanford Humanities Review, 1:1, Spring 1989, 87.

[17]Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-313.

Chapter One

The Impossibility of Interpretation

Any attempt to read and interpret a politics in the texts of Gayatri Spivak inevitably involves the questions of reading and interpretation. Her texts demand orders of study usually left over to affairs of literature. Since she is a professor of comparative literature, many of Spivak's writings entail inquiries into works of fiction. She has written significant studies of such English authors as Yeats, Wordsworth, Woolf, and Drabble. In addition, Spivak has written on the works of such postcolonial writers of fiction as Mahasweta Devi and Salman Rushdie. Further, her interest in psychoanalysis and her continual commitment to Derridean deconstruction express, plainly enough, Spivak's concern with and the importance she places on explicatory strategies and functions. Along with her focus on particular examples of literature and modes of analysis, however, Spivak's texts persistently exhibit fundamental and

often overt undercurrents regarding the significance of textuality in all her areas of study, as well as the subject(s) and object(s) of those studies.

Taking into particular consideration her discussions of culture, history, and colonialism, it is clear that Spivak consistently offers a range of points and arguments which are intended to implicate a supposed literary quality in any and all of these studies and the possible interests therein, whether about fiction or otherwise. Many readers may be quick to suggest that these points can be understood as simple reiterations of some of the more straightforward elements already present in the works of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida.[1] Leaving that complex debate aside for this moment, though, it is important to note, at least, that the entire breadth and depth of Spivak's texts ultimately demand readings that take into consideration the conditions and constitutive elements that allow for the possibility of the themes and objects of study that she takes up, as well as the practice of studying these themes and objects to begin with. She resists strict distinctions between an "immediate reality" and representations of that "immediacy." Spivak demonstrates an acute awareness of what she and others would consider the referential play to which all meaningful phenomena are subject. She recognizes an inescapable contextuality of meaning, seeking to leave any phenomenon open to hermeneutic endeavours.

In this sense, one could say that the corpus of Spivak's writings serves to undermine any politics of location or identity. Her texts continually challenge attempts to fix meaning, as a final act, to any place or name. Spivak describes social and political reality as things that are never and could never be simply given in any definitive manner. Reality, she accepts, is something that is always given over to reading and writing, re-reading and re-writing. Hence, Spivak's texts admit to an "impossibility" in interpretation, where significance is always fleeting and shuttling, and where interpretation takes on the function of continually opening up the possibility of meaning as opposed to securing it.

It, therefore, makes little sense to read and think through Spivak's texts in terms of accuracy or correctness. Her texts do not lend themselves to discussions of "right" and "wrong." Her texts seldom propound any positive assertions as such. Spivak resists any questions of truth and falsehood. She remains, instead, fundamentally interested in the productive contingencies made available in the practice of inquiry itself, constantly opening herself to the (typically poststructuralist) query: how?

Like Derrida, Spivak situates herself directly in her own project. Or, more precisely, Spivak accepts and tends to the personal centrality she believes to be inescapable in her own work. She accepts her place and identity as a

western-trained intellectual, operating in a North American university community, writing for a largely white, western, intellectual audience, a position she inhabits amongst others. However, also like Derrida, and perhaps more than he, Spivak actively questions how it is that she dwells and participates at that site. She asks how it is that certain relations are more crucial for her than others. She asks what interests and aims she must ultimately serve in her situation. Spivak asks what it is that her activities, given her situation(s), must finally produce.

In particular, she is interested in considering the significance of the relationships that are constructed around her as an author and teacher who speaks to readers and students. She shows concern for the implications of those forms of relationships. Spivak appears to believe that she is neither in full control of these relationships nor able to observe them in some form of abstracted consciousness. She perceives herself to be thoroughly and inextricably engaged with those around her and with the politics of their respective positioning.

Spivak maintains the understanding that some form of "companionship" between author and reader and between teacher and student is simply unavoidable. She perceives the acts of writing and reading as intersecting and cutting into one another. She writes: "A literary text exists between writer and reader."[2] Put differently, she states:

"...I write myself as I am written."[3] Spivak recognizes her roles as writer and teacher to be fully complicit with the roles of reader and student. As a result, she deliberately writes in ways so as to invite her readers to embrace this companionship of study with her. She writes so as to entice her readers into an awareness of the politics involved in their own respective exegeses, on whatever level they occur, of her texts.

Thus, to simply accept or dismiss Spivak's texts, or elements in them, to any degree at all, is not to have truly read her texts. Spivak's texts ask that her readers engage in an ongoing mode of questioning with them, aiming to open up the very debates that allow for such a set of relations to exist in the first place. Thereby, she aims to disclose and question what she accepts to be the practical production within and throughout attempts to read and interpret. In other words, Spivak seeks to convey, on a simple level what she admits to be an inescapable practice in theory.

Approaching Spivak's texts in reference to her attraction towards and use for Derridean deconstruction is perhaps the easiest and most helpful way to gain an initial understanding of them. Spivak agrees with Derrida positing an economy of difference within meaningful reality.[4] To put this in the bluntest of terms, she understands that any given real identity owes the presence of its meaning to the

differences that are established between it and those parts of reality that it is not. Identity, she concurs with Derrida, must always be understood in terms of that which it is not and to that with which it forms relations.

This point may be made in consideration of how one structures one's understanding of the world in many ways. For example, one understands the Third World as it is opposed to the First and Second Worlds. In addition, the Third World is understood in such terms as particular historico-political relations of decolonization, as defined in particular global discussions, relations of international capital, and questions of military strategy and hegemony. The Third World does not gain meaning in and of itself. Its very reality is a matter of differences. Hence, Spivak would claim, the identity of the Third World may be understood and found in the terms of an actual economy of differentiated meanings and identities.[5] Its factual presence is, therefore, to be understood as neither present nor identifiable. Rather, the identity that constitutes the Third World as real, in this analysis, must be thought in terms of an entire network of meanings.

In order for such a supposedly real identity to find stability in itself requires an originary moment in this economy, a stable point at which the reality of identity can be traced to and can finally be maintained and referred to with certainty. Yet, as with Derrida, Spivak's writings aim

to expose such trace structures within real identities. Through her texts she repeats Derrida's assertion that, as identity requires difference, every "fixed" origin that allows for a certain meaning itself also refers to an anterior moment of meaning and identity.[6] Along with Derrida, she demonstrates that no originary point of signification is truly traceable or possible.

Spivak affirms that meaningful traces of difference can never be fully attended.[7] For instance, the First and Second Worlds and the various identifiable historical, political, and economic relations that the Third World is caught up in are also dependent upon a myriad of reference points. All of these things rely on the presupposition of a world as a present reality. However, the world and all other "hard facts" that one may care to identify, she would suggest, are equally caught up within an economy of difference. The very possibility of articulating anything as real, in other words, demands a point of reference for it to have any recognizable, hence identifiable, meaning in the least.

The point that Spivak supports here is that it is impossible to ever rigorously define any phenomenal reality.[8] She calls attention to the fact that to trace the structure of the meaning of a thing, to discover what original point(s) of reality a thing rests upon, both undermines those origins and disrupts the self-sufficiency

of a thing's definable identity.[9] This recording of sign traces in the identities of the real, what she claims to be the heart of deconstruction,[10] demonstrates that the presence of the real is always also absent. It is always something to be chased.

Even with respect to the real identity of oneself, Spivak writes further, full presence is an impossibility. She states that one cannot even speak oneself to oneself in self-identical certainty:

> Any articulation of the living present in the stream of speech makes you understand that there was a "present" before you and there will be a "present" after you. In order to conceive of the continuity and spontaneity of ...speech, the speaker must irreducibly, structurally assume her absence before and after.[11]

The assumption of a past and future self, according to Spivak, must then fall into the fallible trace structures as well. Hence, Spivak also shares Derrida's understanding that there is, in addition, an economy of deferral in identifiable reality, be it other or self. Spivak recognizes that trace structures are erected both spatially and temporally and, in fact, require space and time as part of the conditions for the possibility of real identity.

In short, Spivak agrees with Derrida to the extent that she acknowledges that no person can avoid the trace structures that provide meaning.[12] In turn, she must and does also acknowledge that no person can avoid the slippage of reference and meaning found in the ever-fleeting origins of meaning. She therefore accepts the suggestion that

anything and everything is open to deconstruction, this persistent tracing of meaning towards ever-slipping origins.

Surely, to state that all may be opened up through deconstructive practices is to say that things are not simply what they represent themselves to be. But, as Spivak reminds her readers again and again, deconstruction is not a matter of exposing error in identity and meaning.[13] Nor is it a matter of dismantling meaning and structure.[14] Rather, it is a matter of disclosing the complicity that identities have with one another,[15] particularly identities in opposition to one another, and acknowledging the constitutive structure(s) that allow for particular identities in the first place. For Spivak to state that all may be opened up through deconstructive practices becomes synonymous with stating that reality, as it is understood even within the most basic components of space and time, is never necessarily divided, described, and labeled as it is.

An economy of differences and deferrals, by definition, represents only a particular set of traceable references. Spivak notes this to be a crucial part of Derrida's insight into the identification of the real. For, she observes, the structure of reality, the mapping and naming of phenomenal reality, as it rests on a particular economy of relations, leads to the possibility of accounting for the real and the not real in particular finite ways. She writes:

> (Derrida)...reminds us...that all explanations, including his own, claim their centrality in terms of an excluded margin that makes possible the "can" of the "can be expressed" and allows "is" to be quietly substituted for it.[16]

Accordingly, Spivak is aware that there are also always those possible traces that are left out of any trace structure. She recognizes that, along the lines of this analysis, any trace structure constructs an inside and an outside to meaning, where marginal realities, in their silences, also provide the conditions for the true and the real.

Spivak accepts the assertion that what is taken as present identifiable reality is, thereby, additionally complicit with what is taken as not real or not actual. As a moment in the referent play in an economy of difference and deferral, reality itself, she suggests, relies on what it is not, as well. The structure of meaning can, along this analysis, be traced directly to what is particularly absent in it. Without the existence of a representable absence, the real and identifiable could not be presented. For example, the prominence of male thought and prowess in European history could, arguably, be traced to an occlusion of supposedly non-existent women's intellectualism and activities within European culture, as that culture stands in its present significance.

It would be difficult, of course, for any person, no matter how critically aware, to perceive all that her or his

own present status in the real world shadows and denies in the process of enjoying an identity. Surely, if the argument above makes any sense at all, it must be clear that any sort of search that one may care to make for the silences must never end. The deconstructor continues to signify an identity, shifting though it may be, through her or his practice. Even deconstruction, as an identifiable practice, rests on conditions that provide for its reality. Hence, as Spivak notes, all deconstruction ultimately falls prey to its own critique.[17] In short, the authority of reality is shown to be impossible, while re-readings of reality are shown to be always possible. Thus, the critic has no control either. She or he is equally caught and shot-through with playful signifiers of the true and the real.[18]

One of the more immediate implications that must follow this analysis, according to Spivak, is that identities must read as catachreses or misnomers. "A deconstructive awareness would insistently be aware that...there are no literal referents....," she urges.[19] For example, she claims that "...there are no 'true' examples of the 'true worker'...."[20] The term "worker" may call up a particular significance that may be applied to a great many persons. However, Spivak is acutely aware that no person who may be considered a "worker" could possibly fit the identity in the

terms it is defined. According to her, "worker" is like "man," a category of abstraction.[21] It is a generalization that is incapable of identifying all the possible meaningful references that a person to whom the name "worker" may be applied can claim.

Spivak argues the point that the knowledge that one may determine about a thing is never adequate to that object of knowledge. She asserts that what one may identify as knowable is always excessive to the knowledge that captures it.[22] One may always read objects of knowledge differently. One who may be called, or may call her or himself, a "worker," for example, can be read in the terms in which she or he is not a worker. A "worker" is always more and different things, (i.e. a "driver," "sleeper," "eater," "vacationer," or "parent"). In a more complicated manner, though, all that a person may do and be as a "worker" will never be adequately addressed in the term. There are particular aspects to each person's work and what they bring to it as persons that remain different from others. The very fact that each worker is a different person demonstrates the inadequacy of the general label.

More to the point, Spivak holds that even particular names are inadequate. She finds, for example, the term "India" to represent a seriously impossible singular category which serves more to pose as an opposition to other categories than to describe itself in any precise terms:

> "India," for people like me, is not really a place with which they can form a national identity because it has always been an artificial construct. "India" is a bit like saying "Europe". When one is talking about a European identity, for example, one is obviously reacting against the United States.[23]

"India," in these terms, is an identity that points to more than itself can articulate. The history, people, religion, geography, politics, and culture of India, to itemize just a few possibilities, can always be read as heterogenous and irreconcilable to a singular real moment.

On a more specific level, Spivak continues the logic of her position and claims that one can no more fully articulate one's own selfhood and position in reality than one can identify one's self-sufficient "presence," as mentioned above.[24] She means to say that, no matter how detailed a description one provides for oneself, latent readings of who one is remain. For example, by moving and speaking one is constantly constructing new and different macro- and micro-relations with things and persons around one. The economy of differences and deferrals that serve to constitute one's identity is forced in constantly differing ways. Also, and more significantly, there is always a plethora of potential and actual perspectives on the nature of this economy, be it experienced as a fixed picture or in motion.

Spivak, therefore, takes the position that an identity is something that is persistently lagging behind the sign-system that allows for it.[25] In other words, she

understands the claimed identity of a thing to be fundamentally out of step with the "real life" that the thing leads.

Given this perceived lag in identity, Spivak has great mistrust for single- and simple-issue social and political movements.[26] In her mind, a "pious" Communist movement that insists that all social phenomena must be interpreted in the terms of class struggle and modes of production, for example, falls quickly behind its own politics. She believes that it easily fails to be complete. Insofar as it is structured around a singular ideological constitution the movement shuts out the possibilities of other fruitful analyses. In this particular regard, Spivak observes that Marxist-feminist critiques of the labour theory of value may easily show that such an interpretation is typically not claimed by sexual reproduction when articulating the production and re-production of labour-power.[27] The terms of "piety" which rest upon such a labour theory of value are, thereby, not necessarily thwarted but certainly thrown-off and pushed to crisis. The very borders that it must rest upon, she insists, prove to undermine the movement's ability to learn anew and interpret itself on its own terms.

For Spivak, there is no non-situated place from which the interpreter can describe and explain reality.[28] She

urges that the interpreter of meanings is always someplace. Thus, she also believes that one cannot choose to remove oneself from ideology or the production of ideology.[29] For, as she believes that one is always someplace, she must also accept the assertion that one is never not immersed within a specific sign system. One can never not communicate and live within the language or languages of one or more specific cultural structures, however complex. Again, Spivak admits that one is never in full control of one's manner of signing. Rather, she denies any suggestion that there exists a sovereign individual who can write as she or he pleases.[30] Hence, the critic of dominant meaning structures who forgets that she or he is enmeshed within some form of structural composition and production writes in a highly problematic way.[31] This critic would merely be attempting to open up a "critical terrain" within dominant meaning structures, unwittingly reproducing that which she or he criticizes.

Spivak concludes, then, that the function of the critic is always to provide "irreducible signifiers" with "significant interpretation, even while she or he recognizes that she or he is trying to describe the irreducible."[32] Further, Spivak states that the best she or he who remains aware of this paradoxical practice can do as a critic of ideology is to identify the frontier or limits of this practice, so as to allow for some provisional space from

which to write with some intelligence.[33] The critic is always one who functions to finally name that which resists definition and who functions to establish some form of rationalization for her or him to do so. In short, the analyst, in Spivak's mind, serves to establish a believable reality.

Spivak remains, therefore, highly suspicious of the aims and interests of those clothed in the garbs of "academic" and "intellectual" discourse, insofar as these titles provide for the identity of one who somehow searches out the truths by which a given culture may understand itself. In her opinion, acknowledging her own placement in these subject positions, the "academic" and "intellectual" cannot be simply regarded as scribes who record culture. Spivak writes:

> We are, rather, the disc jockeys of an advanced capitalist ethnocracy. The discs are not "records" of the old-fashioned kind, but productions of the most recent technology. The trends in taste and the economic factors that govern them are also products of the most complex interrelations among a myriad factors such as international diplomacy, the world market, the conduct of advertisement supported by and supporting the first two items, and so on.[34]

She suggests that the academic, as a well-ensconced member of institutional life, plays directly into the production and re-production of ideology, establishing and re-establishing the thresholds of meaning and reality.[35] The very "job description" of an intellectual, Spivak proposes, involves a tendency to not look at marginal

discourses, but to cast the shadow that constructs them.[36] In addition, taking her example from literary criticism and psychoanalysis, she submits that attempts at opening disciplines up to the different perspectives and interpretations available in interdisciplinary research often amount to little more than one discipline neutralizing the language and concepts of the other and negating the difference between them.[37]

Realizing that she cannot help but to serve her own disciplinary and ideological production in her critique of interpretation and criticism,[38] Spivak examines the ways in which her own work discloses its limits in its own moments of crisis:

> I am trying to see how much in fact I am caught within the European desire to turn towards the East; but how it has become doubly displaced. I think my present work is to show how in fact the limits of theories of interpretation that I am working with are revealed through the encounter of what can be defined as "non-Western material."[39]

Thus, Spivak opens herself to the internal deconstruction of her own practice.

Still, she maintains, opening oneself to the traces of one's own practice, in one's practice, will not reveal the truth of that practice. Spivak admits that there is no available or recoverable truth to the reality of one's living, just as literature offers its reader and critic no truth as such.[40] In fact, given her analysis, textuality,

and all the structures of narrative that the term implies, is an inescapable "fact."

In March 1980 at Riyadh University Center for Girls one student asked Spivak: "It's all very well to try to live like a book; but what if no one else is prepared to read? What if you are dismissed as an irresponsible dreamer?"[41] Spivak responded:

> Everyone reads life and the world like a book. Even, the so-called "illiterate." But especially the "leaders" of our society, the most "responsible" nondreamers: the politicians, the businessmen, the ones who make plans. Without the reading of the world as a book, there is no prediction, no planning, no taxes, no laws, no welfare, no war. Yet these leaders read the world in terms of rationality and averages, as if it were a text-book.[42]

"Text," for Spivak, refers directly to the trace structures which, she believes, provide for meaningful realities. It is, in a very strong sense, the narratives by which we each smooth over the discontinuities and heterogeneities, the different possible readings of experience and the contradictory and differentiated marginal texts, so as to construct certainty and understanding.[43] It is the stories that we tell ourselves about phenomenal experience that allow experience to fit accepted narratives and serve the realities we subscribe to.

This does not mean, however, that Spivak thinks of the reality, or realities, that she and others live as a social text that could be reduced to the pages of a book.[44] She does not try to establish an identity between life and

literature. Rather, Spivak supports the point that the difference between life and literature is a matter of degree as opposed to kind.[45] Her aim is to begin to unfasten the opposition that is usually accepted between such things as speech and activism, so often defined in narrow and exclusive terms.[46]

Spivak argues such a thing as the politics of activism should not be taken, as it often is, as a simple hard-reality, blood-and-guts practice. She states that practice is always normalized by theory.[47] The object of practice, the subject in practice, the context of practice, the purpose in practice, and practice itself are always already "worlded" in a specific way so that the activity may signify in a particular set of ways and re-produce a set of worlding effects.[48] For example, the activism of development workers can be shown to already be shot-through with an entire narrative of First World/Third World relations; the ethical importance of particular "civilizing" influences; structures, practices, a hierarchy of skills, techniques, and knowledges; and "goodness" surrounding international capital. The activity of development work already presupposes a sustaining ideology.

Spivak is clearly not persuaded by notions of a "hard reality." But she does, at least, acknowledge that the ontology of all phenomena is not simply that of a "semiotic field." Spivak admits that there may well be phenomenal

reality that is "pre-textual," often thought in terms of experiential phenomena or immediate, pre-reflective phenomena. However, she believes that that supposed realm can certainly have little to do with the production, in and of itself, of a knowable reality.[49] Spivak insists that sense of reality does not appear as understandably real without textualization.[50] Experience may certainly inform reflection. Indeed, Spivak would argue that experience constantly interrupts understanding. But, so-called experiential phenomena cannot direct understanding: knowledge requires textual limits and axioms, vulnerable to change as they may be.

Spivak acknowledges, then, that culture and history, as with the case of any other "master words," imply no literal referents either.[51] She suggests culture involves the manners by which trace structures serve to explain and justify the borders and identities that are produced through them.[52] In this respect, culture should be understood as a conservative moment. It is the naming of a social canon, the reference points--such as a constitution, great literature, mythology, revolutionary events, and religion--that allow for a society to continue to point to itself as a way of justifying itself.[53] Similarly, she suggests that it would be wiser and more telling for the historian to lessen her or his tendency to show how

historical facts may be anchored in identifiable points and persons in time, and concentrate more on how history, as a disciplinary discourse serves to secure these identities within specific narrative forms.[54] In short culture and history are the effects of trace structures, not the causes.[55]

Spivak refuses to see anything less than a structurally complicit politics at the very heart of each and any history.[56] She argues that history cannot simply be altered or remade through a nostalgia or simple appeal to other origins. Instead, she writes: "The remaking of history involves a negotiation with the structures that have produced the individual as (an) agent of history."[57] In other words, in order to re-write history with legitimacy, one must engage with an entire sign-producing structure of which history is but an important component and not an origin in itself. That we so often continue to read the political interests of the historian-author out of our social texts only goes to demonstrate the extent to which we, as readers of our own history, comply with the truth such narratives avail.[58]

Similar to her analysis of history in general, according to Spivak, attempts within the Third World to achieve decolonized space and articulate a postcolonial condition are equally complicit with the colonial history of

imperialism. She denies any assertions to the effect that decolonization allows for new political space. Instead, Spivak reminds her reader of the fact that the claims made for a decolonized space are recognizable categories central to imperialism, namely nation, constitution, citizenship, democracy, and culture.[59] Most interestingly, she notes that postcolonial persons, be they native, migrant, or exile, tend to seek restored and new identities through the mediation of nations and nationalism, categories used to colonize in the first place.[60]

Like it or not, Spivak explains, the postcolonial person is the former colonial subject.[61] In asserting her or his "postcoloniality" the postcolonial person asserts colonialism as her or his past.[62] "Native history" is, therefore, irrevocably entwined with the signs produced in imperialism. The pre-colonial is most directly "recoverable" via colonial categories of knowledge and understanding. Hence, the act of decolonization is, in a sense, the completion of colonization. The postcolonial person, ultimately, embraces the imperial history, so as to re-interpret it. Thus, the postcolonial person enmeshes her or himself into a complex web of dubious negotiations within the discourse which continues to oppress and exploit. Her or his attempts to speak differently are, largely, sacrificed to the interested avenues of a symbolic order inherently hostile to difference and slow to change.

This difficulty in interpretation and representation that Spivak represents is, perhaps, put in its most insightful form when she reads it in terms of a fundamental conflict between the ways in which people experience life and the ways in which they know their respective lives. She observes a discrepant relationship between that which is perceived "on the ground" and that which comes to be understood as the truth.

In her essay "Time and Timing: Law and History," Spivak puts this in more precise terms and designates this conflict as a discord in manners of delineating temporality. She claims that a postulation of sequential time is, largely, the way in which Europeans and their cultural descendants have apprehended and followed the real activity of daily life. Spivak suggests that, for many of us, living has been and still is a matter of picturing, or "fleshing" out, a progression from one point to the next, which she calls "timing."[64] In contrast to timing, Spivak observes that those same persons among us, ultimately, give way to an image of the actual laws of temporal motion. We feel compelled to reinscribe our perceived timings within the known diagram of "Time".[65] We face, she argues, a constant battle between, on the one hand, the ways in which we picture our experience of events and, on the other hand, our beliefs about how those events must ultimately be written.

Time may be thought of here in comparable terms to sign structures as they were discussed above. Similarly, timing may be construed in terms similar to the heterogenous and discontinuous possibilities within representation and interpretation. Spivak argues that what is perceived in living, often thought through as the "merely lived," is finally disqualified and sacrificed to a grander narrative of life, fleshed in a universal reality of the way of Life.

Examples of this reading are abundant. As Spivak gladly points out, one of the most exalted and memorable recent moments in this subordination of timing to Time is, of course, Hegel's rationalization of all possible human relations into the laws of Geist and the telos of History.[66] Within Hegel's diagrams we may discover that Reason and the intelligible are to be worked out through a particular and necessary order of historical relations, in the end determining and realizing what was there in the beginning. Part of Spivak's point is to suggest that, perhaps, this law is maintained and obeyed too closely still.

This privileging of history is, to a broad extent, exactly what is expressed in the postcolonial person's paradoxical activity of decolonization. As Spivak notes elsewhere, "...the aftermath of colonialism is not only the retrieval of the colonial history of the past but the putting together of a history of the present...."[67] The postcolonial person, like the colonial, typically relies on

History (with a capital "H") as a means to manifest a locatable identity and communicate her or his interests in a meaningful manner. The discourse of History has been effective to the extent that the postcolonial person often seeks to establish her or his own position in relation to colonial rule with respect to how relations of colonialism fit into a stage of relations in a postcolonial world. It is the rationalization of one to the other with respect to the course of human history, past, present, and future, on a shared globe. It is, at least, a reading of History that seeks to reformulate a global perspective on the actions and relations of human beings, not dissimilar, as Spivak points out, to Hegel's rationalization of India into the "*un*conscious symbolic" of *Geist*.[68]

Spivak would, therefore, argue that the Western categories of History as Time have, in fact, obscured the self-styled timing perceptions of both the colonial and colonized. In her line of reasoning, the cultural dominance of History imported around the globe (in constructing the globe) has acted to subordinate the heterogeneity and differentiation amongst both Europeans and non-Europeans, forcing the meaning of their respective daily lives to read into a mutual and final cause.

For Spivak, though, the important point in decolonization does not amount to a retrieval of pre-colonial, pre-Historical experiences and ways of

knowing. She does not, therefore, conclude that one will find the undoing of the dominance of this singular and continuous Graph of Time in a recuperation of timings. Nor does she suggest that we will find the key to saving interpretation in the liberation of timing. Rather, she goes on to claim that no persons, be they colonial, postcolonial, or pre-colonial, have direct access to an unproblematic "native informant" who can speak the true lived experiences of an "unadulterated" culture prior to Western ways.[69] Timing cannot be understood in and of itself.

In her essay Spivak demonstrates, as an example, that the Srimadbhagavadgita, which Hegel uses as the "Indian" position of timing in respect to Time, is itself structurally complicit with Hegel's History.[70] Spivak takes the very same passage which Hegel uses to explain "India" as a moment in History to show that the Gita is itself an act of Time over timing:

> The Gita is a tightly structured dialogue in the middle of the gigantic, multiform, diversely layered account of the great battle between two ancient and related lineages. Here the battle is stalled so that the merely human Prince Arjuna can be motivated to fight by his divine charioteer, Krishna. All around the Gita is myth, history, story, process, "timing." In the halted action of the text is the unfurling of the Laws of Motion of the transcendence of timing, the Time of the Universe.[71]

Her point is that "India" also requires a submission of timing to Time in the same manner as "Hegel." Hence, what "India" speaks of itself, in this case, must also be

understood as a master narrative, suppressing the lived experience of a multiplicity of so-called "Indians," whether "India" be a moment in History or the expression of the Gita. The Gita can be read as a moment of Time as much as Hegel wishes to view it as a moment of timing. "India" is as much a mistake, then, as it represents an authenticity.

The subjectivity of the authentic "native informant" who, supposedly, can articulate the other of History, is, therefore, an "(im)possibility," according to Spivak.[72] First, she or he is already presupposed in the disciplinary requirements of a European will to know.[73] The Historian, in other words, has already constructed this subjectivity for this other who is willing to speak a native life in the terms of History. Second, this informant is always already caught up in a textual rationalization of experiences into a singular Graph in her or his speech or writing. And, third, the investigator who chooses to listen to this informant cannot simply peek under the robes of Time to see timing in the raw. Timing is itself inextricably informed by Time. The investigator, by her or his act of investigation, invites the pressures of Time to bear.

Spivak recommends, further, that this sensitive investigatory practice of continuing to hold up the "East" as something fundamentally different, in opposition to "Western" logos, goes far to legitimate a violent and unwarranted dichotomy, serving colonial attitudes in a

reversed form.[74] It serves to open up the possibility of "...an ethnicity untroubled by the vicissitudes of history...."[75] As a result, India, for example, is construed into the sort of delicacy which anthropologists and other western scholars, foreign or indigenous elite, drool over, as they seek to reform History and the discourses of Time.

Spivak views this reformation as little more than a re-negotiation of Westernism and colonialism. For her, it is the preparation for, construction of, and navigation through new ground over the space and time of very old ground. It is the fleshing out of a Time, where Time has been fleshed anew over and over again. It is a privileging of timing over Time, only to erect Time once again and ignore the consistent interruption between Time and timing in this economy of and between perception, knowledge, the visible, and the lived.

In the end, for Spivak, Time is, in effect, an attempt to fix the lived (timing) to the visible (space), an attempt to reconcile the two. She understands Time as an undertaking that legislates timing and space into proper names and proper limits, as an endeavour to provide the rules for the possibility of a reality that may be described with certainty.

Interpretation and explanation serve here as the

practices by which this law may be and is established. Yet, Spivak asks that we also recognize that interpretations and explanations are as much produced by Time as they are productive of it. As shown above, she suggests that the virtual reality of the lived is always already subject to Time as well. She strives to demonstrate the opinion that one is never able to flesh out one's world in a disinterested fashion, whether one is aware of the interests one serves or not. Explanation, as Spivak puts it, always "...must secure and assure a certain _kind_ of being-in-the-world, which might as well be called our politics."[76]

For Spivak, then, regardless of one's theoretical and methodological sophistication, theory and method lead the investigator directly nowhere.[77] There is no neutral space of experience, she believes, to which timing may be fixed.

Notes From Chapter One:

[1]Many of the themes and questions that Spivak pursues in her texts are similar to approaches outlined by Foucault with respect to representation and history. See, in particular: Michel Foucault, The Order of Things (New York: Vintage Books, 1973). Despite obvious similarities, however, it must also be recognized that Spivak remains highly critical of much of Foucault's work. Spivak appears to appreciate his method of critical inquiry but is irritated by many of the implications and conclusions that Foucault ultimately draws. Most notably, Spivak is suspicious of his analyses of resistance, via his analyses of power, and the implications these analyses have with respect to resisting subjects. See, in particular: Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1980) and Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980). Hence, one might suggest that, in general, Spivak finds value in parts of the early writings of Foucault, whereas the she remains disturbed by his later writings.

Also, it is obvious that she has been profoundly influenced by the writings of Derrida, particularly with respect to: Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). Yet, it must also be recognized that Spivak cannot be, in any way, categorized simply as a follower of Derrida. Although she has found his deconstruction highly productive in her own work, Spivak has developed critical distance from Derrida's writing.

[2]Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: A Woman's Text from the Third World," in Spivak, In Other Worlds (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), 247.

[3]Spivak, "The Intervention Interview," Spivak, The Post-colonial Critic, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 116.

[4]See: Jacques Derrida, "Différance," in Jacques Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 1-27; and Of Grammatology.

[5]Spivak, "Translator's Preface," Of Grammatology, xlii.

[6]Spivak, "Sex and History in The Prelude (1805): Books Nine to Thirteen," In Other Worlds, 46.

[7]Ibid., 47.

[8]Spivak, "Feminism and Critical Theory," In Other Worlds, 77.

[9]Spivak, "Sex and History," 46.

[10]Spivak, "A response to 'The difference within: Feminism and critical theory'," in Elizabeth Meese and Alice Parker, eds., The Difference Within: Feminism and Critical Theory (Amsterdam and Philidelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1989), 207-220.

[11]Spivak, "Strategy, Identity, Writing," The Post-colonial Critic, 35.

[12]Ibid., 44.

[13]Spivak, "A response to: 'The difference within'," 213-214.

[14]Spivak, "A Response to John O'Neill," in Gary Shapiro and Alan Sica, eds., Hermenuetics: Questions and Prospects (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 197.

[15]Ibid., 194.

[16]Spivak, "Explanation and Culture: Marginalia," in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, In Other Worlds, 106.

[17]Spivak, "The New Historicism: Political Commitment and the Postmodern Critic," The Post-colonial Critic, 164.

[18]Spivak, "Translator's Preface," lxxvii.

[19]Spivak, "Practical Politics of the Open End," The Post-colonial Critic, 104.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Spivak, "Sex and History," 71.

[22]Spivak, "A Literary Representation," 254.

[23]Spivak, "Strategy, Identity, Writing," 39.

[24]Spivak, "The Post-colonial Critic," The Post-colonial Critic, 68.

[25] Spivak, "The *Intervention* Interview," 124-125.

[26] *Ibid*., 118.

[27] Spivak, "A Literary Representation," 247-248.

[28] Spivak, "Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution," *The Post-colonial Critic*, 5.

[29] Spivak, "The Politics of Interpretations," *In Other Worlds*, 120.

[30] Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value," *In Other Worlds*, 168.

[31] Spivak, "The Problems of Cultural Self-representation," *The Post-colonial Critic*, 54.

[32] Spivak, "The Letter as Cutting Edge," *In Other Worlds*, 12.

[33] *Ibid*., 13.

[34] Spivak, "Explanation and Culture," 110.

[35] Spivak, "Practical Politics," 103.

[36] Spivak, "Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution," 4.

[37] Spivak, "The Problem of Cultural," 55.

[38] Spivak, "A response to: 'The difference within'," 214.

[39] Spivak, "Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution," 8.

[40] Spivak, "Translator's Preface," lxxv.

[41] Spivak, "Reading the World: Literary Studies in the Eighties," *In Other Worlds*, 95.

[42] *Ibid*.

[43] Spivak, "The *Intervention* Interview," 120.

[44] Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," *In Other Worlds*, 198.

[45] Spivak, "A Literary Representation," 243.

[46]Spivak, "The Intervention Interview," 120-121.

[47]Spivak, "Strategy, Identity, Writing," 44.

[48]Spivak, "Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution," 2.

[49]Spivak, "The Problem of Cultural," 53.

[50]Spivak, "The Post-modern Condition: The End of Politics?," The Post-colonial Critic, 25.

[51]Spivak, "The New Historicism," 157.

[52]See: Spivak, "Poststructuralism, Marginality, Postcoloniality and Value," in Peter Collier and Helga Geyer-Ryan, eds., Literary Theory Today (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990); "Rhetoric and Cultural Explanation: A Discussion with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak," Journal of Advanced Composition, 10:2, Fall 1990, 293-304; and "Who Needs The Great Works," Harper's, 279:1672, September 1989, 43-52.

[53]Spivak, "Who Needs The Great Works," 49.

[54]Spivak, "Poststructuralism, Marginality, Post-coloniality and Value," 219.

[55]Spivak, "The Intervention Interview," 123.

[56]Spivak, "Who Claims Alterity?," in Barbara Kruger and Phil Mariani, eds., Remaking History (Seattle: Bay Press, 1989), 269.

[57]Ibid., 282.

[58]Spivak, "Love Me, Love My Ombre, Elle," Diacritics, 14:4, Winter 1984, 19-20.

[59]Spivak, "Poststructuralism, Marginality, Post-coloniality and Value," 225.

[60]Spivak, "Reading The Satanic Verses," Third Text, 11, 1990, 56.

This is also the claim from which many postcolonial writers operate. See, for example: Partha Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World, A Derivative Discourse? (Delhi: Oxford University Press, for United Nations University, 1986); and Ashis Nandy, The Intimate Enemy, Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983).

[61]Spivak, "In a Word. Interview," *differences*, 1:2, Summer 1989, 141.

[62]Spivak, "Reading *The Satanic Verses*," 44.

[63]Spivak, "Time and Timing: Law and History," in John Bender and David E. Wellbery, eds., *Chronotypes, The Construction of Time* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1991), 99-117.

[64]*Ibid.*, 99.

[65]*Ibid.*

[66]*Ibid.*, 100.

[67]Spivak, "Feminism in Decolonization," *differences*, 3:3, Fall 1991, 139.

[68]Spivak, "Time and Timing," 101.

[69]*Ibid.*, 116.

[70]*Ibid.*, 99.

[71]*Ibid.*, 103.

[72]*Ibid.*, 105. Spivak brackets the prefix of "impossibility" here (i.e. (im)possibility) as a way of indicating the thesis that the "native informant" is impossible by the fact that she or he is always possible. More will be said of this in the following chapter.

[73]*Ibid.*, 117.

[74]*Ibid.*, 99.

[75]*Ibid.*, 112.

[76]Spivak, "Explanation and Culture," 105-106.

[77]Spivak, "Naming Gayatri Spivak," *Stanford Humanities Review*, 1:1, Spring 1989, 88.

Chapter Two

Strategies Of Catachresis

One may well wish to argue that, as someone who is so clearly influenced by deconstruction, Gayatri Spivak disallows any grounding for political action. At the same time that the analyses she supports provide intellectual tools by which to understand how cultural dominants and oppressive structures gain legitimacy, Spivak also shows readers the tools by which one might de-legitimize the sites upon which social and political struggles are formed and from which they are launched. By attempting to expose an inherent textuality in all social and political reality, she may be seen as one who simply negates the substantiality of all action, "positive" and "negative." Thus, Spivak may be seen as one who invites political paralysis, excepting, of course, the power of academic critique, which may be viewed as her own site of control.

The charge typical to this line of reasoning, which is

not by any means reserved solely for Spivak, often reads as follows: "Is it not odd how, just when women and postcolonial persons, for example, are finally managing to pluralize subjectivity and establish alternative subject positions from which to speak and act, (poststructuralist) theorists such as Spivak move to undermine the validity of subjectivity?" The inference, here, is that the occidental and patriarchal academic elite, which may be thought to include Spivak in some ways, having lost its monopoly on positive speech and writing, seeks now to undermine the power of positivism and secure refuge in negative critique. Hence, the position that Spivak occupies may be read as a threat to positive politics in general.

With respect to her use of deconstruction as a central form of practice in her texts, Spivak is quite quick to recognize that deconstruction does not offer any helpful politics in itself. She concurs with Derrida and suggests that the only sort of politics that deconstruction could possibly offer would amount to either a "wishy-washy pluralism" or an "irresponsible hedonism."[1] To found a politics on deconstruction would constitute little more than a theory of unrestrained and free-flowing multiplicity, wherein judgment would be, in effect, unattainable.

Deconstruction, as she understands it, does indeed negate the True Reality of truth and falsehood, showing only how truths and falsehoods are constructed. Yet, in doing

so, Spivak argues, deconstruction does not deny or "decentre" subjectivity. She recognizes that it, instead, merely investigates the conditions under which specific subjects may become "real."[2] The utility of deconstruction, for social and political investigation, rests in its ability to show how subjects are always centred.[3] For her, deconstruction opens up the possibility of being able to establish the terrain upon which a given subject must stand.

More to the point, though, Spivak explains:

> It is not just that deconstruction cannot found a politics, while other ways of thinking can. It is that deconstruction can make founded political programs more useful by making their in-built problems more visible.[4]

By becoming aware of the economy of differences and deferrals and by tracing the structures of identity, she suggests, one can become knowing of what is required and what must be for specific identities to emerge. Spivak argues that deconstructive practice may show that any given political position or political program is founded upon a given symbolic economy, so that subjectivity, identity, reality, or any "ground" is necessary for the articulation of politics.

Spivak, therefore, accepts the notion that describing and establishing a positive (subject) position within one's politics is inescapable.[5] Rather than denying the power of positive politics, Spivak actually outlines the claim that, in so far as one expresses a position, explicitly or implicitly, one can never not inhabit a politics in that

manner. The difficulty remains, however, that a given position and a given politics is never necessary in itself.

Spivak draws on this problematic most clearly as she joins others in the discussions of essentialism and anti-essentialism in feminist debates.[6] She finds most so-called anti-essentialist feminist writing to be tiring and unhelpful.[7] Yet, this does not mean that Spivak supports essentialism outright. She does, indeed, often champion feminist efforts to mobilize around essentialist principles, not because of any belief in the correctness of an essentialist reading of women. Rather, Spivak takes the position that, actively, politically, and philosophically, feminists have no choice but to be essentialist. She has settled herself in the ground to the side of the great furor that has emerged around the controversy between essentialism and anti-essentialism in feminism, referring to it as a non-debate.[8] She insists that, whether "essentialist" or "anti-essentialist" in orientation, all feminists do operate, mobilize around, and are obligated to essentialist positions.[9]

Spivak sustains the thesis that, regardless of the postion one takes within the essentialism versus anti-essentialism debate, or any other point of discussion as a feminist, one always defines and solidifies a particular attitude from which to speak or act.[10] In

addition, she suggests that attempts to take away from the centrality of one's stance by proposing that one's position is merely perspectival, for example, is naive. Perspectives are taken and displayed for the very fact that one has faith in the feasibility of that view.[11] Be it perspectival or not, feminists must draw on some sort of logic or basic belief in order to act in the various manners they do.[12] She notes that there is always something assumed in order to speak or act.[13] She laughingly professes, then, that anti-essentialists would do just as well to speak of "an essential non-essence" in their positioning.[14] For, the ontological obligations are still there.[15] To privilege any feminist approach, such as practice over theory or difference over unity, in any way, she maintains, is not to simply generalize about feminism but to actually "univeralize" in one's method.[16]

The more general point that Spivak stays with here is that there is no such thing as a "de-centred" place from which to mobilize.[17] Mobilization is a point at which the legitimacy of a program is acted upon. It is a point at which society is re-represented through the continual conversion of timing into Time. Political activity, in this sense, is the moment of naming and defining reality and the ethics therein. It is a process of naming wherein categories and ethics emerge. In other words, Spivak may be said to think of politics as the moment when the trace

structure is fixed and/or the movement of describing and inscribing that which is presumed to be fixable occurs.

For her own part, Spivak, as a feminist, does not flinch in the face of the contradictions that occur in an essentialist position. For example, she tends to situate herself simply in terms of an "anti-sexist" position and has no difficulty initiating struggle from the assertion that "...Women are universally oppressed by men."[18] In doing so, she is well aware that her position directly legitimizes the very grounds that constitute discourses of sexism.[19] Yet, Spivak accepts this as her political ground for the reason that oppression on the basis of genital difference is exactly what she believes she faces as a woman.[20] She supports the contention that it is from the site of sexism that women have the possibility to move. Spivak asserts that genital difference is, indeed, one of the significant points at which women are differentiated and discriminated. And, as subjects of differentiation and discrimination, women have no choice but to engage with themselves and others as such.

She often scoffs at feminist texts and acts that aim at rejecting such a universal framing of women as Woman and reject the question of sexual difference. Such a move, she argues, merely ignores the level of politics that women confront and ignores ways in which women have been and are culturally essentialized. Attempts to undermine univer-

salism in feminism, which Spivak would suggest is a universalizing move in itself, simply offers "theoretical purity" as its reward.[21] And, in her opinion, such theoretically stringent moves must ultimately prove libelous to feminism, understood as a politics, by the fact that it only offers yet another competing account of the world within a recognizable playground of representational reality. It does not in fact engage in the politics of re-writing the world as such.[22] And it does not engage with the situation of women as "women."

It is important to remember, here, that Spivak finds both theory and Time to be <u>im</u>possible by the very fact that each is always too possible. She construes the conditions under which theory and Time are constituted to be thoroughly and forever multiple. Determinations and descriptions of the foundations of such a project as feminist politics is never lacking interested ground. She takes ideas and pictures of reality to always already involve and avail specific strategies, both consciously and unconsciously.

Further, Spivak argues that what makes a thing real and located, its essence, is never empirically evident as such.[23] It is, rather, that portion of phenomenal content that has been situated to read as the moment of truth. Moreover, that which makes theory and Time possible also renders these things vulnerable. The truth of a thing, she

claims, is thus also only of the moment.

Spivak believes that one cannot not be strategic and styled, that one cannot present oneself outside of a representative stance. She suggests, then, that one may begin to understand the strategic posture that one takes in thought and deed as a way to fully comprehend the implications of these performances and the ways in which one's thoughts and deeds serve the conversion of timing into Time.[24] Through such an investigation one may begin to ask and consider how, for example, the processes of timing that convert genital difference into a moment of oppression in Time may be rendered differently and, thus, result in a different inscription of Sexuality and Gender altogether.[25]

Spivak believes that such strategic investigation and employment of the "essentially" strategic posture of identities and names, through and upon which the conversion of timing into Time occurs, is possible through tending to the "mistaken" character in the identities themselves. She writes:

> The line I am suggesting I have called, in a feminist context, "scrupulous and plausible misreadings." Since all readings, including the original text, are constituted by, or effects of, the necessary possibility of misreadings, in my argument the question becomes one of interpretations for use, built on the old grounds of coherence, without the cant of theoretical adequacy.[26]

She recommends that one may be able to actually affect the worlding of phenomena by tending to the conditions under

which specific essences are made possible. So, having recognized the constitution of "woman" to involve the strength of sexist discourses, she does not give up on the politics of feminism altogether. Rather, Spivak queries what may be done with and from such a position.

She advocates a politics of "strategic essentialism" wherein the content of a thing, such as genital difference, which is employed to construct the conversion of timing into Time, such as gender into discriminatory practices, is supposedly loosened from its telling location. Spivak advises those who wish to pursue a politics of resistance to turn the latent play available in the essences that culturally bind them to oppression, differentiation, and discrimination into a moment of confusion. This practice, she advises, can begin to thwart the power of such a discourse as sexism to locate itself with its historical certainty.

Spivak suggests that a truly successful politics of resistance may occur with the claiming of a "catachresis,"[27] namely the mistaken use of words and names. In Spivak's sense, catachresis is both the use of codes and labels in ways that are inappropriate, but, because of the multiple conditions of names, in ways that are also quite appropriate. It is, in other words, a play with the forever mistaken character of names, as they disclose the ever-

unsuccessful attempts to fasten the true and the real to an over-abundantly possible terrain of the world(s).

Spivak states that by acknowledging the essential content of the names one receives and produces one can also ask why one takes "these names" as sufficiently descriptive of oneself and not other codes of identification.[28] This acknowledgment opens up the contingency of the central and marginal operatives in identity and, therefore, functions of persons and other phenomena. For instance, she explains:

> As a caste Hindu, speaking to a London audience maybe 50, certainly 70 years ago, the name that would allow me to have a common ground was Aryan. Today the name that allows me to have a common ground is marginal. To an extent, the centre decides to give you a piece of centrality: either a central name like Aryan or a marginal name like marginal, and you actually welcome it in order to speak.[29]

In speaking at either of those moments and as either of those named persons, it becomes interesting what Spivak might say or do. As she writes elsewhere, Spivak might speak and act in such ways as to disclose the manners in which dominant vernaculars are able to stage themselves as "dominant" and "normal" through a distinction between a margin and a centre.[30] Instead of simply accusing the centre of practicing an illegitimate marginalizing politics, she might pick out those portions of content within the marginal position that can be read in similar terms to the essential content of the central position. Thereby, Spivak would hope that she may be able to place a break in the sign-system of names that places her so. She reminds her

readers:

> When a cultural identity is thrust upon one because the centre wants an identifiable margin, claims for marginality assure validation from the centre. It should then be pointed out that what is being negotiated here is not even a "race or a social type"...but an economic principle of identification through separation.[31]

Spivak claims that it is in the dynamics of interrupting the trace structures that divide a centre from a margin and construct borders and limits in general that the possibility of political activism lies.[32] She argues that by being able to change the functional capacity of a sign-system one will be able to open up potentially violent moments of significant crisis.[33] One may incite this crisis, Spivak insists, by the fact that the axioms upon which the conversion of timing into Time rests may be displaced by that exercise of conversion itself.[34] The space for activism can open up once the limits that allow for a Time are shown to be limitations to themselves, that the limits of Time demonstrate the limitation of Time as a universal moment and description of Reality.

Spivak believes that inciting crisis through the practice of catachresis or strategic essentialism may come in terms as simple as offering "additional evidence," which may serve to force a reinscription of limits and naming.[35] For example, she suggests particular relationships between feminists and Marxists and feminists-Marxists may be greatly

disturbed if one were to successfully demonstrate the notion that even the most oppressed man always has more fundamental and inalienable rights than the most regal woman within the confines of patriarchal society.[36] This, she suggests, has the potential to throw class analysis reeling and introduce a serious consideration of sexism into the equation of class. The success of activism, in this sense, relies on the cunning implication of content, on the use of a trope.

In particular, Spivak admires what she believes to be the powerful use of tropes by Bengali writer Mahasweta Devi. Spivak has both translated and written on Mahasweta's stories and social activism at numerous points.[37] Her readings of Mahasweta's work are far too diverse and complex to articulate fully here. However, it is certainly worth noting that Spivak relishes the ways in which Mahasweta apparently takes great care in her representation of the gendered subaltern,[38] the low-caste and oppressed postcolonial woman, as a framed and essentialized person.[39] In so doing, Spivak finds, Mahasweta's texts go far to incite crisis in this way.

In general, Spivak suggests that Mahasweta's stories draw her readers into a representation of the world of the subaltern and Indian nationalism wherein the codes that one normally uses to coordinate events and objects (hypotaxis) in a natural meaning are absent, leaving the reader with an unnaturalized series of names (parataxis).[40] Mahasweta's

reader is thus compelled to rethink her or his apprehension of the postcolonial subaltern social reality and what that reality might be made up of and mean.

In "Draupadi," for example, Spivak explains that Mahasweta displaces the typical homogenized view of the gendered subaltern and opens up questions of the heterogeneity of experience in the subaltern's living space by such moves as focusing on the plight of "...half-caste, half tribal, half white woman," as opposed to "...the pure ethnic, the full-fledged tribal...."[41] Similarily, Spivak notes, in "Stanadayi," Mahasweta persistently brings the focus of her story on the singularity of her characters, enacting a powerful catachresis with respect to benevolent efforts to globalize the plight of subalterns and subaltern women in particular in a world-wide rationale of oppression or women's politics.[42] Spivak also discusses how Mahasweta describes the daily lives and interests of tribal Indians in ways that show that the forms of oppression that came with colonial rule cannot be so easily caught up and addressed through questions of nationalism and culturalism in the postcolonial moment. Rather, her stories disclose the impossibility of reading nationalism into every corner of decolonization, that decolonization does not necessarily mean an end to colonialism in every respect.[43] Further, Spivak explains, Mahasweta focuses her narratives on the actual bodies of subaltern women in ways that serve to open

up questions of production and value for both Marxism and feminism, particularly in such a manner as to derail the general authority and central placement of "consciousness" in such political languages.[44]

In her "Unmaking and Making in To the Lighthouse"[45] Spivak also expresses delight over what she perceives as the catachretical ingenuity of novelist Virginia Woolf. By manipulating traditional cultural images and representations of genital difference between women and men, Woolf manages to reveal a discourse of "womb-envy." Spivak contends that Woolf fleshes out the sexual symmetry between women and men, most firmly articulated through the texts of Freud, and, thereby forces a re-reading of the symbolism that has been "normally" written as a "lack" in women. Spivak argues that Woolf, indeed, reads "lack" back into the (hetero)sexuality of men on the basis of the same logic.[46] As a result, Woolf's text supposedly converts traditional discriminatory readings between female and male sexuality and this "symmetry" into an arrangement demanding of a more complex reading, on the one hand. And, on the other hand, Spivak believes that Woolf's text converts this traditional symmetrical reading of sexuality into the grounds for a feminist critique.

One of Spivak's most crucial and interesting catachretical strategies involves this supposed symmetry as well. In her essays "French Feminism in an International

Frame"[47] and "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman,"[48] for example, Spivak addresses, amongst other problems, questions concerning the cultural constitution of women as sexed beings, particularly in regards to the French theorists' reliance on psychoanalytic readings of womanhood.[49] She is concerned that, even as feminist women begin to ask the question "What is woman?," feminists ultimately maintain the malestream query into the mystery of woman, by asking "What does woman want?"[50] This analysis poses a problem for Spivak, in that she views the work of some feminists to be an engagement with a discourse of female subjectivity that maintains the constitution of female subjectivity as firmly rooted in the "lack" of a phallus. She observes that some feminists, whether they agree with the analysis or not, still take the question of womanhood in western culture to centre on the cultural problem of an essential absence.

In considering this problematic, Spivak offers the following evidence for consideration. She argues the point that interpreting the relations between men and women as somehow symmetrical, as expressed in a reading of the presence of a phallus in the male and the lack of the phallus in the uterine female is a complete denial of the empirically evident "truth" of women's sexual pleasure. Spivak contends that the sexual relations between women and men are anything but symmetrical, and the mis-reading of

that fact in such theoretical practices as pychoanalysis and counter-psychoanalysis is nothing short of a clear demonstration of what is continually denied in that reading.

She reads women's sexuality as an excess that is effaced by both men's sexual practices and queries into womanhood. Spivak notes that "male orgasmic pleasure 'normally' entails the male reproductive act--semination,"[51] whereas "female orgasmic pleasure (it is not, of course, the 'same' pleasure, only called by the same name) does not entail any one component of the heterogeneous female reproductive scenario...."[52] As she puts it, "the clitoris escapes reproductive framing."[53] Hence, and more to the point, the woman whose outline is traced in a traditional phallus/uterine production misses the reference to what the male "lacks." The woman of traditional analysis may be more accurately read, then, as the result of a clitoridectomy, linking her, at least theoretically, with the women who face the actual physical practice in the colonial and postcolonial world(s). For, Spivak argues, it is the pleasure experienced in the clitoral orgasm that is persistently ignored in theoretical literature, most recently in psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic criticism.

Spivak has faith that implicating the clitoris within the general equation of female sexuality interrupts the power of simple binary logic within the construction of gender. And, for Spivak, it must go further still:

> Investigation of the effacement of the clitoris, where clitoridectomy is a metonym for women's definition as "legal object as subject of reproduction", would persistently seek to de-normalize uterine social organization. At the moment, the fact that the entire complex network of advance capitalist economy hinges on home-buying, and that the philosophy of home-ownership is intimately linked to the sanctity of the nuclear family, shows how encompassingly the uterine norm of womanhood supports the phallic norm of capitalism. At the other end of the spectrum, it is this ideologico-material repression of the clitoris as the signifier of the sexed subject that operates the specific oppression of women....[54]

The full implications of this passage are, of course, too elaborate to consider in any depth here. However, one can note that, for Spivak, the strength of such a disruption in the sign-system chain of a given society has a thoroughly dramatic impact throughout that society. In her view, exemplified in the fate of the clitoris as a named moment in female sexuality, both the vulnerability and strength of political identity, in this exploration of the conditions upon which it rests, are truly disclosed and made available to the activist.

One should be careful, however, not to deem too quickly Spivak's understanding of the possibilities of political struggle as merely the terrorist antics of a nominalist, blowing-up reality from "below." Her basic propositions with respect to inciting crisis via catachresis pose a far more complicated position than that characterization would allow. Spivak does not think of her projects as simply limited to opening new and different ruptured spaces from

which to speak and act--from which to re-write subjectivity and the world. She claims that her projects also, and almost primarily so, involve struggles to open up new and different sites upon and from which to hear and see.

Spivak has said, "For me, the question 'Who should speak?' is less crucial than 'Who will listen?'"[55] She claims to be highly aware of the fact that there are always those intellectuals, those who figure most significantly in entrenching the borders of reality, who, benevolently motivated as they may be, seek to speak for the oppressed persons of the world and articulate their plight for them as a way to bring the sorrow of the masses to view. Yet, Spivak insists that it is more important that these critics and intellectuals "...learn to speak in such a way that the masses will not regard as bullshit."[56] She asks that the elites begin to be less concerned with the problem the masses supposedly have with effectively communicating their politics. She recommends that the elites begin to show greater concern for problematizing their own respective difficulties in cognizing the realities these masses face.

Typically, Spivak has put this assertion in terms of "unlearning our privilege as our loss."[57] By this she means that in order for intellectuals and privileged persons to take advantage of any moment of crisis that may be open to them these persons must also work to make themselves vulnerable and invite crisis. They must remember, Spivak

urges, that, regardless of the interest these intellectuals may have in giving way to radical political practice, what allows them to hold these interests in the ways that they may is conditioned by specific operations in cultural and, hence, economic production.[58] There is then, she holds, the possibility of redeveloping one's distant position.

Spivak becomes incensed, for example, by persons who claim that they are unable to address questions of oppression and discrimination by the fact that, in the social and cultural subject-positions they hold, they are the oppressors and discriminators themselves. She states:

> I will have in an undergraduate class, let's say, a young, white male student, politically-correct, who will say: "I am only a bourgeois white male, I can't speak." ...I say to (him): "Why not develop a certain degree of rage against the history that has written such an abject script for you that you are silenced?" Then you begin to investigate what it is that silences you, rather than take this very deterministic position, since my skin colour is this, since my sex is this, I cannot speak.[59]

She suggests that not taking the risk to learn how one, because of one's subject-position, automatically oppresses and appropriates becomes a denial of the politics of one's position altogether. It merely aids to salve one's conscience, in other words, and maintains the structural difficulties faced by all therein.[60]

As an alternative, Spivak recommends that one find some way to de-hegemonize one's position, so as to "...learn to occupy the subject position of the other...."[61] She recognizes that if anyone has the opportunity to address her

or his political dilemmas he is a wealthy, white, and male academic. She asks them to use their time and refined skills to look for ways in which to displace themselves from such a constrained situation. This would, of course, involve a great deal of strategic work. Spivak has in mind, though, such simple procedures as, in the case of feminist analysis, taking the time to ascertain the degree to which the essentialized category of Woman is essentially differentiated in itself. She writes:

> The point that I am trying to make is that, in order to learn enough about Third World women and to develop a different readership, the immense heterogeneity of the field must be appreciated, and the First World feminist must learn to stop feeling privileged as a woman.[62]

Spivak imagines that through that exercise one may learn how one is unable to represent. Thereby, one may learn to be claimed by one's Other and the different manners of political speech she or he engages with, as opposed to reducing one's intellectual skills to a more simple level,[63] and learning, instead, the possible and necessary limits of one's own discourse.

Spivak has said that there is common ground for emancipatory politics among human beings. But this, she claims, is not made available through any forms of similarity or sameness but, rather, through difference, the fact that we each, as subjects of timing, have the capacity to produce a differential.[64] Hence, for example, she calls

on those women who are in a position to do so to determine and invoke strategies that serve to split "woman" into the many parts that this label is claimed by. In this manner, she hopes that women may empower themselves as those who name, not only those who are named.[65] Spivak has faith that women may be able to allow for the multiple strategies, which may indeed remain contradictory to each other, but which are necessary at different points in their lives as women. She hopes that "Woman" may be not so much liberated but, rather, brought into serious question as a category of knowledge. Thus, women of the First World may gain the ears and eyes to hear and see gendered persons of the "Third World" and perceive what "Woman" can and does mean in that and those contexts.

This does not mean, however, that Spivak believes the interests and politics of women around the globe can ever be reconciled and established as a "fixed" multiplicity either. Recognizing difference and heterogeneity does not give one license to invoke plans of liberal pluralism in any event. Even mediations based on differences are mediated by specific, although possibly multiple, interests, so that there is still that which is not captured in the representation.[66]

Spivak claims that it is the point at which one's political position lags behind itself, the point at which its mobilizing cry is proven inadequate for its own

interests, that politics as activism becomes crucial.[67] She sees the conditions of difference and the production of differentials, in this sense, as offering one ground of persistence, not a final ground from which to stand. The emancipation for women, as feminists, in Spivak's analysis, involves a constant opening of political ground and the possibility of naming. It involves an ever present willingness and necessity to learn and be claimed by the difference in and around others. For Spivak it involves the practical awareness that ground and naming is always possible.

Along different lines, Spivak characterizes political activism as an ongoing maintenance, not unlike cleaning one's teeth or cleaning one's house.[68] She states that in performing these daily domestic functions one may not realize that one is engaging in a "...persistent but always-already-doomed critique of mortality."[69] Yet, Spivak observes, one continues to perform the function with faith. It is a doomed practice, but one could say that it is what allows us to live well. Similarly, Spivak argues that politics may never be able to solve social problems as such. Still, in so far as activism can operate at the level of an ongoing project, she maintains, politics can serve to articulate and introduce the possibility of a better world and social relations as such things are required by a continually changing and re-modeled world.

Ultimately, Spivak's message with respect to an activist politics is that, given the impossibility of interpretation, political intervention must be understood in terms of negotiation,[70] or, as she has stated elsewhere, "...a sort of deconstructive homeopathy, a deconstructing of identity by identities."[71] By this she means that political intervention must always entail a shift in the site that one is obligated to express, given one's place within the trace-structures one is caught in.[72] This, as it has been indicated above, may be as simple a practice as implicating additional content in one's essentialized position. It is, however, always an engagement with the impossible play that brings meaning to one's position as such. And, it is something, therefore, that occurs in any movement whatsoever, consciously or unconsciously.

Moreover, politics is a matter of negotiation for Spivak. A grounded position never stands autonomously in the face of its opponents. One's politics, she insists, is always already also a product of one's opponent, in that one shares the same or similar symbolic foundations. For instance, Spivak writes:

> Feminism within the social relations and institutions of the metropolis has something like a relationship with the fight for individualism in the upwardly class-mobile bourgeois cultural politics of the European nineteenth century. Thus, even as we feminist critics discover the troping error of the masculist truth-claim to universality or academic objectivity, we perform the lie of constituting a truth of global

> sisterhood where the mesmerizing model remains male and female sparring partners of generalizable or universalizable sexuality who are the chief protagonists in that European contest. In order to claim sexual difference where it makes a difference, global sisterhood must receive this articulation even if the sisters in question are Asian, African, Arab.[73]

"Global sisterhood," like "worker," "woman," or "child," is a name that must be put forth in order to accomplish specific tasks, according to Spivak. It is a moment in the given sign-systems that may allow provisional success.[74] Once the effectiveness of "global sisterhood" is thrown into crisis and the differences of the Asian, African, and Arabian "sisters" interrupt the given logic, further negotiations must take place. Negotiation is therefore another term in Spivak's vocabulary for crisis management.[75] She views all names and positioning, insofar as she views these things as negotiations of the true and the real,[76] as attempts to stave off their respective ever- and already doomed existences.

Spivak remains firm in her assertion that one can only begin to intervene and engage in activism from where one is.[77] Certainly, by her own considerations of interpretation and the play of identities, she agrees that one does and must inhabit a multitude of subject-positions and names. But, she adds, one can only engage in a politics of multiplicity in the terms in which one is indeed multiple.[78]

Spivak realizes that she herself cannot speak of

feminism in general.[79] In keeping with that realization, she recognizes her positionality to be that of a North American academic feminist, in part to constrain her claims to feminism as narrowly as possible.[80] This is probably an unfair representation, in that her own Bengali background and position as a "foreigner" within the United States speaks of a great deal more in itself. Still, by locating herself simply as an academic feminist Spivak makes a fairly strategic statement. Her contact with others with respect to feminism is mostly on an academic or intellectual level (despite her involvement with "other" women at other sites) and mostly in the form of academic texts. These are the sites in which many in the industries of disciplinary and cultural production know her best.

In addition, Spivak admits that her own problems with respect to feminist debates are of little importance to most women around the world.[81] But, this fact does not cause her to lose faith in her practice. She is, instead, bolstered by the belief that it is possible for many feminists to move from the position or positions they inhabit. But this, she declares, must take commitment to the endangerment of their selves and commitment to learn how to be taught.

Notes From Chapter Two:

[1]Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Practical Politics of the Open End," in Spivak, The Post-colonial Critic, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 104.

[2]Spivak, "In a Word. Interview," differences, 1:2, Summer 1989, 134.

[3]Spivak, "Feminism and deconstruction, again: negotiating with unacknowledged masculism," in Teresa Brennan ed., Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 214.

[4]Ibid., 206.

[5]Spivak, "Imperialism and Sexual Difference," Oxford Literary Review, 8:1-2, 1986, 229.

[6]By this I mean feminist stances that tend to either lay claim to an essential difference between men and women (be that a biological difference or other) or develop a politics that aims to combat the sort of strict and universalized divisions made between men and women, claiming that such essentialized interpretations of gender only legitimizes or paves the path to discrimination against women.

It is in this discussion of essentialism that Spivak is most heavily influenced by the writings of Luce Irigaray. See: Irigaray, Speculum of the Other Woman, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985); and Irigaray, This Sex Which is Not One, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca New York: Cornell University Press, 1985).

[7]Spivak, "Interview," 142.

[8]Spivak, "Practical Politics," 109.

[9]Spivak, "Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution," The Post-colonial Critic, 11.

[10]Spivak, "Imperialism and Sexual Difference," 229.

[11]Spivak, "Strategy, Identity, Writing," The Post-colonial Critic, 46.

[12]Spivak, "The Intervention Interview," The Post-colonial Critic, 124.

[13]Spivak, "A response to 'The difference within:

Feminism and critical theory," in Elizabeth Meese and Alice Parker, eds., The Difference Within: Feminism and Critical Theory (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1989), 211.

[14]Spivak, "Interview," 149.

[15]Ibid., 143.

[16]Spivak, "Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution," 11.

[17]Spivak, "The New Historicism: Political Commitment and the Postmodern Critic," The Post-colonial Critic, 146.

[18]Spivak, "Intervention," 117.

[19]Spivak, "Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution," 12.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Spivak, "An Interview with Gayatri Spivak," Women and Performance, 5:1, 1990, 87.

[23]Spivak, "Interview," 145.

[24]Ibid., 127.

[25]Spivak engages with this theme herself. Further in this chapter I will discuss this theme with respect to her analysis of symmetry in sexuality and the displacement of the clitoris.

[26]Spivak, "Explanation and Culture: Marginalia," In Other Worlds, 116.

[27]Spivak, "Interview," 143.

[28]Spivak, "Naming Gayatri Spivak," Stanford Humanities Review, 1:1, Spring 1989, 85-86.

[29]Ibid., 86.

[30]Spivak, "Explanation and Culture," 107.

[31]Spivak, "Poststructuralism, marginality, Post-coloniality and Value," in Peter Collier and Helga Geyer-Ryan, eds., Literary Theory Today (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), 221.

[32]Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," In Other Worlds, 198. HM101 S773

[33]Ibid., 197.

[34]Spivak, "Negotiating the Structures," 139.

[35]Spivak, "Feminism and Critical Theory," In Other Worlds, 81.

[36]Spivak, "Negotiating the Structures," 139.

[37]See: Mahasweta Devi, "Draupadi," Spivak, In Other Worlds, 179-196; and "Breast Giver," In Other Worlds, 222-240; Spivak, "A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: A Woman's Text from the Third World," In Other Worlds, 241-268; "An Interview With Gayatri Spivak," 80-92, and "Woman in Difference: Mahasweta Devi's 'Douloti the Bountiful'," Cultural Critique, 14, Winter 1989-1990, 105-128.

[38]By "subaltern" Spivak is indicating those persons who have no representable identity as such, those oppressed masses who play no meaningful roles in social and political discourse as differentiated individuals. "Gendered subaltern", here, is a reference to subaltern women who are doubly displaced by the effects of sexism. The significance of subalterneity will be addressed in greater depth in the following chapter.

[39]Spivak, "Practical Politics," 110.

[40]Spivak, "An Interview With Gayatri Spivak," 89.

[41]Ibid., 83.

[42]Spivak, "A Literary Representation," 249-252.

[43]See: Spivak, "A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: A Woman's Text from the Third World," 241-268 and "Woman in Difference: Mahasweta Devi's 'Douloti the Bountiful'," 105-128.

[44]Spivak, "An Interview With Gayatri Spivak," 83.

[45]Spivak, "Unmaking and Making in To the Lighthouse," In Other Worlds (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), 30-45.

[46]Ibid., 45.

[47]Spivak, "French Feminism in an International Frame,"

In Other Worlds, 134-153.

[48]Spivak, "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman," in Mark Krupnick, ed., Displacement, Derrida and After (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 169-195.

[49]Spivak is speaking directly of such feminists as Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Hélène Cixous.

[50]Spivak, "Displacement and the Discourse," 185-186.

[51]Spivak, "French Feminism," 151.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Ibid.

[54]Ibid., 152-153.

[55]Spivak, "Questions of Multi-culturalism," Post-colonial Critic, 59.

[56]Spivak, "The Problem of Cultural Self-representation," The Post-colonial Critic, 56.

[57]This point is made most eloquently by Spivak via a specific Shakespearean passage. See: Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," Critical Inquiry, 12, Autumn 1985, 245.

[58]Spivak, "Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution," 9.

[59]Spivak, "Questions of Multi-culturalism," 62.

[60]Ibid., 62-63.

[61]Spivak, "Intervention," 121.

[62]Spivak, "French Feminism," 136.

[63]Spivak, "The Problem of Cultural Self-representation," 57.

[64]Spivak, "Interview with Radical Philosophy," The Post-colonial Critic, 136.

[65]Spivak, "Feminism and deconstruction, again," 220.

[66]Spivak, "Rhetoric and Cultural Explanation: A Discussion with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak," Journal of

Advanced Composition, 10:2, Fall 1990, 297.

[67]Spivak, "Intervention," 125.

[68]Spivak, "Practical Politics of the Open End," 105.

[69]Spivak, "Naming Gayatri Spivak," 88.

[70]Spivak, "The Post-colonial Critic," The Post-colonial Critic, 72.

[71]Spivak, "Interview," 130.

[72]Spivak, "The Post-colonial Critic," 72.

[73]Spivak, "Imperialism and Sexual Difference," 226.

[74]Spivak, "Negotiating the Structures," 148.

[75]Spivak, "Practical Politics of the Open End," 101.

[76]Spivak, "Negotiating the Structures," 148.

[77]Spivak, "Strategy, Identity, Writing," 44.

[78]Spivak, "Interview," 147-148.

[79]Spivak, "Feminism and Critical Theory," 77.

[80]Spivak, "The Post-colonial Critic," 68.

[81]Spivak, "Strategy, Identity, Writing," 43.

Chapter Three

Reading "Can the Subaltern Speak?"[1]

Spivak's strategies of catachresis are successful to the extent that they remain theoretically consistent with her remarks surrounding the politics of interpretation and the relations between what she refers to as timing and Time. Yet, the true success of her texts, as implied by the inherent rationale in her strategic posture, remains contingent upon the extent to which her texts are actually able to provoke the sort of crisis that she designs within them. Spivak's political success as a writer relies on the extent to which she is capable to animate her readers to show interest in learning from others and those who oppose them, which must also include a willingness to reveal the vulnerabilities of their own respective works and positions. Her success also depends upon the extent to which languages and bilateral communication, fleeting as they may be, are constructed by and between privileged and non-privileged

feminists, for example, as they confront each other's political differences and differentiations. In short, the success of Spivak's writings as political acts must be judged with regard to the extent to which they serve to goad others to move beyond the threats that she poses to their respective works, to excite the re-negotiation of specific "realities" (such as, in her case, Woman and the postcolonial condition), and to proliferate an awareness of the economics of signs in general.

In this sense, then, it is difficult to see how Spivak moves beyond the purity of theory herself. For all her declarations against the reliance on theory as a steadfast ground, Spivak's positing of the necessity of strategy, the unavoidable styling of one's position(s), can easily be read as a theoretical ground itself. Certainly, her texts, if taken as seriously as they demand to be, make it far more difficult for her colleagues to speak of particular themes and subject-positions in familiar terms. Spivak works towards making certain cultural objects more complex than they are already taken. With the help of examples in feminism and colonialism, she demonstrates the sophistication required in order to attempt to tend adequately to cultural phenomena. Yet the question remains whether Spivak has offered her readers anything more than a theoretical re-negotiation of method in academic practice. Does she merely allow intellectuals the rationale by which

they may "feel better" (i.e. more "practical" or "active") in the face of the world(s) they discuss? Does Spivak, in the end, simply think through the politics of theory for Theory's sake?

In response to this sort of inquiry, although she remains interested in what others might have to say about her work, Spivak doubts that her own writings have much political effect.[2] She also fears that her own callings for strategic essentialism have been used as permission by those who wish to theorize essentialism outright and disregard what Spivak views as the extreme danger unleashed in the self-conscious styling of essences. She is well aware of the ways in which her analyses can be taken as potent apologies for self-interested intellectual agendas.[3] Spivak is, therefore, not oblivious to the potential grounding that her texts may avail her readers. One can assume that she is acutely cognizant of the fact that her texts, as she suggests is the case with any text, are always susceptible to such framing.

Yet I wish to argue that a thorough consideration of Spivak's texts will show that they do not merely aim at, and succeed in, turning theory and interpretation into impossible exercizes. Her texts do not simply disclose the impossibility in theory and interpretation. Rather, they, arguably, disclose and incite impossibility within the theorist and interpreter. Her texts force points of

self-critique and demand specific moments of negotiation in the practice of reading.

Spivak sells the political impact of her texts too short. There is an engaging politics in her texts that potentially forces a set of re-negotiations within her reader, as an active subject, in such a manner that the economy of reader/writer and written/read is thoroughly broached. The reader of Spivak's texts, at least at specific moments, is forced into a practical confrontation with her or himself. Spivak's reader is drawn into a re-construction of her or his own productive political practices of interpretation and analysis. Hence her texts are positioned to rupture the very disciplinary practices that, as she views them, serve to organize the conditions of political activities themselves.

To fully outline how this practice occurs in the writing and reading of Spivak's texts, given the complexity of her writings and the multi-faceted character of her strategies, one must offer an extremely broad and intricate explication of the majority of her essays and articles with respect to the plethora of debates she engages therein. It would demand a project that must go far deeper and beyond the confines of this preliminary glance into Spivak's works.[4] It is, however, valuable at least to look briefly at some of the basic moves that Spivak makes in her long and notorious essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" It is in that

essay, which is arguably both her most important and most difficult text, that her politics of disclosing and enacting a rupture between theory and practice emerges in its most accomplished form.

There is something extremely frustrating in reading Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" She ends with the declaration that "The subaltern cannot speak."[5] She announces that these people have no voices and cannot be heard. Yet it is not exactly clear to the reader who the subaltern people are. Spivak writes of the subaltern as those oppressed people in the world who have no particularly relevant identities. It is a collection of persons who gain identity only through their differences, she tells her reader.[6] This is, supposedly, a "group" of people who constitute a collective only through the fact of their mutual lack of identifiable alliances. Yet Spivak makes a blanket statement to represent them all, closing their voices as if they were one.

It is, perhaps, a seemingly arrogant position that Spivak takes in this essay. She is harshly critical of writers like Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze who, at points, aim to determine ways in which the oppressed may speak. All the while, she takes only a minute part of Foucault's and Deleuze's writings into consideration. At the same time, she privileges the thought of both Karl Marx

and Jacques Derrida, based on the same selective means of representing their respective works. Spivak discusses the plight of women in the Hindu practice of widow-sacrifice, <u>sati</u>, with a disturbingly academic tone and a refusal to condemn the practice entirely. She condemns the oppressed peoples of the world to a sealed-off realm of obscurity without even giving these subaltern figures the opportunity to answer the question for themselves. Spivak does all of these things in a text that is not by any means inviting. It is a stingy text, offered to the reader in an incoherent and obscure manner.

However, the anger that a reader of "Can the Subaltern Speak?" may feel would be unjustifiable if it were directed at Spivak alone. To vent one's indignation at her would be to completely dismiss and overlook the practical tactics of Spivak's work here. She tries to incite this anger in the reader quite deliberately. She does not want to allow any easy reading of her essay. As with most of her writings, Spivak does not want to allow the reader the ability to easily constitute her or his own position in regards to it. She wants to make the reader join her in her work.

In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak forces her reader to take the question of the existence of the silent, oppressed, impoverished, marginalized, and dis-empowered population of the world, whoever they may be, more seriously than she or he has ever likely done before. Above all, she

challenges her reader to attempt to reconstruct the fragmented problems that Spivak poses. She dares the reader to prop-up or criticize the theorists that she discusses in her essay in a more "substantial" and "accurate" manner. She asks the reader to search for ground upon which she or he may firmly condemn the burning of widows. And she challenges the reader to listen to the voice(s) of the subaltern. Spivak calls upon the reader to construct a position on the subaltern without simply adopting a position.

The point of Spivak's essay is to demonstrate that such a reconstruction of the fragments of her own discussion is impossible. She successfully demonstrates that a position on the subaltern is necessarily fragmented in itself, that it appears to be whole only through a wiping away of the significance of the problem. Spivak shows that the title of her essay is an impossible question, by bearing out the fact that the subaltern are subaltern by the very fact that they cannot speak.[7] Thus, I argue that Spivak, ideally, hopes that the anger that the reader of her essay may feel will become self-directed. Spivak wants the reader to become anxious about her or his own position and own identity, for it is within the identity and position of the reader that questions of the subaltern question reside.

As noted above, in discussing the subaltern Spivak is

writing about the faceless masses. (Spivak has borrowed the term "subaltern" from Antonio Gramsci, who, under the duress of censorship, used "subaltern" to re-name the proletarian. She likes the term because it can be used without reference to a politico-theoretical system of thought.)[8] She refers to people who, because of such things as their nationality, race, gender, and occupation, have no means by which to articulate themselves politically or, at least, cannot be heard. They are people who resist description by the fact that they have not been "players" in the story of politics and culture. As she puts it: "...they're non-narrativisable."[9] They are "meaningless."

But, of course, the problem is that the unimaginable oppressed do exist. They may be "meaningless," but they are certainly not irrelevant. They live in Mexico City, in Calcutta, in Bangledesh, in Guatemala, in Sudan, in Sri Lanka, in Indonesia, South Africa--the list goes on and on. A huge portion of the world's population is in fact subaltern, as Spivak describes these people. The plight of these peoples is completely intertwined in the efforts, interests, actions, and words of those people who do fit into the signs of political analysis. The wars, political battles, economic growth, trade agreements, and pursuits of the political "world" have direct influence on the lives of the subaltern and depend on the subaltern for much of the labour and consumption power. Also, the subaltern remain a

problem by the fact that they require feeding, clothing, and shelter.

The fact that the subaltern are silent and faceless is thus a problem for persons on both sides of the equation. For some people the subaltern must be politically dealt with. For others the subaltern must be dealt into politics. Depending on one's level of compassion or interest in the subaltern, be one subaltern or not, one will be faced with a selection of debates. The debates may range from proposals to eliminate the subaltern as obstacles to "greater" societal interests to proposals aimed at emancipating the oppressed from the silent sites of marginalia and welcome them into the family folds of a Humanity. No matter what the goals may be and no matter whose goals they belong to, though, the problem of the subaltern amounts to making these persons meaningful and locatable, be it on their own terms or through the agency of others.

Much of the concern that Spivak addresses in her essay revolves around the difficulty in symbolizing the subaltern as persons. Making the subaltern true players in political narratives means that they be allowed the privilege of participating directly in a sign-system--as those who name and are not simply named, one way or another.

This is not merely a matter of representing the subaltern. By virtue of being "subaltern," these people are

already represented in politics. They are already embraced by sign-systems. The problem is just that the representation of these people is not fully adequate for almost everyone involved. The term "subaltern," by definition, lags behind the persons it denotes. Thus, the matter appears to become one of appropriate representation and how they might represent themselves.

Here, again, Spivak demonstrates that the "presence" of a thing is still and always contingent on conditions of framing, though. To illustrate this point, she draws attention to the way in which Marx, in a passage in his _The Eighteenth Brumaire_, makes what she views as an important distinction between representation as portrait, _darstellen_, and representation as substitution, _vertreten_.[10] Spivak warns that to confuse the two in the case of the subaltern, for example, may lead to the unfortunate assumption that in presenting a portrait of themselves the subaltern are actually showing themselves as themselves.[11] She cautions that broad statements about the subaltern cannot be viewed, in any way, as proximate to any subaltern person. It is, instead, always a reading of "subalternaity." Moreover, Spivak notes that _vertreten_, even as it serves as a proxy, necessarily slips into the form of _darstellen_. For, any representation, as noted in Chapter One, is always only a particular reading and fashioning of that which it depicts.[12] It is still a picture of sorts.

For Spivak, then, "Subaltern" is a master-word, full of the catachretical potential as any other identity and, given the breadth of its referent, possibly more so. Like labeling a person a "woman," "feminist," "homosexual," or "immigrant," "subaltern" is not so much a way of representing that person as it is a way of showing how that person represents a general life that no one in particular lives. It is a manner of depicting a person to read in a particular frame of understanding. One is faced, then, with the difficulty of locating the "true" subaltern.

Of course, Spivak is repelled by any move to find the "true" subaltern situation. In this regard, Spivak shows respect and admiration for the theoretical attempts made by Foucault and Deleuze to disclose the masking effects that master words and the grand narratives from which they emerge spread over the production of signs. In considering a specific conversation between the two,[13] she appreciates the ways by which both attempt to de-reify the big pictures in society, such as the law, government, sanity, sexuality, and the proletariat. Spivak acknowledges that Foucault makes progress in showing that such general labels are supported by a much more heterogenous network of activities and identities which cannot be understood through an analysis of such general identities as subaltern.

Yet the fact that Foucault and Deleuze ultimately agree

that, given the appropriate conditions, the oppressed could speak for themselves and name their own situation[14] makes Spivak suspicious of their poststructualist projects in general. She suggests that, although Foucault and Deleuze understand that the master-words in culture rely on a myriad of heterogeneous movements and differences in identity, they can be faulted for not recognizing the fact that this same manner of economy occurs at the specific and local points as well.[15] Spivak claims that Foucault and Deleuze, in their respective benevolence to "liberate" the voices of the oppressed from the narratives that misrepresent their experiences and activities under such terms as subaltern, assume the availability of speaking subjects as moments in a "concrete" social reality.[16] In so doing they effectively assist in colonizing the space of the local with a typically European construction of individual subjectivity that is no less essentialized than the "subaltern."[17] Indeed, she urges, the efforts of Foucault and Deleuze to unleash the conditions by which the oppressed subject may name her or his own situation, and thereby resist the violence of universalizing discourses, is a re-initiation of an abstract identity once again.

Spivak argues that these efforts to criticize and open up subjectivity ultimately suffice to solidify the category of the sovereign subject,[18] that which the subaltern, by definition, cannot fit. She suggests that Foucault and

Deleuze work to construct the empirical ground upon which a positivistic account of subjectivity must take place.[19] In her reading, they posit the fact that there is always an individual at the micrological level of social reality who can speak the truth of her or his own part in the networks of meaning that support the macrological representations that she or he falls victim to. Spivak recounts, for ecample, that Foucault describes the persons who make up the masses as knowing full well who they are.[20] Also, she reminds her reader of Deleuze's observation: "Reality is what actually happens in a factory, in a school, in barracks, in a prison, in a police station."[21] She suggests that they both describe a "level playing field" upon which, presumably, each person lives and might speak against misrepresentation in the same manner.

Unfortunately, Spivak maintains, such a description does not go any further distance to account for those who are not already capable of speaking. By assuming the reality of a potential speaking subject in all oppressed persons she claims that Foucault in particular introduces a very old metaphysics of individuality and, at once, erases the possibility of a subaltern reality where representation is its impossibility. Foucault must assume, along this analysis, that when given the appropriate conditions the oppressed person who does not speak or name her or himself chooses not to do so. The "true" subaltern thus chooses

subalterneity.

Spivak does agree with Foucault insofar as she believes that an alliance of differentiated voices can be an effective and worthwhile project against social tendencies to universalize subject positions. But she warns that this project should not be universalized.[22] In all practical terms, Spivak notes that there are some people who are so shadowed and outside of the logic of political, social, and economic discourses that their respective voices and attempts to resist as individuals will be largely irrelevant outside of such general struggles as workers' class consciousness, international women's movements, and global ecology.

Spivak claims that a truly radical and liberatory practice of dealing with the subaltern will tend to both senses of representation--self-identity and general essentialized identity.[23] Hence, instead of using purely heterogenous local and particular forms of alliances to alter movements of oppression, Spivak would prefer to see Foucault's analysis of resistance utilized with macrological and general manners of resistance as well, where the need for each arises. Thereby, she contends, the radical discontinuities that exist within the full dimensions of the identity and subjectivity of any given subject, subaltern or otherwise, may be negotiated with the proper care required.

It is in the writings of Karl Marx that Spivak finds this kind of attention to the discontinuous needs and requirements of subjects.[24] In one respect she finds Marx more helpful than Foucault and Deleuze, because he allows for an ideological analysis of such things as the movement of capital, which, she claims, is so global now that a micrological analysis is completely inadequate to address it.[25] Further, Spivak enjoys how Marx, as she reads him, offers a much more complex analysis of subject-consciousness than Foucault, opening the different possible dimensions of consciousness for different persons at different moments and places.

Spivak understands Marx to be making a fundamental distinction between class consciousness (what Foucault is irritated by) and the development of class consciousness (a result of particular local concerns).[26] She believes that Marx posits two distinct ways in which persons can become meaningful. Spivak announces that he allows for the identity that the worker develops for her or himself, on the one hand, and the more generalized identity that the worker may come to invoke in certain given circumstances, on the other. She does not see a privileging of either sense in Marx but, rather, an analysis that accommodates the two.

As far as Spivak is concerned, Marx, unlike Foucault, does not limit his understanding of discontinuity in subject development and activity to an attack on misrepresentation.

According to her, Marx seems to understand that universal subject-categories are not simply masks to something more real, but that they are also ways in which people live meaningful lives.[27] The universal categories, in other words, are just as genuinely representations of subaltern lives as self-descriptions may be.

To be sure, Spivak accepts Foucault's own analysis that the arenas of knowledge and understanding are, at least, socially constructed.[28] Thus, she also remains aware that there may easily be those who are not located as typical western subjects, that they are not in a position to lay claims to western subjectivity. She suggests, rather, that the only legitimate position available to the colonized and oppressed persons is often the general essentialistic delineations of identity that Foucault and others view as essentially problematic. It is only through those macrological identities that some persons may be able to establish subjectivity and engage in Foucauldian alliances of heterogeneity.

According to Spivak, Marx understands that such things as international capital and the international division of labour, both concerns in the "subaltern problem," cannot be simply traced back through a network of local capillaries: that the macrological is irreducible to the micrological; and that particularity cannot be adequately represented in the broad painting of life. In this way, Spivak believes

that Marx allows for the differences between people in different places and occupations. This is, of course, important to her in that Spivak wants to make the point herself that there are differences between workers in the West and workers in colonized lands.[29] She wants to make it clear that there is no homogeneous class or group of people on the Earth. Thus, accordingly, one should be careful in making far-reaching statements about a group of people, so as not to deny the differing means by which segments of any group constitute themselves as members of that group.

It would not be at all difficult to demonstrate that, in her discussion of the subaltern and the possibility of "retrieving" subaltern consciousness, Spivak dreadfully misrepresents both Foucault and Marx. She is extremely selective in the readings that she takes from them both. With respect to Foucault, Spivak concentrates most firmly on one very short interchange that he had with Deleuze. Aside from that, she selects a mere handful of sentences from some of his other interviews. With respect to Marx, Spivak draws mostly from The Eighteenth Brumaire, while indicating a few thoughts from Capital and a few other pages from the thousands that he wrote. It would be far from impossible to make arguments from the works of both Foucault and Marx to counter Spivak's readings completely. Clearly, there is other evidence in the corpus of these men's writings that

could be brought to bear.

Foucault alone makes it quite clear in many of his published interviews that what his work is about has nothing to do with the kind of coherent theorizing of subjects that Spivak attributes to him. He makes the comment more than a few times that his project to de-mystify macrological social constructs amounts to more of a "tool-box" of questions and approaches that may or may not be useful to different persons at different times and in different places. He also tries to make it clear that he is not speaking for anyone but himself. He looks forward to what certain persons or groups of persons, such as feminists, may do with his approaches. Foucault often seems more like someone who wishes to learn rather than preach. Even in his own writing Foucault tells us that he has tried his best to simply draw on his own experience--to speak from only his own spaces.[30]

Marx could also be read as a completely universalizing theorist with no regard for individual needs. Entire national movements and states that claim to privilege the collective over the particular have located their theoretical origins in Marx. Spivak's reading, therefore, may simply be cleverly framed to read Marx in the way that she does.

The fact that Spivak has misrepresented Foucault and Marx, though, makes a very striking point in her favour. No doubt, it must be quite obvious to Spivak herself that she

has offered highly controversial and alternative readings of these thinkers. It is really quite comical how she does it. She has made each read like the other. Foucault, given the analysis in Spivak's essay, is now to be read as a methodological theorist of a monolithic Subject, which need only "unite" to break its chains. And Marx has been construed to read like a postmodern theorist of a fragmented capital. In doing so, Spivak has demonstrated that no one reading or story of either thinker need be believed and has opened up the question of how both "Foucault" and "Marx" are and have been used by those who read and invoke them.

By misrepresenting Foucault and Marx, Spivak has exposed sides of each thinker that make it impossible to simply return to conventional readings of their respective texts. She has enacted a catachresis of the two in conjunction with each other. Spivak has demonstrated that, no matter how one reads Foucault and Marx, there are also sides that do not fit into conventional readings. She challenges the reader of either one of these writers to either re-frame her or his readings or somehow justify dismissing aspects of the author's writings that appear to the given reader as simple aberrations.

Spivak has supported the argument that any reading of a thinker is necessarily a misrepresentation. She has demonstrated that one cannot simply rely on such a theorist for support. The theorist, herself or himself equally

requires the support of the reader.

Hence, Spivak calls for the reader to re-assess why she or he may take one route of analysis or another with respect to the subaltern question. She charges the reader to ask what gives her or him the right to speak of the subaltern in such a way and to privilege one reading over another. Even more so, Spivak demonstrates that there is no necessary reason or cause to believe her own words either. Why accept this distinction between two senses of representation that she accepts in her essay? Why only two? She challenges the reader not just to swallow this intriguing analysis. Spivak cannot speak for all of us either. She cannot speak for all of the readings that one may make of her. She demands that the reader consider the conditions that allow her or him to read as she or he does. As a result, Spivak seems to be rather Foucauldian.

Reflecting on the problems she finds in Foucault and Deleuze, Spivak portrays Derrida in a predictably favourable light. As noted in the chapters above, she admires Derrida for his practice of remaining outwardly critical of any nostalgia for lost origins, be they theoretical or empirical.[31] She again maintains the point in this essay that deconstruction is not about de-legitimizing the bogus.[32] Rather, she claims, Derrida is interested in tracing the production of essentialized positions. Thus

Derrida proves wonderfully situational for her.

In this case, what Spivak finds so important in Derrida's writing is that he first looks at his own constitution as a western intellectual.[33] One of the charges that she lays against Foucault in her essay is that he appears to ignore his own representative actions in pointing to the oppressed, making himself somehow appear transparent and unproductive to the process.[34] Derrida, on the other hand, clearly begins by recognizing that the theoretical problems he is dealing with are indeed his problems, that his position as a western intellectual shapes the world for him in a particular way.

Through Derrida, Spivak is able to see that the Other of Europe, which could be read as the subaltern on some levels, is a European problem, not a problem in general.[35] This, again, is the whole difficulty of rendering the subaltern meaningful. It is to the Western position(s) that the subaltern does not make sense. It is not that the subaltern does not make sense to her or himself. Thus, what is potentially productive in Derrida's deconstruction is that Western intellectuals may be able to understand how they, as Westerners, are situated with the problem of an Other that cannot be heard, that is "meaningless." The subaltern problem can then be seen as a matter of how Westerners are constituted in their representations, how it is that the ways in which Westerners represent the world to

themselves deny billions of people voices that can be heard.

Again, Spivak wants to make it clear here that free play in working with the politics of the subaltern, and any other politics, is not possible.[36] She accepts the point that one's position must be taken extremely seriously, that one cannot simply choose one's representations. For example, she finds it terribly naive of Foucault to think that he can avoid being a "watershed" intellectual and avoid the fame and legitimacy of his position by simply refusing to take on the trappings and lifestyle of an important celebrity.[37] Spivak's point is that, whether he likes it or not, Foucault's work has been and will continue to be represented, popularly, as the work of a very important person who occupies a very important position in society and the history of thought. In a way, by not accepting the role of "watershed" individual, Foucault leaves the position solidified, because he has not even attempted to tend and negotiate the position in a manner adequate to the dilemma.

In the end, Spivak brings her above considerations and the problems thereby introduced into the representation of the subaltern towards a "concrete" example. She spends much of the last third of her essay discussing the meanings and problems surrounding the Hindu practice of <u>sati</u>. <u>Sati</u>, as Spivak represents it, is the practice by which widows throw themselves upon the burning funereal pyre of their dead

husbands, to be consumed alive in the flames and join their husbands in death.[38] What is so perplexing in sati, as portrayed by Spivak, is the vast array of positions that have developed around it and the various meanings it has taken on.

The image of a woman burning alive for the sake of a dead man who ruled her in life is the ultimate temptation that Spivak dangles in front of the reader. Spivak awaits the reader to declare sati "WRONG!" Sati seems so absolutely wrong. Yet, by taking care to explain and describe the long history and genealogy of sati, Spivak hopes to demonstrate that to declare it "wrong" is also problematic. In the end, Spivak comments that the abolition of sati was an admirable act.[39] However, she refuses to make any pretense of being able to justify such a claim by any means at all.

Spivak's basic point in discussing sati is to show that its origins, like the origins of any cultural activity, are irrecoverable. She claims that the facts of sati are irreducibly heterogeneous.[40] As she points out, much of the modern evidence surrounding sati comes from the pens of British colonials, through which the practice of sati was at times romanticized, at times viewed as a primitive act to be revered in its purity, at times condemned as a hideous act that heathen men perpetrated against heathen women, and at times viewed as the willful choice of Hindu women.[41] Spivak

also notes that _sati_ has had different levels of social significance over its history. She points to the interesting shift that it made from a private to a public affair alongside the shift from a British commercial colonial presence in India to a British territorial colonial presence.[42] Further, Spivak recalls how, if one is to investigate Hindu religion and mythology, one can discover justifications for and explanations of _sati_ ranging from misogyny, to hereditary battles, to the protection of feminist pursuits.[43] Finally, she finds the matter of _sati_ to be engulfed in the institution of Hindu law, which itself has become engulfed in British re-codifications as well.[44]

According to Spivak, there is no traceable itinerary in _sati_ from which to build a solid case for or against it.[45] She demonstrates that it is irretrievably over-determined to the extent that it is altogether ambiguous. How is one to say that _sati_ is wrong when _sati_ is impossible to identify? Any position that one takes for or against it will be in one way or another an intervention of sorts--essentializing it in one's own terms. Thus, the subaltern women who are burned in _sati_ remain unrepresentable in any immediate accuracy.

Spivak shows that "the burning of women" and _sati_ are two different things. The burning of women is, of course, a horrible thing. However, that does not mean that one can condemn _sati_ in necessarily the same manner. _Sati_ is a

completely different set of representations from the burning of women. One cannot reduce one to the other, even if one feels the same way about each. If one does condemn _sati_ as the burning of women then, although the condemnation may be "admirable," as Spivak puts it, one has still intervened and done violence to _sati_ as well. There is no way to be pure and correct in the matter. One's actions will never be able to stand on their own. There will always be a disputable factor.

Clearly, in this way, Spivak hopes to demonstrate the inescapability of negotiation and the inevitability of interruption. It is because of this understanding of the politics of negotiation and interruption that Spivak makes a telling joke at the very opening of her essay about her invocation of positionality. First, she attempts to explain, in immediate terms, the terrain that she comes from in writing "Can the Subaltern Speak?":

> The original title of the paper was "Power, Desire, Interest." Indeed, whatever power these meditations command may have been earned by a politically interested refusal to push to the limit the founding presuppositions of my desires, as far as they are within my grasp. This vulgar three-stroke formula, applied both to the most resolutely committed and to the most ironic discourse, keeps track of what Althusser so aptly named "philosophies of denegation."[46]

Second, in the same move, she draws attention to her "cumbersome" manner of doing so. She notes that she is also well aware that any declaration of biases or perspectives is

never quite truthful either:

> I have invoked my positionality in this awkward way so as to accentuate the fact that calling the place of the investigator into question remains a meaningless piety in many recent critiques of the sovereign subject. Thus, although I will attempt to foreground the precariousness of my position throughout, I know such gestures can never suffice.[47]

Spivak realizes, here, that she cannot disclose a locatable position that does not slip off along the edges to other effects. Crisis, here too, is thoroughly unavoidable.

It appears as though inciting crisis is almost Spivak's sole purpose in writing "Can the Subaltern Speak?" The focus of her essay is not on the political abilities and capacities of the oppressed peoples of the world. Spivak focuses on the ways in which the readers of her essay, who are most likely to be Western intellectuals, attempt to deal with the problem of the subaltern as it occurs as their problem.

Spivak has completely switched the "normal" positions of Self and Other in her essay. Although Spivak claims that the subaltern are collections of irrecoverably heterogeneous people, definable in their very difference from any logic, she universalizes and solidifies the subaltern throughout her essay. Her discussion is about The subaltern, a singular ontological mass that can be spoken of in a completely general fashion. On the other hand, although Spivak points to western intellectuals in her essay as being

persons who submit to universalizing logic and universal subject positions, she has gone to great pains in her essay to fragment the reader. She makes it impossible for the reader to put together a coherent position in regards to her writing. Put differently, Spivak presents the subaltern as uni-vocal and uni-representational, while rendering the reader multi-vocal and irreducible.

With her re-reading of Foucault and Marx and her example of sati alone, Spivak demands that the reader consider a series of questions and positions that are not necessarily part of the same narrative or train of thought. She does not allow the reader any one way of approaching her essay but requires the reader to establish several approaches at the same time. She has fully interrupted the reader's capacity to make sense of the subaltern. Yet she has also made the "Other" in this case the only "sensible" moment in her analysis.

In doing so, Spivak has constructed her Western intellectual reader into the object of investigation. At the same time, Spivak has made the subaltern into the Subject, waiting for Its moment to speak. The reader is, thus, sent sliding off to the position/site of the subaltern. The subaltern is the only term in which any solidarity can be found in the analysis. However, once the reader discovers that the solid term that has been used to prop-up herself or himself as the investigating subject is

irrecoverable and irreducible and over-determined to the point of having no knowable origins--<u>that it cannot speak</u>--no position of negotiation is left available for the reader to adopt. The subject/object dichotomy that Spivak has feigned collapses into full crisis. The reader, then, must acknowledge that she or he has traveled to a site that is part of her or his own logic, that it is occupied by the reader's own representation and investment of Self. As readers, we must admit that the subaltern is ourselves.

Spivak, then, proves the subaltern to be a theoretical supposition, meant to negotiate her readers' own tenuous Western identities and positions. Indeed, Spivak foreshadows this conclusion in her first statement in her essay. She writes:

> This paper will move, by a necessarily circuitous route, from a critique of current Western efforts to problematize the subject to the question of how the third world subject is represented within Western discourse.[48]

She tells us that the problem of the Western self leads directly back to a consideration of her or his other. Spivak, also, claims that confronting the problem of the subaltern will not be to learn to represent them but will necessarily lead to the problem of representing ourselves.[49] For Spivak it could not be otherwise. In her opinion, we can only maintain our positions as rational speaking subjects for as long as the interruptions of differences that the "meaningless" persons live. The contradictions to

our Western ways of life that are experienced by others, are maintained in such forms as the subaltern--separate from our own "world" and only locatable in our own logic.

By strategically tracing this process in the way that she does, Spivak lays this responsibility of determining subaltern reality squarely in her readers' laps. She problematizes the solution to identity that the subaltern-type question has traditionally offered. More importantly, though, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" entices its reader into positions in which she or he may be claimed, by other readings of the reality she or he studies. Spivak obliges her readers to give themselves over to specific forms of negotiation by constructing a crisis in the very reading of her text.

Through the catachreses and structure of her essay, Spivak draws her readers into revealing vulnerable points in their respective subject-positions, wherein the re-writing of those positions and the identities that they give rise to becomes forced and critical. The results of such crises are not by any means certain. One can imagine, however, that Spivak hopes that her readers will no longer be capable of interpreting, and speaking about, the "subaltern," particularly the "gendered subaltern," with the ease that such a label affords one. No doubt, she hopes that her readers will require new and different languages with which

to determine reality, languages that must come from "somewhere else." In any event, Spivak's readers will, conceivably, be changed with respect to writing and reading the world they aspire to know. These Western intellectuals, who continue, in Spivak's eyes, to serve the violence of colonial efforts to assimilate the World into a singular commerce of the true and the real, may see this practice in their own theories and learn of the worlds they have yet to speak and which they cannot speak as the "intellectuals" that they are.

Notes From Chapter Three:

[1]Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-313.

[2]Spivak, "The Post-colonial Critic," in Spivak, The Post-colonial Critic, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 71.

[3]Spivak, "In a Word. Interview," differences, 1:2, Summer 1989, 128-130.

[4]The complexity of dealing with the sort of political and practical dimension to Spivak's texts that I am indicating here cannot be emphasized enough. To fully "unearth" the strategies that Spivak develops throughout her writings and the practical effectiveness that they may and do have requires a sustained reading of literarly dozens of performative moves at the same time. The styling of her texts involves a reliance on her readers knowledge of a great deal of critical literature, not the least of which involve the writings of Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche. Even my own study of "Can the Subaltern Speak?" here is necessarily limited, by the fact that it is situated in the midst of an entire series of debates that cannot all be fleshed out in the space with which I am working.

[5]Spivak, "Subaltern," 308.

[6]Ibid, 285.

[7]Spivak, "The New Historicism: Political Commitment and the Postmodern Critic," The Post-colonial Critic, 158.

[8]Spivak, "Negotiating the Structures of Violence," The Post-colonial Critic, 141.

[9]Ibid., 144.

[10]Spivak, "Subaltern," 275-276.

[11]Ibid., 276.

[12]Ibid., 277.

[13]Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, "Intellectuals and Power," in Michel Foucault, Language, Counter-memory, Practice, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, New York: Cornell

University Press, 1977), 205-217.

[14]Spivak, "Subaltern," 283.

[15]*Ibid*., 279.

[16]*Ibid*., 274-275.

[17]*Ibid*., 292.

[18]*Ibid*., 271-272.

[19]*Ibid*., 275.

[20]*Ibid*., 274.

[21]*Ibid*., 274-275.

[22]*Ibid*., 289-290.

[23]*Ibid*., 279.

[24]*Ibid*., 278.

[25]*Ibid*., 279.

[26]*Ibid*., 277.

[27]*Ibid*., 276.

[28]*Ibid*., 285.

[29]*Ibid*., 288.

[30]See, for example: Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980); and *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, ed., Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Alan Sheridan et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 1988).

[31]Spivak, "Subaltern," 291.

[32]*Ibid*., 292.

[33]Spivak, "Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution," *The Post-colonial Critic*, 6.

[34]Spivak, "Subaltern," 280.

[35]*Ibid*., 293.

[36]Spivak, "Strategy, Identity, Writing," *The Post-colonial Critic*, 46.

[37]Spivak, "Criticism," 4.

[38]Spivak, "Subaltern," 297.

[39]*Ibid.*, 299.

[40]*Ibid.*, 297.

[41]*Ibid.*, 296-301.

[42]*Ibid.*, 298.

[43]*Ibid.*, 299-303.

[44]*Ibid.*, 304-307.

[45]*Ibid.*, 302.

[46]*Ibid.*, 271.

[47]*Ibid.*

[48]*Ibid.*

[49]*Ibid.*, 288-289.

Chapter Four

A Politics of Delirium

In her support of a nominalist reading of truth --bringing the role of language to bear on the political and the real--Spivak's texts unleash a level of danger. The readers of her texts are both armed and faced with a whole series of unending and, ultimately, unanswerable questions regarding the readers' engagement in political action, the possibility of such action, and the very nature of the political itself. Spivak's readers are shown how one may enact and trip radical shifts in culture and history, the points at which much political mobilization hinges. However, they are also confronted with uncontrollable conversions in their own critical practices and confronted with an instability in themselves as "selves" in their respective political acts.

In impressing her readers with an economic understanding of the composition of meaning and identity,

Spivak draws her readers into a realm in which such binary distinctions that have, at times, been comfortably made between reader and written, reader and writer, subject and object, self and other, and investigator and investigated are made impossible and uncomfortable. Her texts disallow any easy statements about such relations. They attempt to demonstrate that lines drawn between these phenomena are unnecessary and forever problematic. Spivak does not deny that such oppositions exist and are productive as such. However, her texts go far to persuade her readers that there is an inherent and unavoidable complexity in such relationships of difference and the politics that rely on and assume them. And, in so far as Spivak's readers are indeed persuaded by this view, they must address themselves to an internal investigation of this complexity in their respective selves and practices.

Spivak's analyses serve to show that any distinctions that are made between investigator and investigated, for example, are both there and not there. The distinction between these two things, in other words, may certainly be negotiated as such. However, the difference upon which this dichotomy rests is by no means an economic requirement. The cultural negotiations which allow for such a dichotomy to persist are not necessarily negotiated in the interests of all subjects nor in ways which are meaningful for all as subjects. Spivak's texts also show that a given negotiation

is not immune to its own contradiction. She demonstrates that the structure of meaning which may result from a given negotiation is also always susceptible to interruptions in the very terms of that structure. Hence this difference is also not negotiated as such. And, the negotiation of this difference is productive of other things as well.

More dangerous yet, in considering the political force and effect of Spivak's texts, it is difficult and impossible to determine whether this intervening role that her writings play in her readers' respective political engagements is that of disclosure or construction. On the terms Spivak advocates, one is left wondering whether the practice of these texts is to reveal an economic play and an impossibility which have always been there or whether it is to produce and draw her readers into this economy by the naming of it. In her investigation of the conditions of meaning and identity and the possibility of political activity, Spivak must recognize, as she does, that she engages in a productive enterprise of naming--of legislating timing into (a very peculiar) Time. One might suggest, then, that to "reveal" a symbolic economy, in this sense, is itself really to frame meaning in a particular and styled manner. Yet, does Spivak necessarily construct something if she merely names that which has always been possible and susceptible to naming? Can the intervention of Spivak's texts be reduced to her own act of writing?

The reader may, of course, decide that Spivak's texts both reveal and construct the politics that she draws her readers into. One might propose that the writing and reading of these texts both effect processes of timing as much as they are subject to negotiations of Time. Put more simply, one might submit that the role that her texts play is as much a movement of tracing meaning as it is a movement of structuring traces of differences. Similarly, in the end, one might decide that there is merely an essential ambiguity between investigator and investigated, that they continually contribute to the "natural" character of each other.

Yet what could that mean? And how could such doubled assertions help one to understand what this politics is? These questions must also go on forever. The critical strength that Spivak draws attention to is not so potent that it may stop this continual deferral of inquiries. These queries, instead, force the importance and substance of these uncertainties back to the reader/investigator all the more. The politics that are maintained in Spivak's texts are still unaccounted for and left lurking in the shadows.

With this accelerating flow of uncertainty, Spivak plays with the physical distance that one generally presumes between meaningful phenomena as a way to discuss such things

as reader and writer, investigator and investigated, or "East" and "West" as different from each other. Spivak's texts are dangerous in that she negotiates this differentiating proximity in such a manner that it can no longer serve as a positive point of reference from which to derive meaning and understanding. Spivak's critical inquiry works to show that questions of space--the geographical location of phenomena and the ground on which a politics stands--are merely ways in which relations of meaning can be articulated. But the articulation of space in a politics is, according to Spivak, never exclusive as such. The geography of a politics, the distance between respective terms, is by no means ever firm for her. In fact, as should be clear from the previous chapters, Spivak upholds the opinion that the differentiating spatial relations in any politics is always vulnerable to collapse, that there is never a fully successful explanation of spatial relations in any politics. There is always the possibility of a different location and ground in a given politics, such as in the over-determined case of *sati*. Spivak affirms that the difference that is negotiated in terms of space is descriptive of particular readings but never indicative of a mappable reality *per se*.

Hence, the reader who simply claims that Spivak's texts announce an ambiguity between terms and in Spivak's practices themselves ignores the temporal character to the

politics in her writings. This perceived ambiguity is the point in Spivak's texts that indicates that the economy of differences upon which meaning and a politics ultimately relies is a matter of differentiated moments, as opposed to space. This movement of difference by which meaning is expressed is, indeed, that complex and heterogeneous capacity by which, she claims, we each flesh out the world in time (timing), as opposed to the legislation of timing to a fixed monument of Time--timing organized in terms of space. Spivak's texts speak of an ever-possible capacity to situate experience into a sequence of relations. And, in so doing, she attempts to demonstrate that the situation of these relations never has the power to exclude other chronological accounts. Hence, what may be understood as an ambiguous practice in Spivak's texts is, instead, the series of temporally different practices operating at and within what may appear to the reader as a singular space, the law of Time. Yes, her texts may both serve to construct and disclose a politics at what may be explained as the same site. But the reader must understand that for Spivak these practices, as different practices, occur in different manners of timing. As different practices, in her analysis, they flesh out different sequences of events.

This is expressed through Spivak's writings again and again. The heterogeneous moments in her readings of "the postcolonial situation," "woman," and "the subaltern" are

her most apparent examples. This point is pushed further in her various writings, though, with these examples and others. For instance, and controversially, Spivak expresses the necessity for a reading of this sort in Marx's theory of value as well.[1]

In brief, she attempts to establish that value, as the mediating possibility between labour and commodity and the possibility of exchange,[2] must continually escape positive determination. She argues that this understanding of value will always lead one to the question of determining the origins of value: use-value. Yet, to simply refer to use-value as the "representation of objectified labour," she argues, continues to lead Marx to indeterminate ground.[3]

Use-value, Spivak reminds her readers, is both inside and outside of the systemic determination of value. In Marx's terms, a thing may have use without being a value, and use is itself outside of the motion of exchange.[4] Further, Spivak argues that use-value is not simply understandable in terms of its representation in Capital. It may also, in so far as it is also outside the circuit of exchange, fall prey to the interests of the worker at the level of simple labour itself.[5] She writes:

> ...since one case of use-value can be that of the worker wishing to consume the (affect of the) work itself, that necessary possibility renders indeterminate the "materialist" prediction of the subject as labor-power or super-adequation as calibrated and organized by the logic of capital. In terms of that necessarily possible "special case," this predication can no longer be seen as the excess of

> surplus labor over socially necessary labor. The question of affectively necessary labor brings in the attendant question of desire and thus questions in yet another way the mere philosophical justice of capital logic without necessarily shifting into utopian idealism.[6]

Spivak attempts to show that value cannot be so simply rooted in its origin of use. She agrees that use may indeed be abstracted into the general circuit of value determination. However, she argues that that which is represented as alienated labour in Capital is not necessarily understood as such simple representation. Use is also a moment of interest to the worker. Hence, use must be also understood as that which is consumed by Capital. To draw a simple line from the point of use through surplus and exchange to Capital is merely a singular possible reading of the distance between each phenomenon. For her, it is, in fact, the reading of distance into these phenomena altogether. Spivak insists that the meaningful points along this line may sign in such a way that the progression from one to the next is never certain. Thus, although the continuist explanation of value in Marx may certainly be made, she argues that one must realize that, on Marx's own grounds, the life of value can never be successfully charted to meet the possible readings that the question of value opens up at each stage. A continuous reading of value in Marx, like any narrative, must compete with unreconcilable readings produced in its writing.

Impossibility thus arises insofar as the various

practices of timing and possible manners of timing are provisionally totalized onto a presumably mappable geography of meaning and identity (Time). In this attempt to submit timings to Time these different ways of knowing/producing the world(s) inevitably sign disparities of meaning which cannot be rationalized or explained in an appeal to the logic of a Time. The structure of meaning that a Time represents is incapable of representing the discontinuity in production that may occur between the different ways of knowing and particular forms of "internal intuition."[7] Accordingly, as one wishes to hold onto the spatial discourse of meaning that is offered in Time, one confronts these senses of ambiguity and ghost-like double images of the true and the real. The meaning of what one may investigate under the conditions of Time fall to an ecstatic ontology, wherein the object of investigation must, ultimately, be persistently found beside itself.

The privileged position of the temporal over the spatial in Spivak's texts is made all the more evident if one is to study the sort of critical "space" they truly offer her reader. In committing oneself to the full implications of her texts, one must, in the end, find oneself without a place of critique as such. Rather, one ultimately finds oneself in a practice that is only adequately addressed and "explained" in reference to a

sequence of activity and the speed in which that sequence occurs.

The persistent critique that Spivak demands and entices from her readers is plain enough. If the reader of Spivak's texts is to take this call for persistence, and the understanding of economies of difference that it rests upon, seriously, though, she or he must then also consider how her or his reading must persistently engage in a critique of Spivak as well. It should be open to her readers to consider what she remains complicit with, for example, in her call for strategic essentialism. How do Spivak's texts lag behind her adherence to a problematizing of theory and analysis? And what does the answer to that question disclose of the character of her politics in general?

At the most basic level, one can stress the fact that the critical position Spivak takes on is reliant itself on a fixed grounding as well. By proclaiming that theory takes one nowhere, and that all that one has available to one in one's politics is strategy and catachresis, Spivak's texts rest upon and continually assume a "symbolic economy" and the "production of differentials." By claiming that all one has as political tools and tools of understanding is the possibility of inscribing points in structures of meaning, Spivak's texts rest upon and continually assume "meaning-structures" and the capacity to write politics in such terms. Thus one might also suppose that Spivak's texts

also do not fit all readings of the political that others, unlike herself, might make. The analysis and critique of politics Spivak presents requires symbolic framing as well.

The committed reader of Spivak's texts must, then, assume that this reliance on the possibility of a symbolic economy within limited structures of meaning is also a matter of strategy, that these are names styled within meaning-structures as well. The reader of Spivak's texts may, therefore, justifiably inquire into that which such a critical posture must suppose in its shadow. Her readers are obliged to trace the symbolic itinerary of the narrative Spivak describes. For, along the line of analysis she follows, there must also be a differential that allows Spivak, as critic, to suppose an economy of difference and symbolic structure to begin with.[8] There must be a specific "lynchpin" that maintains a disjuncture between this level of reality, as a series of differentials and differentiating points in identity, and that from which it is differentiated.

To investigate the differential that allows Spivak to claim language as the central ground of politics, and all latent possibilities therein, though, is to posit that which cannot be represented. All that could provide the required referential distance from which to compose a ground of the symbolic could only be expressed in negative terms, that which is not subject to symbols. In effect, it would

necessarily be that which has no meaning in and of itself.

To investigate what, for lack of a better term, may be referred to as the "other" of the symbolic is by no means a new question. In these very terms, there have been many attempts within the Western critical tradition to think through the conditions under which an economy of symbols is possible. Typically, those philosophers who have been concerned with such a question have pointed their respective fingers toward something unspeakable yet ever-present. For example, Hegel offers his readers the journey of *Geist*. Heidegger attempts to articulate a "lighting" of Being that provides the conditions of all being. Sartre's answer to this is the postulation of a "nothingness" from which being emerges. Merleau-Ponty describes the "invisible" against which he believes one can perceive the "flesh" of the world. And Foucault outlines an ever-elusive network of "power" through which all that we know, he maintains, is produced.

However, if one is to continue taking the analysis present in Spivak's texts seriously, one must recognize that the attempts, among others, to speak of the other of the symbolic, again, serve to unleash newly reified symbolic constructs. They do not develop a critical position from which to understand the styled relations between a symbolic and non-symbolic realms. For, as may well be the case with Spivak and her commitment to a symbolic economy, these various inscriptions of the other as a named phenomenon are

signs in themselves and, necessarily, require the other of the symbolic as well.

The whole question of the other is here and continually deferred. As with representing the subaltern or providing the conditions under which the subaltern may speak, insofar as the other of the symbolic is supposed and sought, the other is subjected to a presupposed structure of meaning. It is already trapped in the language and manner of representation that its recovery is hoped to undo.

Given the critical stand Spivak maintains, it is difficult to understand how one might attempt to trace the symbolic itinerary of her narrative to the other of an economy of naming in a way that does not initiate an economy of names in this sense. The point of tracing the economic structure of a text, she holds, is not to show how that structure is at fault. It is not to show that the origins upon which the structure of meaning rests are "wrong." The point of this practice, as Spivak understands it, is not to unveil an origin of any sorts at all. Rather, she affirms that such deconstructive practice will open up the possibility of meaning, specifically the possibility of the symbolic. To consider the conditions upon which Spivak's texts rest, in this manner, is also to let loose a multitude of naming acts. To deconstruct her texts as such is to make room for further negotiations of that which Spivak assumes and to the limits she has outlined for herself.

To take Spivak up on her invitation, to deconstruct her texts, is not to look beneath the symbolic, just as one cannot look underneath Time to see a more authentic timing. It is, instead, to open up the heterogeneity of what the symbolic and the location of symbols can mean. It might be seen as a necessarily conservative practice, in that it maintains terms of reference essential to the position Spivak inhabits. Perhaps deconstruction will draw out the sophistication of these terms in more critical and strategically aware forms. But it cannot go beyond the critical world enacted by Spivak in her political stand. It must retain her political language in its originary force. For in such a critique of Spivak's texts, "Spivak" and "the texts of Spivak" are maintained as the points from which the other of the symbolic is to be known. Deconstruction as practice here problematizes "Spivak" and "the texts of Spivak" in an agenda unavoidably interested in its object of critique.

In the end, Spivak's texts and the critique they uphold deny any movement away from one critical stance to another. The further one invokes the persistence she calls for, the further one is enmeshed in the object of critique, even if that object is the texts of Spivak themselves. Her texts serve to demonstrate the possibility of only re-structuring readings of political ground and critical space. The difference that the critic gains in this level of critique

is prolific, therefore, only in terms of previous critical readings and further possible interruptions to one's critical stand. The other of the symbolic, along the lines to which the reader of Spivak's texts is obliged, is always a deferred point, shadowed only in the framing of Spivak's practice and the practices she both admires and advocates. It is not a locatable perspective outside her analyses as such.

Spivak's interest in derailing the often supposed security of spatial commitments in political practice is, perhaps, most notable in her vehement reaction to Julia Kristeva's writings on psychoanalysis. Spivak views Kristeva's work to be one of the more unfortunate contemporary examples of attempts to think through and mark a pre-symbolic realm against which the symbolic is supposed to attain its stature. For Spivak, Kristeva's efforts to draw awareness to an "unconscious," which Kristeva apparently believes to inform and constitute the basis against which consciousness may operate, is little more than yet another (necessarily) failed example of an unproblematized positivist politics of location and explanation. Spivak is irritated by what she sees as a blatant naturalization of a pre-economic (other) space to signs.[9]

Spivak has considerable difficulty with the way in

which Kristeva explicates the practice of interpretation, and its implications, in Kristeva's "Psychoanalysis and the Polis."[10] In this essay, Kristeva also supplies the notion that there are indeed political consequences within any act of interpretation, that it constructs referential play in itself.[11] She describes interpretation as a "corrective" act. In Kristeva's analysis, interpretation is the exercise of striving to realign a reality from that which is (unconsciously) desired. It is, in other words, a denial of the imaginary in favour of what can be (consciously) known.

Interpretation is, therefore, a potentially, ongoing act for Kristeva as well. She claims that our desires, which are essential to our beings in Kristeva's view, will never adhere well to what we wish to see as facts. It is always clear that our interests, which cannot be let go, are necessarily contradictory to the search for objectivity and truth. A search for truth, then, is always a contradiction in terms. One's desire for the truth, she insists, foils one's project of objectivity altogether.[12] Kristeva observes that, torn between what one presumes to be fact and the image of one's desire, we are each left in a state of delirium.[13] Within the single act of the search to know, one both negates the possibility of accurate knowledge and makes a positive assertion about the known.

In light of this version of an impossibility in the politics of interpretation, Kristeva recommends that one

must return to this delirium, as opposed to continually attempting to correct it in analysis. She maintains that, in order to fully apprehend the politics and relationship of desire and one's attempts to know, one must acknowledge one's delirious site. Kristeva claims that the privileged and coveted meaning that one may project into the objective fact will then dissipate, the structure of meaning will dissolve, and the unsymbolizable conditions from which desire and the search for knowledge supposedly stand will emerge.[14]

Tending to one's delirium, in Kristeva's account, is to become aware of a particular border-point that one, in one's desire, supposedly occupies between the sites of the symbolic and "unnameable." It is to reveal a pre-symbolic origin, the phenomenal possibility of difference, from which all symbols emerge and to which each must return in order to sign.[15] Kristeva explains that tending to one's delirium will thereby inaugurate a persistent dissolution of Meaning into its conditions of the unnameable. And, supposedly, delirium will give way to a productive, as opposed to frustrating, place of knowledge. The interpreter, in short, will finally be able to throw off the masking difference that delirium places between Meaning and Unmeaning. Further, she or he will know the life of symbols and, thus, the politics of meaning in general. And, finally, the symbolic and the unnameable will give way to a space in

which both may be negotiated in one and the same motion.

In the context of Spivak's writing, however, the productive consequences of this particular move by Kristeva is clearly reliant on an unhistoricized interest which privileges the psychoanalytic categories of the conscious and, particularly, the unconscious.[16] Kristeva's analysis of delirium, therefore, remains acutely vulnerable, in Spivak's eyes, to different readings of knowing and thought from the start. It implicates, once again, a moment of meaninglessness which, as a term in the analysis itself, provides the conditions not for understanding the play of signs but the conditions for a re-negotiated trace-structure that actually undermines the productive potential that this "delirium" could possibly avail.

Spivak would have Kristeva seize on this point of delirium in a different manner altogether. Without a doubt, Spivak's texts show that she is aware of some sort of perplexing and continually self-undermining struggle between one's efforts to name one's world and one's interest in the process of naming. She reads this inability to finalize structure and reconcile interest with object, however, as the moment in which both the "fact" and "imaginary" occur, not a point that divides them. Delirium is not a moment of frustration and the mask of the relationship between meaning and unmeaning for Spivak. It is in fact the extravagant possibility of the two.

Consider how delirium emerges differently in the following example:

Spivak ends "Can the Subaltern Speak?" with the story of a young woman, Bhavaneswari Bhaduri, who committed suicide in North Calcutta in 1926. She writes:

> The suicide was a puzzle since, as Bhuvaneswari was menstruating at the time, it was clearly not a case of illicit pregnancy. Nearly a decade later, it was discovered that she was a member of one of the many groups involved in the armed struggle for Indian Independence. She had finally been entrusted with a political assassination. Unable to confront the task and yet aware of the practical need for trust, she killed herself.[17]

As Spivak notes elsewhere, Bhuvaneswari was very careful to kill herself under such circumstances that could not possibly be interpreted within the culture of <u>sati</u>. Bhuvaneswari, in fact, left a letter, explaining the circumstances of her death, so as not to disclose the covert operations too soon. Yet, with this great care in attempting to speak clearly and unequivocally, Spivak recounts, Bhuvaneswari's message was still unclear.[18] She recalls that even the relatives of Bhuvaneswari could not see the difference that she was invoking in her act. The displacement of her suicide was dismissed as the action of an insane woman, even after the "facts" came out.[19] The woman truly had no place from which to speak. Her suicide would only make sense, apparently, if she had killed herself for a man, as in <u>sati</u>. Bhuvaneswari, Spivak explains, was simply taken to be delirious.[20]

Here, however, delirium is shown not to be a distorting veil to any pre-symbolic field. Bhuvaneswari indeed becomes delirious by the fact that what makes her what she is also is that which unmakes her. Spivak draws attention to the fact that the ever-present heterogeneity of Bhuvaneswari, as a subaltern in this case, is significant in a multitude of manners at any point. According to Spivak, Bhuvaneswari's attempt to signify her identity and activities in the way that she did, therefore, also sets in motion other readings of identity and movement in a just as necessary manner as what she intended to sign. In other words, Bhuvaneswari, as in the case of any person, Spivak would add, automatically speaks both herself and the possibility of her other at the same location. The conditions that allow for her to articulate and pursue her desire are present and constructed in the same place as her desire. There is a juncture of negotiating economies of difference which enact play and crisis in one another. What is signed in the name of "Bhuvaneswari" gains meaning in its deferral to the many ways in which "Bhuvaneswari" is portrayed. Bhuvaneswari is delirious by her excess.

Again, Spivak strives to show that any negotiated essence, as she has determined it, can never be understood in any singularly locatable terms, even if those terms are recognized as provisional. Spivak indicates that

negotiation is itself given over to an entire competition of timing. Moreover, it is given over to levels of Time that may not necessarily even have a bearing on each other. That which may be located in the subaltern, or any phenomenon, that which makes the thing what it is, in her analysis, remains thoroughly at odds with itself.

The "essential reality" of any given phenomenon, for Spivak is also its delirium. The only thing that may be located in the object of one's investigation, given the impossibility of interpretation, is its potential and practical excess of readings and, more strikingly, its capacity to sign and provide "grounds" for its "other."

In her analysis she argues that the ways in which a sign is negotiated and then signed in the process makes that signature available for the economic needs and requirements of other trace structures, potential or actual. Spivak attempts to show that, in constructing or revealing meaning, greater faces of differentiation are afforded in the process. The more one seeks to convert one's impressions into a rule of reality, in other words, the greater the possibility one offers to procedures of timing in the face of and detriment to Time. Attempts to determine the conditions of Time, for Spivak, must then be seen to aid in the rendering of Time into a more impossible and difficult act. Determining the structure of Time--that which Time rests upon--may offer a greater differentiation in Time and,

thereby, the production of Time*s*.

To put this point more plainly, in the logic of Spivak's texts, the other of a thing is also the product of the determination of the thing itself. Accordingly, to investigate the conditions upon which Spivak's texts rest must involve the creation of those conditions and the construction of conditions under which such an activity of investigation is possible in the first place. To embark on a critique, such as the persistent critique which Spivak advocates, not only serves to open up what has been declared as an original site but to flesh-out the original to make it read as such. It is to treat the trace structure that one addresses in critique as a moment in timing and convert it once again into the law of Time.

Hence, for Spivak, the subaltern cannot speak because it is also not itself. The subaltern is not simply ourselves either. "It" is its own differential and possibility. The subaltern is thoroughly ecstatic, truly beside itself--delirious. And, as such, the subaltern is always to be taken up and re-written by those moments of Time for which the subaltern becomes relevant.

Clearly, the delirious status that the subject and object of analysis take in Spivak's text does not halt her, though. She does not believe that tending to delirium will ever uncover a ground that will explain the impossibility in

interpretation. Yet she indicates that tending to delirium as an "essence" in itself may cause the significance of a "ground" to lessen. The analyses that Spivak pursues suggest that this persistent critique, which may lay this delirium to bear, will potentially open vulnerable points within the practice of investigation and critique. Theoretically, this persistence may express the delirium of interpretation and positive assertions. And Spivak may, thereby, feel comfort in the notion that critique can increase the possiblities of Time, to the extent to which the dynamics of the politics of interpretation may truly be re-written--possibly interrupted beyond writing and other forms of representation.

The force portrayed in Spivak's texts lies in the conviction that the aware investigator may open up the possibility of naming to the extent that naming may indeed take on a different life altogether. Spivak strains to show that this kind of persistent critique will allow one to disturb the production of trace structures in order to engage more wittingly with the economics of meaning and names in time.

In doing so, she outlines the notion that this entire --at times conservative--process may also open a given trace structure to the point at which its meaning and origins are interrupted in ways that the investigator could not possibly be aware of. Critique, in this sense of practice, may open

its own economy of investigation in ways that fall into the processes of other dynamic levels. Along the lines of Spivak's argument, it invites displacement from that which the investigator, in her or his own structure of meaning, could not possibly anticipate. In the same way that theory and practice may be seen to fall to the interruptions both offer at their respective levels of production, a critique may open itself to meaningful points that do not rely on a symbolic economy or inscriptions of space and time in the least.

The process of critique which Spivak advocates may necessarily render delirious its subject and object in practice and maintain the economy of its critique in its subject and object. However, it appears as though she has faith that the practice may also open up the moment of possibility through which the economy upon which this critique rests may be "spoken" differently again. For Spivak, this critical movement potentially lays open the possibility that the grounds under which "politics" is made conceivable, such as location and explanation, may be re-negotiated in part or entirely.

Notes From Chapter Four:

[1]See: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Feminism and Critical Theory," and "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value," in Spivak, In Other Worlds (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), 77-92 and 154-175; Spivak, "Speculations on reading Marx: after reading Derrida," in Derek Attridge, Geoff Bennington, and Robert Young, eds., Post-structuralism and the question of history (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 30-62; Spivak, "Post-structuralism, Marginality, Postcoloniality and Value," in Peter Collier and Helga Geyer-Ryan, eds., Literary Theory Today (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), 219-244; and Spivak, "Practical Politics of the Open End," in Spivak, The Post-colonial Critic, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 95-112.

[2]Spivak, "Practical Politics," 96.

[3]Spivak, "Scattered Speculations," 155.

[4]Ibid., 162.

[5]Ibid., 161-162.

[6]Ibid., 162.

[7]This is a direct reference to Immanuel Kant's description of time as an internal intuition of the mind, separate from the external intuition which, he believes, allows us to experience space. See: Immanuel Kant, "Transcendental Aesthetic," in Kant, Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: MacMillan Education Ltd., 1929), 65-91.

[8]Spivak, "Translator's Preface," in Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, trans. Spivak (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), xlii.

[9]Spivak, "In a Word. Interview," differences, 1:2, Summer 1989, 145.

[10]Julia Kristeva, "Psychoanalysis and the Polis," in Kristeva, The Kristeva Reader, ed., Toril Moi, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 301-320.

[11]Ibid., 303-304.

[12]Ibid., 312.

[13]*Ibid.*, 307-308.

[14]*Ibid.*, 310.

[15]*Ibid.*

[16]Spivak, "The Politics of Interpretations," *In Other Worlds*, 126 and 133.

[17]Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 307.

[18]Spivak, "Gayatri Spivak on the Politics of the Subaltern," *Socialist Review*, 20:3, July-September 1990, 89.

[19]Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," 308.

[20]*Ibid.*

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