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Dorothy Figueira
University of Georgia

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Dorothy Figueira

Dorothy Figueira is Professor and former Chair of Comparative Literature at the University of Georgia. She has also taught at The University of Chicago, Cornell, SUNY-Stonybrook, and the University of Illinois. She is the author of Translating the Orient *(1991),* The Exotic: A Decadent Quest *(1994), and* Aryans, Jews and Brahmins *(2002).*

Postcolonial theory champions the inclusion within the Western literary canon of works by groups with historical grievances against Western power structures. As a field of inquiry, postcolonial theory has been made possible by a radicalization of theory and a paradigm shift from the aesthetic to the political that has occurred over the last two decades. Literature, once a central mode of aesthetic expression, has come to be viewed as an outmoded form of cultural capital belonging to the bourgeoisie. The paradigm shift from the literary to the cultural studies model presumably sought to install a more immediate and less conservative hierarchical format. In reality, however, it addressed certain political and psychopathological needs, first and foremost of which was the abstract identification of critics with victims of repression. Although postcolonial theory celebrates diversity, it does so without compromising American tendencies toward cultural provincialism, triumphalism or indifference to the world. Like those popular ethnic fairs one finds throughout the United States, postcolonial theory allows students to taste other cultures without having to travel or learn hard languages. In the Internet age, when the globalization of English has contributed to a diminishing need to learn other languages, the Other can now be consumed "on the cheap." One can grasp

the world, for example, by reading selections from representative women of color writing in the English language. Thus, postcolonial criticism as practiced in institutions of higher learning in the States feeds both the intellectual's need for engagement and the pretense that academic criticism can and should function as a political act. It presumes to transform textual culture into activist culture.

Like most poststructuralist theories, postcolonial criticism relies on the notion that some heritage of systems limits the reader. It supposes that our present condition, although seemingly benign, imposes an existential limit, and theory alone can liberate us from systemic constraints (Fluck 216). Curiously missing from the discussion is any serious questioning of how the text's appearance as a network of hegemonic or subversive gestures tends to suit the state of literary theoretical professionalization. Unexamined also is the manner in which theory has allowed individuals cut off from any effective social action and buoyed by their security as academic professionals to claim solidarity with the disenfranchised. The alienation from real powerlessness (such as the academic Marxist's guilt vis à vis the worker) can then be replaced and absolved by a posture of powerlessness vis à vis representation. Homi Bhabha's earnest attempt to recast theory as a "politics of the theoretical statement" (22) exemplifies this casting of the critic as a fellow traveler alongside the disenfranchised, as he argues for a reconsideration of Lenin's famous question in poststructuralist terms:

> 'What is to be done?' must acknowledge the force of writing, its metaphoricity and its rhetorical discourse, as a productive matrix which defines the 'social' and makes it available as an objective of and for, action. Textuality is not simply a second-order ideological expression or a verbal symptom of a pre-given political subject. . . . A knowledge can only become political through an agnostic process: dissensus, alterity and otherness are the discursive conditions for the circulation and recognition of a politicized subject and a public 'truth'.
>
> (23)

This passage from Bhabha's oft-cited essay "The Commitment to Theory" is symptomatic of the problem I have been outlining in at least two ways. First, the critic's placement of the words 'social' and 'truth' within quotation marks effectively reduces the real-world struggles of the disenfranchised to a discursive problem. In his deft deconstruction of a politics/theory opposition that would privilege praxis, the critic necessarily ends up privileging what *he* does — write, theorize—without requiring any further commit-

ment from him. Theory *is* a form of praxis, Bhabha wants to argue — I'm already *doing* my bit. This line of argumentation leads to the conclusion — my second point — that the critic is in fact already aligned with the disenfranchised. Through his claim of the solidarity of theory with the politics of change, Bhabha can implicitly align himself with the disenfranchised, or at least what he terms in the essay's conclusion a "free people of the future" (38), even as the actual struggles of people all but disappear in his analysis. In one of its most disturbing moments, the essay in fact reduces these individuals to discursive figures:

> [Theory] makes us aware that our political referents and priorities – the people, the community, class struggle, anti-racism, gender difference, the assertion of an anti-imperialist, black or third perspective – are not there in some primordial, naturalistic sense. Nor do they reflect a unitary or homogeneous object. *They make sense as they come to be constructed* in the discourses of feminism or Marxism or the Third Cinema or whatever, whose objects of priority – class or sexuality or 'the new ethnicity' – are always in historical and philosophical tension, or cross-reference with other objectives.
>
> (Bhabha 26, emphasis added)

Here the critic's self-aggrandizing agenda becomes crystal clear. Theory is not only an indispensable part of the struggle, Bhabha claims: It *produces* the struggle, and along with it the very people with whom it simultaneously (and cynically) claims solidarity. Thus Bhabha's "Commitment to Theory" allows the critic to have it both ways: It would pre-empt any critique of how the text's appearance as a network of hegemonic or subversive gestures undermines the political causes it claims to champion in favor of literary theoretical professionalization, while allowing the critic, simultaneously cut off from effective social action and insulated by his position in academia, to pose as a champion of the people "committed to progressive political change in the direction of a socialist society" (Bhabha 21). Any question of real powerlessness or marginalization — such as that of the efficacy of theory to effect change — disappears, to be replaced by a posture of powerlessness steeped in a discourse of hybridity, indeterminacy of the signifier, and so on. Theory thus validates the critic's social pose even as it absolves him of making any real difference.

This strategy, however, often backfires. Rhetorical engagement cannot really serve as a blueprint for social change, just as critics cannot presume access to positional knowledge. The critic's self-fashioning through imaginary marginalization only results in the wide-ranging identification of an academic privi-

leged class with the marginalized other. The postcolonial critic then positions herself, in a quasi-messianic manner, to speak for the other. This masquerade poses a significant problem of representation. Critics assume roles as spokespersons for minority communities, regardless of their own socio-economic status and privileges. They claim to speak as/for minorities and as representatives for a minority community and its victimization. They function, to quote Deepika Bahri, as "victims by proxy" (Bahri 73). Critical discourse, moreover, has made this shift in positionality possible.

The postcolonial theorizes always from the impregnable position of "the margin," invoking "ambiguity," "binarism," and splitting," as constitutive of the center and those that inhabit it. This concept of the margin versus the center derives from Derrida's critique of logocentrism. Postcolonial critics invoke Foucault to establish the disequilibrium of the modern state and Homi Bhabha to establish the conception of the marginality of the people. According to Bhabha, the postcolonial theorist is not constrained to "stand" on particular ground or take up a position, but instead can "slide ceaselessly" along the moveable margin (Bhabha 300). Edward Said and Bhabha accept Foucault's dubious claim that the most individualized groups in modern society are the marginals yet to be integrated into the political reality. They attempt to validate interpretation from the margin, where the exiled Third World metropolitan intellectuals are the most authoritative voices. Critics such as Said, Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak can then locate themselves at a place where theorists are necessary to interpret across cultures without the inconvenience of having to pinpoint cultural particularities. Postcolonial texts abound with examples of this kind of theoretical legerdemain and its corresponding dearth of cultural specificity: Said's sweeping indictment of the entire Western civilization in his critique of Orientalism; Bhabha's dizzying (and never fully worked through) invocation of Salman Rushdie, Frantz Fanon, Goethe, two Latino performance artists,[1] and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* in the introduction to *The Location of Culture;* and most recently Spivak's facile juxtaposition of W. E. B. DuBois and José Martí in the long parenthesis that concludes *Death of a Discipline*.[2] In each of these examples and many others, the theorist can apparently say whatever she likes, the only constraint or test of validity being that the proper cultural space is occupied and that the writing validates and promotes the ambiguity and contradictoriness of that position.

The problem with this postcolonial formulation becomes clear, as E. San Juan Jr. suggests, "when contraposed to the resistance of colonized subalterns themselves" (8). The truly marginalized are not there by choice; they do not, as does the postcolonial critic, position themselves on the perceived margin the better to produce

elaborate academic critiques of Western hegemony. The result, as San Juan Jr. explains, is a theory "divorced from its concrete social determinations" (9). If for Bhabha, Said, et al. the margin is a desirable place from which to exploit the "unevenness" of colonial discourses, for Arif Dirlik such a posture of self-marginalization emphasizes cultural difference and linguistic indeterminacy (the critic's strengths) at the expense of a more substantial critique of Western hegemony:

> However much postcolonial intellectuals may insist on hybridity and the transposability of locations, not all positions are equal in power, as Spivak's interrogators in India seem to recognize in their reference to the "wings of progress" that brought her to India. To insist on hybridity against one's own language, it seems to me, is to disguise not only ideological location but also the differences of power that go with different locations.
>
> (Dirlik 343)

Dirlik's critique, echoing San Juan Jr.'s, effectively gives the lie to postcolonial formulations of Foucault's theory of marginality by exposing the irreducible difference between the critic and the subaltern group. The critic may conspicuously position herself at a margin, but she retains a mobility (social and literal) that the truly disenfranchised can only dream of. As Michael Gorra points out in a different context, the fluidity and hybridity that postcolonialism so prizes "remains best suited for those most able to live with a sense of uncertainty and improvisation — for the gifted and well-off, those for whom shuttling between London and Bombay is the literal and not the figurative truth" (172, emphasis added).[3]

Postcolonialism thus reflects postmodernism's concern with hybridity and sites of ambivalence. It discovers those subversions that compromise meaning and effectiveness. It seeks to link dispersed groups across ruptures of space, time, nation or language. Since the appearance of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983), nationalism (previously seen as an ideology of oneness) is studied for its plural roots and dependence on others for the construction of the national self. In the quest for an alternative beyond identity, a post-identitarian model, the critical trope of postcolonial subject functions as an identity free from the constraints of identitarianism. Moreover, like the postcolonial critic who moves along the unfixed margin, the postcolonial subject is believed to incarnate notions of intellectual freedom of movement and escape from ideology and bourgeois values. Critics embrace the grandiose identity and exorbitant role that theory has assigned them. They then seek to identify with an idealized persona that theory has ascribed to the postcolonial subject. This

entire process exhibits false consciousness: that reified perception with identificatory, anti-dialectical, and egocentric structures defined by existential psychoanalysis (Gabel 253ff). It is my belief that the critic's quest for reification through gestures of false consciousness betrays an intellectual and institutional refusal to deal honestly with the other. In the remainder of this paper, I wish to address this concern.

In a seminal work in the field of social psychology, Joseph Gabel defined false consciousness as a dissociation produced by a reification of the past. False consciousness is primarily a distortion of the perception and experience of time. When the natural flow of time is "dissociated" by ideology, utopianism or schizophrenia, it produces a perception that is out of touch with reality and at odds with historical fact; it becomes false consciousness (Gabel xiv). In postcolonial criticism, ideology that is uninformed by historical and linguistic facts distorts a vision of the past. This past, dissociated from reality, is further circumscribed by the critic's strategies of self-representation.

In many American universities, the Third World appears almost exclusively under the rubric of postcolonial literatures. As such, it is largely circumscribed by a theoretical politics of opposition and struggle. The work of generations of linguists, historians and anthropologists who might have made genuine efforts to bring non-first-world cultures into the Euro-American continuum, is often dismissed as serving a decrepit ideology (Clark 1996: 23). The emphasis placed on Eurocentric cultural theory also overshadows the testimony of native voices. Multitudinous cultures are thus marked and marketed with their chronologies collapsed, particulars essentialized and geopolitical distinctions telescoped into invisibility. Indiscriminately embracing the other levels out the various competing others. They tend to look the same, since their actuality is never taken seriously.

Bhabha's invocation of both Beloved and the plight of border crossing Mexican immigrants in the introduction to *The Location of Culture,* for example, functions in precisely this way, by invoking the struggles of African-American slaves and Latino communities only as a point of departure for his own discursive analysis of hybridity and the transposability of cultural positions.[4] Bhabha's by-now notorious refrain "Who is Beloved?" (18) emerges in this context as disingenuous and even cynical, given the novel's very obvious positioning of Beloved as a restless spirit connected to a very real history of African-American suffering and struggle. The question, and indeed Beloved herself — arguably among the most poignant characters in all of American literature — is reduced in Bhabha's analysis to a rhetorical figure in a broader analysis that ultimately confirms the critic's place as an arbiter of culture and spokesman for the other.

Spivak's translations of Mahasweta Devi's fiction and her writings on the practice of *sati* (widow self-immolation) in India, while more subtle and self-reflexive in their maneuverings, function in the same way. Spivak is less interested in the stories themselves, which focus on the plight of devadasis, or temple dancers/prostitutes, indigenous inhabitants of what is now India,[5] than on how they serve as examples of her own theory of subalterity, as best explained in her well-known essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?"[6] Spivak downplays the horrors perpetrated upon the protagonist of Devi's "Breast-Giver," for example, in favor of a broader argument about the incommensurability of subalterity and representation.[7] Likewise, Spivak's discussions of the case of the widowed Rani of Sirmur and the politically-motivated suicide of a young militant Indian woman finally shift away from the individuals' respective predicaments and toward presenting them as examples of an "unemphatic, ad hoc, subaltern rewriting of the social text of *sati*-suicide" (307). Spivak goes on to further contextualize the women's struggles within an abstracted theoretical framework, concluding ambivalently that "[t]he subaltern as female cannot be heard or read . . . . Bhubaneswari attempted to 'speak' by turning her body into a text of woman/ writing" and that "her attempt had failed" because later generations of women in her own family failed to "hear" her correctly (308). In each of these examples, the native voice of the subaltern is sublated and folded into the critic's larger theoretical imperatives, first among which is the positioning of the critic in an imaginary solidarity with the marginalized other who cannot speak. The native voice becomes mere fodder for the critic's performance of a virtuous marginality. Absent, of course, from this discussion is the fact that any archival investigation of native and colonial records shows ample evidence of subaltern women "speaking" for themselves.[8]

Critics foster acontextual and fragmentary analyses out of a deep cynicism regarding the Other as a fossilized object of "clinical" experimentation. If one is disengaged from reality and has retreated into a rarefied zone of postmodern abstraction, one can ignore significant issues of neocolonialism, especially since what is ultimately important is that the other always be perceived as correct, regardless of differences and histories. The other must be correct in order to fulfil the postcolonial critic's desire for "a pure Otherness in all its pristine luminosity" (Chow 45). Postcolonial criticism exhibits and relies upon an uncritical primitivism that privileges non-western culture and glories in its presumptive, eventual and always revolutionary resurgence.

The identitarian politics at work are blatant. The Amero-European critic theorizing the postcolonial subject extols life in smooth spaces with non-ideological consciousness and exemplary freedoms. The result is a realm of pure exoticism, where an iden-

tity is being established not of the other, but of the hypertrophied Amero-European subject. As I have suggested, it is the properties metaphorically accorded to this subject that are of particular interest. The critic can taste the romance of exile and can play at being diasporic, nomadic or disenfranchised without having to dirty his/her hands. As Dirlik wryly suggests, such a critic can claim to talk for the margin and, in doing so, pretend to speak from the margin, while actually inhabiting a space that is quite close to the center:

> My neighbors in Farmville, Virginia, are no match in power for the highly paid, highly prestigious postcolonial intellectuals at Columbia, Princeton, or Duke; some of them might even be willing to swap positions and take the anguish that comes with hybridity so long as it brings with it the power and the prestige it seems to command.
>
> (343)

Theoretical notions of the margin, periphery, and exilic space allow critics to create a metaphorical space in which to dwell — in this case a narrative of victimhood — that is separate from the real space they inhabit. In this metaphorical space, critics can voice ideologies of subversion and rebellion that would be too unsettling if voiced from their actual space. The critics' delicate balancing act stems from the paradox of inhabiting a space of bourgeois comfort, while needing at the same time to distance themselves from global capitalism. When critics appropriate the metaphorical space of the postcolonial, nomad, exile, and marginal, they hope to exonerate themelves for all the benefits they receive from this same capitalism. Criticism thus functions as an act of penance or, to give it a clinical diagnosis, criticism becomes an expression of false consciousness.

The postcolonial critic's personal search serves as a mask for a lack of calling or significance. The stakes are considerable: the critic seeks personal validation within a community of theorists in an incestuously boundaried field. The Third World is totally eclipsed by the critic's emplotment of it. The authoritative critic who has carefully picked through shards of information provided by individuals writing in these postcolonial places provides the dominant voice. Postcolonial critics claim acuity vis à vis the intricacies of their readings, although an ignorance of key aspects in the narrative they seek to deconstruct often leads to gross distortions. However, these mistakes are neither given significance or, for that matter, even acknowledged because of the overriding importance assigned to the idealized image of the critic's own theory or of· theory itself. This aestheticization of the critical project is truly "criticism for criticism's sake." Postcolonial criticism

places desire on the level of the critic's own need for validation. Knowing the Other was never really at issue.

Third World reality is thus bracketed before the argument begins. The critic's primary interest lies in structuring the Third World thematically for a milieu that consumes these structures. In this process, we find the meeting of incommensurables — a deep seated need for the experience of political engagement coming out of the 1960s meeting a 1990s need to be media savvy, to package and market intellectual capital. There is no small irony here, in how easily these two conceptual frameworks have melded. If the belief in criticism as a viable intervention is a relic of the 60s that has proven itself bankrupt, then the whole critical project functions as nothing but an investigation of socio-political impotence. Potency, when it exists, resides in the critic's relationship to colleagues, through the coining and usage of jargon. The dexterity of language manipulation becomes an exercise in pyrotechnics garnering the critic points in a rarefied professional game. Theory, understood as symbolic capital and combined with spokespersonship, becomes even more a form of professional empowerment. Postcolonial criticism has allowed critics to appear relevant on a global level. Like ideologues, schizophrenics and utopian idealists, postcolonial critics seek to reify historical existence and understand their visions as an organized system of meaning produced to balance and disguise the disorder of their being-in-the-world (Gabel 22). By reifying the history of colonialism, making it the sole source of all socio-cultural evils, postcolonial critics foreclose the possibility of interrogating and transcending the endemic social and cultural dysfunction that predates colonialism and lives on after the colonial masters have left. It is with the repercussions of this systemic failure that I wish to conclude this essay.

Colonial discourse analysis has developed in the last twenty-five years, following the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). Said defined "Orientalism" as the systematic stereotyping and degradation of the Easterner that enabled Western colonial powers to victimize their subjects and consolidate hegemonic control. For the last two decades, practitioners of the Orientalist critique have catalogued the myriad and grave sins of the West to such a degree that one might say that they have trivialized the discussion. Orientalist criticism has engendered a form of fetishism wherein all current Third World ills are traced to colonial oppression. In certain respects, Orientalist criticism has rewritten history. However, it has done so only partially. It has provided a one-sided apologia regarding Western sins and sinners without addressing its flip side. Examining the East to see if it too might be cluttered with stereotypes or misconceptions has never been a sustained part of this critique. Moreover, there has not been an

inquiry into the dehumanizing trends in the East toward itself and its other, the West. Precolonial society is presented as sanitized, the Third World equivalent of an arcadian idyll. This revisionist history has allowed Third World elites to avoid scrutiny of time-honored corrupt practices and nativist racism and sexism. It has allowed customary indigenous exploitation to continue. In short, for postcolonial elites, thanks to Orientalist readings of the past, colonialism has become an opportunity, not a burden. Because of the evil of colonialism in the past, the West has lost all rights in the present to address any subject having to do with the East. With regard to the East, the West is permanently guilty.

Postcolonial criticism has inherited these limitations of the Orientalist critique and developed some of its own, first and foremost, the exorbitant role that it has assigned to the critic. Postcolonial criticism has replaced the colonizer and the subject has become the practitioners of the critique itself. Postcolonial criticism no longer examines the culture's original Orientalist consumers, but postcolonial culture's contemporary interpreters. We have come a long way from discussing nineteenth-century paintings of odalisques and harems, and now discuss the contemporary critics themselves and what they see in such paintings. It is no longer a question of revealing how a text codifies Eurocentric sexual or political superiority, but rather an examination of the contemporary critic's intellectual insecurity and alienation. It is no longer a question of describing how the West has managed the East, but an investigation of how critics manage their relationship with the West. The critique of Orientalism has shifted from a discussion of imperial fantasies to an examination of academic fantasies. The twenty-five years spent analyzing the numerous and real sins of the West have not resulted in a clarification or improvement of relations.

During that same period, Eastern nations, relying on Western epistemes to construct their arguments, have not confronted their own history in any critical fashion. In fact, many Third World scholars have become Orientalists themselves. Some critics of postcolonial theory have questioned the degree to which the whole endeavor has become less a critique of Western power and more an apologia for Eastern failure and a leftist intellectual adventure in rationalization. In the West, it has been enough to embrace guilt and complicity. In the East, it has been enough to condemn and feel victimized. This is the great legacy that this criticism has handed down to us. This heritage was put into grand relief in the rhetoric that surfaced after September 11.

As Edward Rothstein noted in *The New York Times* (Sept. 22, 2001), the general response to September 11 was not particularly novel. In numerous accounts, we were presented with what might be described as the flip side of Orientalism. The same

reductionist misrepresentation that the West had applied to the Arab world was now being applied to America. For the monolithic portrayal of America presented in both Eastern and Western media, Rothstein resuscitated the term "Occidentalism." He claims that the stage for this critique was set much earlier by postmodernism's effort to relativize the fundamental philosophical and political premises of the West. In literary circles, quidities such as truth, morality, objectivity and universality have for some time been understood as culturally constructed. Literary theory teaches us that we must reject universal values.

Orientalism has taught us that Western claims to objectivity and universality and nothing but strategies of imperial control. In arguments common to the protests against globalization and echoed by Said in *The Nation* (Sept. 17, 2001), universals are false and serve merely to "legitimize corporate profit-taking and political power." Rothstein maintains that postcolonialism has added to the critique based on Orientalist criticism its own universal: Western imperialism, appearing as the Original Sin, is to blame. Any act against the West by a postcolonial power cannot be viewed as anything as a reaction to a previous imperial act by the West. We cannot then condemn the World Trade Center attack, since Western hegemonic behavior is the fundamental cause of terrorism and the United States, against which this act was directed, is the most powerful Western hegemonic power. Rothstein opined that some may well view such logic and relativism as ethically perverse. What disturbs me, however, is that we, as readers of recent literary criticism, have become accustomed to this brand of logic. We are not particularly shocked by it, and have come to accept it as commonplace and conventional.

What I propose instead is that we reject a postcolonial theory that, as practiced by its most eminent stars, glorifies theoretical legerdemain and linguistic pyrotechnics at the expense of the careful study of languages, literatures, and cultures — precisely those skills and habits that, ironically enough, Spivak herself praises throughout her most recent book as the traditional strengths of comparative literature. If the rise of postcolonial studies poses any real threat to comparative literature as a discipline, it is because of the apparent ease with which an initiate can become an expert. Because postcolonial theory does not require comparative literature's linguistic skills or an expert's familiarity with specific national cultures and histories, it allows for (and even encourages) a theoretical approach that conflates individual colonial histories and contexts into an overarching "condition." Thus postcolonialism's false consciousness: postcolonial studies emerges as a faux-discipline whose practitioners can celebrate cultural difference and hybridity, and speak in solidarity with subalterns without ever having to partake of their actual struggles.

What born-again comparatist Spivak calls for in *Death of a Discipline* — a "reconstellation" of the discipline that retains its traditional strengths while embracing a suspiciously postcolonial-sounding "planetarity" (91) — again promises to do everything, in the manner of a demonstrably overinflated postcoloniality: preserve traditional strengths while opening up to cultural and linguistic differences within national literatures, *and* retain and defend the value of language skills. True to the postcolonial approach I have mapped out, Spivak asserts all of this but offers only an anecdotal, willfully eclectic exposition of what such a comparative literature might look like, how it might operate in a world increasingly dominated by facile monolingual postcolonial and cultural studies. Rather than a prescription or manifesto, Spivak presents the book as a call to action "in the hope that there may be some in the academy who do not believe that the critical edge of the humanities should be appropriated and determined by the market" (xii). This approach is of course consistent with the postcolonial critic's pretense of "openness" toward the future, as Spivak herself asserts: "we must, as literature teachers in the classroom . . . let literature teach us that there are no certainties, that the process is open, and that it may be salubrious that it is so" (26).

Perhaps. But then again, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. Spivak's strategy exemplifies the dishonesty pervading much postcolonial theory. It espouses an open endedness in order to occlude a concerted lack of cultural knowledge, specificity and, ultimately, respect for the cultures supposedly being studied. Such lofty disinterest allows Spivak in a final, unfortunate parenthesis at the end of *Death of a Discipline* to blithely throw together figures as disparate as José Martí and W. E. B. DuBois for no better reason than that they represent "two widely known, heroic figures from the older minorities, writers of a previous dispensation" (92). She can invoke the two great modernists not to carefully discuss their works, but to employ them in her own critical project of "the turning of identitarian monuments into documents for reconstellation" (Spivak 91). It is a profoundly disappointing, yet not surprising, conclusion for the book. It points in a discouraging way to how one of our discipline's most renowned professors practices her craft. Marti and DuBois do not need to be "reconstellated," but Spivak's version of comparative literature does.

Postcolonial criticism has, in fact, died. It died before we even could articulate adequately what it was. It is time for critics to retool themselves. What better persona to adopt, in the age of multiculturalism and globalism, than that of a comparatist. Postcolonial critics, whose formation almost exclusively had been in English literature, made their careers championing a brand of crit-

icism that claimed to engage a voiceless, underrepresented world. They did so while ignoring the methodology and linguistic expertise traditional to the discipline of Comparative Literature. They now position themselves as prophets calling for a return to the very skills that their own scholarship has consistently eschewed. They claim to engage in a reform process of installing the standards of cultural and linguistic specificity to a discipline that their own brand of criticism had co-opted and colonized. They claim to discover what comparatists have known and practiced for decades, with the telling difference that the focus continues to be on the consciousness of the critic herself rather than the culture supposedly under investigation. This too is an extension of the false consciousness that plagues scholars today.

Notes:

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1. Guillermo Gomez-Peña and Pepon Osorio.
2. See respectively Said 1-28, Bhabha 6-18, and Spivak *Death* 92-97.
3. In the quoted passage, Gorra's immediate subject is Rushdie's fiction and characters.
4. See Bhabha 6-18.
5. Spivak calls this group "the so-called original inhabitants," and strategically avoids the word "indigenous" herself in favor of "Indian aboriginal society." The devadasis, of course, predate modern India, which did not come into nationhood until 1947. See Spivak *Critique* 141.
6. For the most recent, revised version of this famous (and infamous) essay, see Spivak *Critique* 248-311. For the original see Spivak "Subaltern."
7. See Spivak *Other* 222-240 and 241-268.
8. See Waters.

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