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**Translating the Other: Spivak's *Other Asias* - Questions of
Representation and Identity.**

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To My Dad and Mum
For always being there

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Abstract

The present thesis consists of a two part introductory essay and the translation of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Righting Wrongs – 2002: Accessing Democracy among the Aboriginals."

The first part of the introductory essay, "Translating the Other: Spivak's *Other Asias* - Questions of Representation and Identity," is a preface to the following translation. It aims at familiarising the reader with Spivak and her work, both of which are rather unknown to the Greek public. In this part, some of her key contributions to the field of postcolonial studies are presented; concepts like what constitutes the Other, "sanctioned ignorance," "Humanities to come," "learning from below" together with the discussion of issues of Human Rights, humanitarianism, responsibility, representation and identity together with the role of Humanities today. The part that follows is a "Translation Commentary" that explains in more detail the reasons behind the choice of Spivak and "Righting Wrongs" and discusses a number of issues that are relevant to the translation process.

The source text is the first of the essays collected in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *Other Asias*. The book consists of seven essays and one interview. The chosen text discusses the need for a new pedagogy both in the Western World and the Global South.

The present thesis, through the translation of the aforementioned text and the presentation of Spivak and the issues she discusses attempts to indicate that this need for a new pedagogy is more relevant and more urgent than ever before.

Keywords: responsibility, identity, representation, re-presentation, learning from below, Humanities to come, subaltern, Human Rights, ethics, Other

Περίληψη

Η παρούσα διπλωματική αποτελείται από ένα εισαγωγικό δοκίμιο σε δύο μέρη και τη μετάφραση του δοκιμίου της Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak “Righting Wrongs – 2002: Accessing Democracy among the Aboriginals”.

Το πρώτο μέρος του εισαγωγικού δοκιμίου, «Μεταφράζοντας τον Άλλο: Οι Διαφορετικές Ασίες της Spivak – Ζητήματα αναπαράστασης και ταυτότητας», αποτελεί μια εισαγωγή στη μετάφραση που ακολουθεί. Επιδιώκει να εξοικειώσει τον αναγνώστη με τη Spivak και το έργο της, καθώς είναι κατά βάση κάτι το άγνωστο για το ελληνικό κοινό. Παρουσιάζονται μερικές από τις σημαντικότερες συνεισφορές της Spivak στον τομέα των μετααποικιακών σπουδών: έννοιες όπως το πώς συνίσταται ο Άλλος, η «εγκεκριμένη άγνοια», οι «υπό έλευση Ανθρωπιστικές Σπουδές», η «μάθηση κάτωθεν» καθώς και θέματα ανθρωπίνων δικαιωμάτων, ανθρωπισμού, ευθύνης, αναπαράστασης, αντιπροσώπευσης και ταυτότητας μαζί με τον ρόλο των Ανθρωπιστικών Επιστημών σήμερα. Στο δεύτερο μέρος της εισαγωγής αυτής ακολουθεί ένας σύντομος «Μεταφραστικός Σχολιασμός». Εκεί επεξηγούνται λεπτομερέστερα οι λόγοι επιλογής της συγκεκριμένης συγγραφέως και του συγκεκριμένου δοκιμίου, “Righting Wrongs”, και εξετάζονται διάφορα θέματα που αφορούν τη διαδικασία της μετάφρασης.

Το κείμενο πηγή είναι το πρώτο της συλλογής δοκιμίων *Διαφορετικές Ασίες (Other Asias)* της Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Το βιβλίο αποτελείται από επτά δοκίμια και μια συνέντευξη. Το επιλεγμένο κείμενο συζητά την ανάγκη για μια νέα παιδαγωγική τόσο στον Δυτικό κόσμο όσο και στον παγκόσμιο Νότο.

Η παρούσα εργασία, με τη μετάφραση του προαναφερθέντος κειμένου και την παρουσίαση της Spivak και των ζητημάτων που συζητά, επιχειρεί να δείξει ότι η ανάγκη για μια νέα παιδαγωγική είναι πιο σχετική και πιο επείγουσα από ποτέ.

Λέξεις κλειδιά: ευθύνη, ταυτότητα, αντιπροσώπευση, αναπαράσταση, μάθηση κάτωθεν, Ανθρωπιστικές Επιστήμες υπό έλευση, υπεξούσιες ομάδες, Ανθρώπινα Δικαιώματα, ηθική, Άλλος

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Translating the Other: Spivak's *Other Asias* - Questions of Representation and Identity.

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 textbook. The world actually writes itself with the many-leveled, unfixable intricacy and openness of *a work of literature*.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ("Reading the World: Literary Studies in the Eighties"; emphasis mine)

In "Reading the World: Literary Studies in the Eighties" Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak proposes that the world should be read as a book and what is more as "a work of literature" in process (Spivak, 1987:95). Taking into account the diverse people, cultures, genders, classes that exist in this world, one could argue that this "book" is often in need of translation. Therein lie the solution and the problem of being able to build a political and ethical relationship to the humans conditioned to be others. Depending on how one translates this world, connections, synapses, "filiations" and "affiliations," to use Edward Said's terms, are created and they all have concrete effects on people's lives everywhere, from the poor, isolated villages in India where Spivak teaches "the future electorate in the Global South" (2008:16) to rich New York and her western elite students. As this essay will attempt to show, for Spivak the best translation comes through education and the Humanities because for her this translation should amount to an "ethical relationship with history" (Moore and Rivera, 2011:132) and far more importantly to an ethical relationship with the Other.

In Greece, Spivak is not widely known outside the Academia since, with some exceptions¹, her work has not been translated into Greek. This constitutes a paradox when one takes into account her celebrated status in the rest of the world and the current political and theoretical questions that her work addresses and range from post-colonialism and deconstruction to feminism, globalization and human rights. As

¹ According to the books-in-print database BIBLIONET established by the National Book Centre of Greece (EKEBI) the following works have been translated in Greek: *Europe and the Bull Market (Η αρπαγή της Ευρώπης από τον ταύρο των αγορών*, εκδόσεις Νήσος 2013), *Who Sings the Nation State (Τραγουδώντας τον εθνικό ύμνο*, εκδόσεις Τόπος 2015) (collective work) και *Φεμινιστική θεωρία και πολιτισμική κριτική*, εκδόσεις Νήσος 2006 (collective work).

a result, a short introduction to the present translation of her essay “Righting Wrongs” is in order.

When Spivak was born in Calcutta in 1942, India was five years away from achieving its independence from the British Empire and was experiencing the artificial famine imposed by the British in order to feed their troops in the Pacific theatre of the war (Spivak 1996:16). Spivak, thus, belongs to the last generation born in a colonised India, a generation “on the cusp of decolonization,” on whose “childhood and adolescen[ce] [...] was played out the meaning of a negotiated political independence” (16). She also belongs to the “first generation of young intellectuals after the independence” (Spivak 1990:38). In 1959, she was awarded a first-class honours degree in English from the University of Calcutta (Morton 2003:2). As she comments in her interview for the *Melbourne Journal of Politics*, she “ha[s] inherited a certain history –born in metropolitan Bengal, having a postcolonial education, gaining expertise in European matters” (1990:38). One could argue that she herself is the embodiment of the paradox she terms “enabling violation” (Spivak 1999:371), the term Spivak uses to describe the situation created by the experience and the violent effects of colonialism on the former colonies and their peoples. Spivak is the “healthy child” (371) that was produced by the “rape” of her colonised country and while she “cannot be ostracised” (Spivak 1996:19), her “existence cannot be advanced as a justification of the rape. Imperialism cannot be justified by the fact that India has railways and [she] speak[s] English well” (Spivak 1999:371).

It could also be argued that she is the “child of a rape” in another sense, a not entirely colonial one this time. Spivak’s family was a “good caste Hindu family” (Spivak 1996:17) of the upper middle class. She went to a missionary school where the majority of the teaching personnel “were tribal Christians, that is to say, Indian subalterns, lower than rural underclass by origin, neither Hindus nor Muslims, not even Hindu untouchables, but tribals –so called aboriginals– who had been converted by missionaries” (17). In this case the rape was committed by Spivak’s people, her caste and her class (and by the Christian missionaries of course) toward people who were considered to be lower than the lowest. However, her school was characterised by a “very good academic quality” (17) and at a very young age Spivak experienced what would later become one of her trademarks; she was “learning from below,” from teachers deprived of all privileges by virtue of origin alone, “who[, however,] had

dehegemonized Christianity [and in a way the caste system as well, since they had escaped their subaltern status] in order to occupy a space where they could teach social superiors” (17).

Thus, two violations appear to have conditioned Spivak’s “enablement.” The first, a cultural by-product of Spivak’s own culture that allowed no space for people to move; and, the second, a by-product of colonialism, namely Macaulayism,² that marked her education as “a legacy of the colonial education policies that had been in place in India since the days of the British Empire in the nineteenth century” (Morton 2003:2-3). Both offered Spivak the translation tools she needed to read the world and enabled her to become a “postcolonial diasporic Indian who seeks to decolonise the mind” (Spivak 1990:67) and who is considered “by the Marxists as too codic, by feminists as too male-identified, by indigenous theorists as too committed to Western theory” (69-70) and who in turn refuses to marginalise herself in an attempt “to get sympathy from people who are genuinely marginalised” (Spivak 1996:18).

After receiving her degree in English, Spivak went to the United States where she earned a Master’s degree from Cornell and afterwards wrote her doctoral dissertation on Yeats under the supervision of Paul de Man (Morton 2003:3). Today, she is a professor in Columbia University in New York. Spivak’s impressive entrance to the academic field was firmly established with her translation of Derrida’s *De la grammatologie (Of Grammatology)* which was accompanied by her now famous “Translator’s Preface,” which, besides presenting the author, constituted a seminal introduction of Derrida’s deconstruction as a radical philosophy. Since, she has written several books, collections of essays and speeches, and given numerous interviews and talks around the world.³

² The term refers to Thomas B. Macaulay and his stance against the teaching of Sanskrit and Arabic to the Indian students in the 19th century. The term describes the use of the educational system for the oppression of the indigenous populations and the destruction of their culture through its forceful substitution with the culture of the metropolis (Wiench 2014:23).

³ It is impossible to give an overview of her work here, so a short summary is given instead: In *In Other Worlds* (1987) Spivak draws on feminism, Marxism and deconstruction to explore literary texts in an attempt to show how the dominant Western canon and the traditional way of reading its texts essentially silence voices from other parts of the world by providing a singular, Eurocentric, mode of translating them. *The Post-Colonial Critic* (1990) discusses issues of representation and responsibility, as well as the politics of deconstruction. *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (1993), examines literary and philosophical works and films to show how philosophy touches upon pedagogy and the responsibilities of the academic and the intellectual. *A Critique on Postcolonial Reason* (1999) explores the role of the postcolonial critic by deconstructing philosophical works of the Western canon in search

Spivak has also written a great number of articles of literary criticism and theoretical articles, the most famous of which is “Can the Subaltern Speak?”⁴ In it Spivak critiques Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault for not taking into account the difference between the concepts “represent and “re-present” and thus not recognizing the actual social and political presence of subaltern constituencies in their vision of an international workforce that would rise against oppression. The two French philosophers thus represent the subaltern other by omitting them from their discourse of liberation, failing to open the possibility for frames of recognizability and representation of their own (re-present). By collapsing these two concepts into one, she argues, “the critique of ideological subject-constitution within state formations and systems of political economy can now be effaced, as can the active theoretical practice of the “transformation of consciousness” (Spivak 1999:257). Thus, what actually happens is that the intellectual effaces his/her presence in representing his/her own re-presentation of the Other essentially resulting in him/her occupying the space that should be occupied by the Other while simultaneously disappropriating the Other’s experiences and voice and in effect rendering her/him a ventriloquist puppet.

In “Can the Subaltern Speak,” Spivak also discusses the missing dimension of the work done by the Subaltern Studies Group. Their epistemological task is the excavation of history “from below”, namely, the people who have been ignored by the master narratives of the elite, so that they can create the necessary space for these people to represent themselves, something that Spivak obviously supports. What she takes issue with is the methodology used by the subaltern historians in order to achieve this goal. Specifically, and although Spivak is a self-proclaimed Marxist, she does not agree with the classic Marxist methodology used by the subaltern historians, in the sense that such an analysis that focuses on the materialist evidence forgoes the most elusive in terms of its material presence in the archive but also greatly if not more oppressed subaltern subject, the gendered subaltern, the subaltern woman (Morton 2003:46-47).

of the structures constituting postcolonial reasoning, and also traces the figure of the native informant. *Death of a Discipline* (2003) is Spivak’s critique on western cultural dominance and on the increasing control of the market over the Humanities. Finally, in *Other Asias* (2008) she once again addresses the issues of pedagogy, responsibility, representation and re-presentation, as well as issues of Human Rights, humanitarianism and the establishment of an ethical relationship with the Other.

⁴ First published in 1988 and then revised in “History” the third chapter of *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* in 1999.

Another aspect of Spivak's work is the translation and commentary, mainly, of the works of Mahasweta Devi, a Bengalian writer of fiction and a political activist supporting "the Indian tribals and outcasts," who fights her war "in the arena of tribal self-development and Constitutional rights" (Spivak 1996:162-163). In her translations of Devi's stories, in which women often have the central role, Spivak has the opportunity to implement the methodology and principles she discussed in her essay "The Politics of Translation."⁵ There, quoting her "Translator's Preface" that preceded her translations of 18th century Bengali poetry, she remarks, "[t]ranslation is the most intimate act of reading. I surrender to the text when I translate [...] Reading and surrendering take on meanings in such a case. The translator earns permission to transgress from the trace of the other –before memory– in the closest places of self" (2009:201-202).

For Spivak, translation is yet again the building of an ethical relationship with the Other, which starts with the translator "surrender[ing] herself to the linguistic rhetoricity of the original text" (211) because the opposite could mean the translator opening the door to "a species of neocolonialist construction of the non-Western scene" (203). Such an act could render "the literature by a woman in Palestine" similar "in the feel of its prose" to that of "a man in Taiwan" (204), destroying her voice and turning her work into nothing more than a commodity which only answers the demands of a western market's multicultural sensitivities (Spivak 2003:xii), rather than the call of the Other for a meaningful connection. The building of this relationship continues with the translator facilitating the "love between the original and its shadow, a love that [...] holds the agency of the translator and the demands of her imagined or actual audience at bay" (202). Spivak's suggestion regarding the achievement of this goal is the translator's deep knowledge of "the history of the language, the history of the author's moment [and] the history of the language-in-and-as translation" (209).

Stephen Morton observes that Spivak's translation of Devi's stories allows her to work "with the singular histories and lives of 'Third World', subaltern women in order to disrupt the codes and conventions of western knowledge and the maintenance of imperial power" (2003:7). This often takes place when someone holding a

⁵ It is the 9th chapter of her book *Outside in the Teaching Machine*.

privileged position –whether a politician, an intellectual, a humanitarian worker or a translator– attempts, no matter how benevolently, to re-present the subalterns in the effacing way Spivak criticised Foucault and Deleuze for. Spivak, in her interview with Sarah Harasym, mentions that one of the reasons she chose Devi is that “she is very careful about representing the gendered, subaltern as she represents her. So that single-issue bourgeois feminists, who want to represent themselves as *the* people [...] are very irritated [...] that Mahasweta Devi doesn’t do this herself, and speak *as* the gendered subaltern *herself*” (1990:110; emphasis in the original).

What remains constant throughout her work is her continuous effort “to break the rules” as she boldly states in the preface of *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (xiii). The rules she is referring to are those used by the dominant privileged to define and constitute the world exclusively according to their desires, disregarding not only the desires of the unprivileged but often even their human status. Spivak’s postcolonial reading of the world is characterised by “constantly and persistently looking into how truths are produced” (Spivak 1996:27), that is to say, by the use of deconstruction, as well as, by a non-western feminism.⁶ These are the methodological tools she uses in order to uncover and criticise the so called “truths” that are supposed to constitute class, gender, identities, nationalities, humanity, and which inscribed –colonialism– and maintain –globalization– the inequalities in the Global South. She also uses deconstruction and her non-western feminist perspective in her alternative reading of Marxism. By reading Marx in that way she reveals its weaknesses, for example its eurocentrism and its patriarchal overtones, since in his discussion of social change he ignores the non-European and the gendered Other. Simultaneously, however, Spivak’s reading reintroduces the now often thought obsolete Marxism into the current political fold by reformulating key ideas like that of the working-class body that in her analysis often takes the form of the gendered global South Other. (Morton 2003:91-99). Thus, this new reading of Marxism adds another tool in her arsenal that allows her to address and criticise the silencing of the non-European Other and in particular the gendered subaltern, via the economic conditions imposed by capitalism and globalization.

⁶ Stephen Morton notes that “Spivak challenges the universal claims of feminism to speak for all women [...] [namely] the assumption that all women are the same, [emphasizing] the importance of respecting differences in race, class, religion, citizenship and culture between women” (2004:71-72).

The epigraph at the beginning of this essay highlights that for Spivak the world should be read as a complicated literary text; such a vastly diversified world would necessarily require translation. Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi in their “Introduction: of colonies, cannibals and vernaculars” in *Post-colonial Translation* write that

[...] Europe was regarded as the great Original, the starting point, and the colonies were therefore copies, or ‘translations’ of Europe, which they were supposed to duplicate. Moreover, being copies, translations were evaluated as less than originals, and the myth of the translation as something that diminished the greater original established itself. It is important also to remember that the language of ‘loss’ has featured so strongly in many comments on translation. [...] Students of translation almost all start out with the assumption that something will be lost in translation, that the text will be diminished and rendered inferior. They rarely consider that there might also be a process of gain. The notion of the colony as a copy or translation of the great European Original inevitably involves a value judgement that ranks the translation in a lesser position in the literary hierarchy. *The colony, by this definition, is therefore less than its colonizer, its original.* (2002:4; emphases mine)

Hence, when colonialism’s achievement to establish Europe as the metropolis to the colonies’ periphery status, mainly through the power of culture rather than that of arms, is viewed through a translation register that reads the “metropolis” as the “great Original” and those in the “periphery” as “copies or ‘translations’,” what is revealed is a “value judgement” that not only presumes that there is nothing to be gained from the periphery’s culture⁷ but which also establishes a vocabulary of loss. The copy is less than the original, the colonised less than the coloniser. This mistranslation, that arises from the West succumbing to the temptation of translating the non-European Other into a copy of itself instead of opening itself to his/her alterity, lies behind concepts such as “First” and “Third” world.

Like Edward Said in *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, Spivak too believes that culture played a significant role in the establishment of the concept of the Third World and the register of loss and lesser value that came to be identified with it. An event which projected the image of the western white male as the valuable “original” to be copied –albeit in valueless copies– and the desires and interests of the West as synonyms of the desires and interests of the whole planet. Spivak argues that the West

⁷ This is illustrated in Macaulay’s “famous and horrible sentence” that Spivak reminds us of in “Righting Wrongs”: “A single shelf of a good European library [is] worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.” (2008:44).

simultaneously constituted and effaced the subject in the Global South obliging him/her “to cathect (occupy in response to a desire) the space of the Imperialists’ self-consolidating other” (1996:219). The term she uses to describe this political and ontological domination process is “epistemic violence”, reflected in Marlow’s redeeming idea in Joseph Conrads *Heart of Darkness*⁸, and she uses it in a way that “echoes”, as Sangeeta Ray suggests, “Foucault’s notion of epistemic rupture and discursive violence” (2009:32).

The naturalisation, on the one side, and the internalization, on the other, of the ideas resulting from this “epistemic violence” are further solidified by what Spivak calls “sanctioned ignorance”. In *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* she argues that postcolonial studies,

by concentrating only on the representation of the colonized or the matter of the colonies, can sometimes serve the production of current neo-colonial knowledge by placing colonialism/imperialism securely in the past, and/or by suggesting a continuous line from that past to our future (Spivak 1999:1)

She propounds the idea that “[p]art of the mainstream education involves learning to ignore [...] with a sanctioned ignorance” (2) the practices of the “epistemic violence” (which were efficiently disseminated through the works of the Western literary canon) and their role in constituting what today are called First and Third World, thus forever reproducing and maintaining these structures.⁹ Spivak further analyses “sanctioned ignorance” as the phenomenon in which the West gives the impression of trying to establish a relationship with the global South. It is however, only an impression because the West does not have any actual “sense of [...] the subject-constitution of the social and gendered agents in question” (164). It tries to cover this gap in its knowledge by invoking words like “globality” and “hybridity” which, in truth, serve,

⁸ “The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it, not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea –something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to ...” (Conrad 2006:7).

⁹ In many of her works Spivak uses the term “worlding”. Morton explains that the term “refers to the way in which writing in general, or textuality, has provided a rhetorical structure to justify imperial expansion. In many literary, historical, legal and geographical texts written in the colonial period [...] there are frequent references to colonial territories as empty, uninscribed land or *terra nullius*, or to indigenous peoples without cultures, writing or political sovereignty [... all of them being] persuasive metaphors employed to justify colonial expansion” (2004:19). One could argue that and sanctioned ignorance is the current equivalent of the colonial worlding.

as Spivak remarks, “to hide the financialization of the globe [... and] to obliterate the irreducible hybridity of all language” (164). Simply put, “sanctioned ignorance” is exercised by many western institutions and western intellectuals in two ways: on the one hand colonialism is either considered to be a past relic that has only museum character and value or its presence is simply ignored –in both cases its role in the construction of today’s world and its inequalities is conveniently ignored– and, on the other hand, what takes place is the marginalisation or complete rejection of the knowledge that derives from the epistemic systems of the Other.

A paradigm of the latter, which also brings into the fold questions of the role of development, Human Rights and responsibility, is the case of Bangladesh. In her interview “Subaltern talk,” which took place in Columbia University in 1993, Spivak referred to Bangladesh as an example of “subaltern insurgency”. In that example she mentioned that when the British came to that area they discovered “fully developed ‘ancient waterworks.’” They actually were “very complicated irrigation canals” used for the management of the flooding and were maintained by the subordinates of the local feudal chiefs. The change of the role of the chiefs to tax collectors for the British led to the abandonment of the canal maintenance –due to the ignorance of the British regarding their use and the feudal chiefs’ indifference for their former duties and people–, their infestation with mosquitoes and their subsequent destruction despite the reaction of the local subalterns (1996:290). By failing to pay attention to the knowledge of the locals regarding the canals, namely by purposefully ignoring their epistemic system as something “ancient” thus obsolete and inferior, and by changing the social structure of the area and thus destroying the existing balances, the British exercised a form of sanctioned ignorance that led to the destruction of “the affluence of the place” due to its uncontrolled exposure to the floods (291).

In the second chapter of *Other Asias* entitled “Responsibility -1992: Testing Theory in the Plains” we find the contemporary development of this example. Spivak discusses the case of a conference about the Flood Action Plan (FAP) in Bangladesh that the Green Party had arranged to take place at the European Parliament in Strasbourg. It was to be an answer to the plans set in place at the 15th G7 Paris Summit, in the framework of Third World Aid, according to which the G7 countries¹⁰ together with

¹⁰ Namely, France, Western Germany, United Kingdom, Italy, United States, Canada and Japan.

the IMF and the World Bank decided to back up financially and technically a plan for the management of the floods in Bangladesh so that the country would be led to the path of development. As Spivak explains, the basic idea of the plan was the building of enormous embankments –she pointedly describes them as “pharaonic”– which would effectively destroy the curved, “changeable riverscape” lines running through the land by forcibly turning them into straight ones (2008:83).

In a repeat of what happened before upon the arrival of the British, the western donors, despite the reaction of the Bangladeshi peasants and fishermen, failed to consult them opening a dialogue with them and chose the road of sanctioned ignorance. The Bangladeshi people, through their constant experience of living with the water and the floods, have learned to survive the extreme floods that take place every thirty years and to manage and take advantage of the yearly floods that fertilize the ground with their algae making it fertile –and the industrial fertilizers redundant. Furthermore, they use the rivers that run through the country to fish, with fish being the main protein source for them (82). They learned to grow different types of rice seeds whose growth corresponds to the pattern rhythms of the floods (87). This is their episteme and their right; to manage the floods and to sustain themselves by fishing in the public rivers.

The plan set in motion under the wings of the World Bank and the donor countries paid no attention to these. Instead it led to the flooding of the country with contractors and consultants, namely to the “consultanization” of Bangladesh, effectively blocking “the possibility of agitation for peoples’ rights [...] since the de facto law [was] in the hands of the donors via a Flood Protection Organization” (84). The western donors chose to ignore the episteme of the local people, failing to “learn from below”, and promoted their episteme as the only one able to lead to the development of the country. Spivak observes that “Development is the dominant global denomination of Responsibility: the story is that the rich nations collectively hear the call of the ethical and collect to help the poor nations by giving them skill and money” (85). A responsibility, however, that is actually a trap; the donors and the World Bank were not offering a gift to the Bangladeshi people. It was more an act of “coercive lending, solicited by comprador capital and a compromised State” that “mortgage[d] the future of the country” (83) or, in other words, a rearticulation of “earlier forms of

imperialism” under the mantle of “developmental policies, and in aid programmes” (Harindranath 2006:64)

As an answer to the World Bank and the donors’ FAP project and its repercussions, a conference hosted by the European Parliament was arranged by the Green Party supposedly to “offer the opportunity to [the project opponents] to present their case directly to many of the governments funding the scheme” (81). Whereas the World Bank and its associates answer to responsibility in the name of development, the Green Party answers to responsibility in the name of “Nature as the Other of the Human” (79). For the former, “people” are the “final instance of justification for its enterprise [...] remain[ing] a promised possible beneficiary [...] while t]he real interest remains the generation of global capital through consultant and contractor” (85-86), for the latter, the “last instance is ‘Nature,’ [not “people”] even though it is always Nature-for-the-human as the human-for-Nature” (86).

It is clear that neither the World Bank and its associates nor the Green Party –despite the appearances– were interested in establishing a relation of equals with the Bangladeshi subalterns.¹¹ Spivak comments that the conference, according to the literature surrounding it, was supposed to be a dialogue, namely “the accepted proper name of responsibility as exchange-of-responses” (80), between the representatives of development (the World Bank, the donors and the Bangladeshi officials) and the representatives of the those against it (the Bangladeshi fishermen and peasants), who as Sangeeta Ray observes were “given voice to by the intervention of the Green Party which supposedly enable[d] [their] representation” (2009:76). When the conference took place, however, the Bank officials refused the call to participate to that exchange (Spivak 2008:86-87) and ignored “the organised protesters at the conference” (89). Moreover, the organisers of the conference had failed to provide for simultaneously translation from Bengali, turning the “representatives” of the Bangladeshi fishermen and peasants into simple spectacles on display like children or animals (92), to be observed but not to be actually heard. Even taking into account that the organisers of

¹¹ Spivak does recognise that the stance of the World Bank and that of the Green Party towards the Bangladeshi subalterns are not equivalent but does not absolve the latter of their complicity to the inequality of the relationship (2008:86). bell hooks describes this situation pointedly: “We know that the forces that silence us because they never wants us to speak, differ from the forces that say speak, tell me your story. Only do not speak in the voice of resistance. Only speak from that space in the margin that is a sign of deprivation, a wound, an unfulfilled longing. Only speak your pain” (1990:343).

the conference had the best intentions and the absence of a translator was an unforgivable but honest mistake, one cannot forget that the starting point of the Green Party's initiative is inherently flawed by its very benevolence in a "white men, seeking to save brown women [and men] from brown [and white] men" (1999:303) manner. Thus even though the representatives of the "below" trusted in the responsibility of the "above" they were betrayed. They expected to participate in an exchange-of-responses, but how can a response exist if one is not even heard?

What appeared at first glance as acts of benevolence, was in fact an exhibition of a neo-colonial humanitarianism; "the two faces of 'Europe' [...] –global and bloated on the one hand", refusing responsibility towards the subaltern even in the form of 'exchange', "earthy and ascetic on the other" (86) supposedly offering a space for the subalterns to speak but in effect staging them "as a slice of the authentic, a piece of the real Bangladesh" (92) and silencing them. As bell hooks aptly observes:

No need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself.
No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain.¹² I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still colonizer, the speaking subject and you are now at the center of my talk (1990:343).

Malreddy Pavan Kumar observes that for postcolonial discourses the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights was nothing more than "an ideological extension of colonial humanism" through which colonial apologists basically implemented benevolence and rationality practices abusing "humanist narratives to 'promote social

¹² Another interesting input on this account is articulated by William Paul Simmons, who drawing on Jacques Rancière and Aristotle argues that in so far as the politics is about who are part of the polis and who are "*sans part* (without part), or [...] *aneu logou* (without a voice) [...] [f]rom the perspective of those in the polis and their law," those outside it speak in the same voice as animals seeking to express pain or pleasure (Simmons 2014:131). What is crucial here is that the Law does not respond to these calls since while it recognises that those outside the polis "may understand the voice of reason" (131), it firmly doubts that they can exercise it. Hence, in the polis of the European Parliament, and that of the European Union by extension, the outsiders, namely the representatives of the Bangladeshi peasants and fishermen were treated as such; as animals only able to express sensations of pain but unable to "exercise reason." The following scene described by Spivak is indicative of that: the representative of the Bangladeshi subalterns was delivering his speech, despite the aforementioned difficulties, in a lengthy, oratory style true to his cultural axiomatics, but unfit for the rigid European ones that make no concessions based on "gender, status, and the temperament of the moderator" (2008:93) regarding the allotted speech time. Naturally, he was unable to finish in time and although his plea to continue was granted, it was not done so from the perspective of understanding and accepting it as the right of another cultural system with different rules of conduct, but rather "as a gesture of benevolence toward someone who could not *understand* the rules" (93; emphasis mine), namely, as someone unable to "exercise reason" and thus "*aneu logou*" before the eyes of the polis.

hierarchies and the violence necessary to maintain them” (2011:1558). Kumar also argues that in the postcolonial field there are two different channels of thought regarding humanism. The first, which Kumar calls “Fanonian humanism”, draws on Franz Fanon’s call “to grow new skin, [...] to work out new concepts, and [...] to set afoot a new man” (Fanon qtd. in Kumar 2011:1557), outside the framework of what the West proclaimed as human. The second one, “critical humanism”, advocated by postcolonial scholars like Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, is characterised by Kumar as “‘consolidating,’ ‘residual,’ or ‘inclusive’ [...] neither averse to nor fully complicit with European humanism” (1559). What is implied by these conflicting humanism channels of thought is what Anthony Appiah calls “humanism’s deadening urge to uniformity” (in Kumar 2011:1560), namely the tendency to ignore diversity¹³ and “inequalities in power and wealth/labour distribution” (Andreotti 2006:41), thus resulting in a universalism with a “non-negotiable vision of how everyone should live what everyone should want or should be” (48). In the forward note of her book *Other Asias*, Spivak writes that her essay “Righting Wrongs” constitutes a critique of this universalism. Where Appiah claims that the presence of “different local human ways of being” (qtd. in Kumar 2011:1560) makes it possible to overcome this trait of humanism, Spivak in turn emphasises the need of a new pedagogy.

In “Righting Wrongs,” Spivak critically examines humanism and humanitarianism under the scope of responsibility and human rights. She asks questions like what it means to be a dispenser of human rights, who has a right to it and the responsibility for it and how the “training of the imagination” through the teaching of literary reading with the help of the Humanities could, on the one hand, prepare peoples, like the Indian tribals, to reclaim their place to the tissue they were torn off and, on the other, lead the West on a new path of ethics that would allow it to construct an ethical relationship with the Other, overcoming its claim to be the centre of the world and its responsibility/burden to bring the rest up to its standards. Ramaswani Harindranath

¹³ Spivak makes a similar point in “Righting Wrongs” when she argues that the “permeability of global culture must be seen as restricted” since in contrast to the western “superficial cultural relativism” that overcomes cultural borders with ease, “the immense heterogeneity of the subaltern cultures” cannot do the same due to “lack of communication between and among [them]” (33). She also suggests that declarations regarding the “right to self-determination”, like the Bangkok NGO Declaration, may claim that they speak for “Indigenous People in general,” however, they have no effect on “the entire spectrum of Asian Aborigines,” due to the cultural absolutism that characterizes each group that is included in it (34).

argues that Spivak distinguishes between responsibility-based and rights-based cultures in an attempt to articulate what her “strategic essentialism”¹⁴ could not because of the emergence of the “new subaltern”, who “is caught up in the global capitalist imperatives” that constitute the re-articulation of earlier forms of imperialism in new terms like development, ‘free trade’ and Third World Aid. In other words, although “conceptions and declarations of human rights” do have value, there is an unequal relation between North and South expressed through “the relationship between human right initiatives and development projects”, replicating “dimensions of the exercise of colonial power and its exclusion of the subaltern” (2006:64). For Spivak the only solution available is the initiation of a dialogue with both responsibility- and rights-based cultures, since both are in need of supplementation. The former, because they are “unprepared for the public sphere” due to their long delegitimization and thus they need to learn to develop “democratic reflexes” (Spivak 2008:14). The latter, because in order to answer in the most ethical way “the call of the other” (14), they must “learn to unlearn” their privilege, which actually constitutes a loss since no matter what those privileges are

¹⁴ The term “strategic essentialism” was coined to describe a strategy that could overcome the negative effects of essentialism in identity politics. In philosophy, essentialism is used to describe “the invariable and fixed properties which define the ‘whatness’ of a given entity” (Fuss 1989 in Morton 2003:73). In the political sphere, however, this fixity of traits is rather dangerous; it assumes that groups of people “have one or several defining features exclusive to all members” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1999 in Olson and Fox 2010:304) of the group. Hope Olson and Melodie Fox treat essentialism “as a reductionist oversimplification leading to stereotyping” (304). As a result, those in dominant positions are able to construct permanent identities and consciousnesses. Prompted by the Subaltern Studies Collective’s efforts to rewrite history from below that necessitated –“in order to write ‘the subaltern as the subject of history’” (Ray 209:109)- the construction of an essentialistic subaltern consciousness, Spivak tried to overcome the traps set by essentialism by articulating a strategy that came to be known as “strategic essentialism”. In her essay “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography” Spivak called for “a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest” (qtd. in Rivera and Moore 2011:10). Rivera and Moore comment that what differentiates strategic essentialism from essentialism is that it does not assume “that action flows naturally from identity” (10), yet it does admit that under specific circumstances, like the Subaltern Studies Collective’s history rewriting project, “the employment of or appeal to an essentialized concept of identity [...] [is] sometimes a necessary political tactic” (10). Morton also argues that “the use of essentialism as a short-term strategy to affirm a political identity can be effective, as long as this identity does not then get fixed as an essential category by a dominant group” (2010:75). The key words one should pay attention to here are “short-term” and “strategy.” The fact that the majority of strategic essentialism users failed to do so led Spivak to reconsider her “cry for a strategic use of essentialism” (2009:5). Many of those invoking strategic essentialism turned it from a context-specific strategy into a good-for-everything theory, thus cancelling the “persistent (de)constructive critique of the theoretical” (3) that characterises the former. Spivak is adamant “[a] strategy suits a situation; a strategy is not theory. [...] [S]trategies [should not be] taught as if they were theories, good for all cases” (4). If one keeps using it after the situation that called for it is resolved, then it attains “an essentialist position” (4) with all the trappings that this entails.

in terms of race, class, nationality, gender, and the like, [they] may have prevented [them] from gaining a certain kind of Other knowledge: not simply information that [they] have not yet received, but the knowledge that [they] are not equipped to understand by reason of [their] social positions (Landry and Maclean in Spivak 1996:4).

Spivak insists that the needed supplementation to both types of culture should be provided by the Humanities in the form of a new pedagogy.

According to Rauna Kuokkanen, responsibility in responsibility-based cultures involves what she calls “the logic of the gift.” According to it, responsibility translates into a form of reciprocity between human and nature, recognising the “significance of relations and interdependence” between them, and is actually concretised by gift offerings to the land (2010:62). Responsibility-based cultures, namely cultures that “foreground reciprocities”, cultivate in their members “the expectation of acting for others.”¹⁵ For them responsibility *towards* others is an inherent characteristic of their self (63). This concept of responsibility echoes Edward Said’s concept of contrapuntality. Both cases are an exhibition of the “counterpoint”, a combination of two or more different things that retain their independence when at the same time they intertwine forming a harmonic exchange. As Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan, observes, this “is structured in relationality, [...] it is intentional not arbitrary, a structural elaboration and not a[n] [...] un-self-reflexive mode of expression. The relationship acknowledges and valorizes simultaneously both independence and interdependence” (2012:24). Both concepts share the will to recognise the set of “intertwined and overlapping histories” (Said 1993:19) that exist around them.

The western view of responsibility is not in alignment with that of the responsibility-based cultures. Rather than a responsibility *towards* the other, it takes the form of a

¹⁵ One could argue here that these cultures by understanding themselves as custodians rather than owners of the planet epitomise Spivak’s idea of “planetarity,” a term she introduced in *Death of a Discipline* (2003) drawing on Derrida’s *Politics of Friendship*. Planetarity is Spivak’s answer to globalisation; one could say it is its ethical counter-discourse. Spivak suggests that the globe is something abstract, something that “is on our computers [with] [n]o one liv[ing] there” (2003:72). This leads to the impression that we can attempt to control and exploit it. Contrastively, the planet is something concrete, “we inhabit it, on loan”; at the same time it can be found “in the species of alterity” (72), namely in an outer rather than an inner position, constituting a space of alterity. Whereas people as “global agents” or “global entities” usually driven by capitalist demands of infinite profit try to impose “the same system of exchange everywhere, people as “planetary accidents” and “planetary creatures”(72-73) think of the planet as custodians, as belonging to another and as such “infused with the possibility of seeing from outside, [...] from the perspective of the alien, and not merely of apprehending the unified sphere that is familiar to us from prominent discourses of absolute oversight” (Birla 2010:97).

responsibility *for* the other. Based on Spivak's definition of responsibility as a "transference of 'responses' volleyed from one subject to another" (2008:79), one could visualise the indigenous concept of responsibility as a game of tennis, whereas the western notion of responsibility rather resembles a game of squash. The element missing in the second case is that of interconnectedness and this subsequently entails the danger of a failure in communication and in establishing an equal exchange-relationship. Spivak argues that responsibility for corresponds to "ethics as imagined from within the self-driven political calculus, as 'doing the right thing'" and responsibility to corresponds to "ethics as openness toward the imagined agency of the other" (2008:32). If responsibility is solely for the other then its ethics could be compromised due to the danger of effacing the other by teaching him/her to be a copy of the perceived original¹⁶; by embodying that stance the West transforms responsibility to obligation, to the infamous "white man's burden" or *noblesse oblige*, and thus solidifies its superiority. Ray observes that

[f]or Spivak, the question of ethics turns on the idea of responsibility as right, not responsibility as obligation, since the rationalization of responsibility as obligation can only shore up a culture as reasonable – the culture of European Enlightenment – relegating all other notions of culture as inhabiting the other side of reason (2009:82; emphasis in the original).¹⁷

Moreover, in undertaking that burden it seeks reimbursement for its efforts; a reimbursement that comes in the form of power, of the power to define and of the power to dispense benevolence –no matter its form, development projects or human rights.

Spivak argues that Human Rights can be read in two ways. Firstly, if "Human Rights" is considered to be a noun phrase with "Human" as an attribute of "Rights" then it reads as "having or claiming a right or a set of rights" (2008:14). However, if it is

¹⁶ In the "work of literature" (Spivak 1987:95) that is the world, responsibility towards the other could be seen as a kind of cultural translation that leads the subject to understand that alterity exists "both inside and outside the self" (Schutte 2000 in Gurd 2006:33) and "demands a self-reflexivity" (33) which can help the subject resist "turning the other into something like the self in order to be ethical" (Spivak 1993 in Gurd 2006:33).

¹⁷ Spivak observes that responsibility in the sense of duty has always been part of the rhetoric used by the "Rights camp" and she illustrates it using as examples the works of Machiavelli and Hobbes, the 1793 Declaration of the Rights of Man and more importantly the 1997 Declaration of Responsibilities by the United Nations. She condones the Amnesty International's reaction –which for Spivak constitutes the "liberal vision"– that claimed that the latter is "'no complement to human rights' and that 'to *restate* ... rights from the UDHR [Universal Declaration of Human Rights] *as responsibilities* [...] introduces vague and ill-defined notions which can only create confusion and uncertainty'" (2008:26; emphases in the original).

considered as a verb phrase then “Human” becomes the subject of the verb “Rights” and it can be read as redressing. This double reading reveals that Human Rights enclose in their core the notion that someone occupies the role of the dispenser of these Rights, of the righter of wrongs. In the way Human Rights are perceived in the world today, this space is occupied by “the fittest [who] must shoulder the burden of righting the wrongs of the unfit.” What is implied here is “a kind of social Darwinism” (14-15). Only the “fittest” can fill the position, the “unfit”, like the Indian tribals, must live under constant intervention, doomed to never occupy the position of claiming and dispensing rights for themselves and others. Adding to that, Robert Young observes that

[w]hereas the West typically identifies human rights with its central political ideologies of freedom and democracy, on the three continents the discourse and implementation of human rights are frequently criticised on the grounds of eurocentrism in conception, and instrumentalism in terms of the selectivity of focus on where (and by whom) human right abuses are alleged to take place (2003:165)

Whereas many postcolonial critics are fast to place the West in the space of originator and dispenser of rights, Spivak adds one more reagent to the mix. She argues that simply calling Human Rights Eurocentric is rather “disingenuous,” firstly, because the human rights workers in the global South, as “descendants of the colonial subject, [are] often culturally positioned against Eurocentrism” and secondly, because “internationally, the role of the new diasporic is strong, and the diasporic in the metropolis stands for ‘diversity’, ‘against Eurocentrism’” (2008:16). In claiming that, Spivak is actually suggesting that the antagonism is not simply geographic –West versus global South– or even colonial –coloniser/neocoloniser versus colonised/neocolonised–, but rather class-related: elites versus subalterns. She writes that “the work of righting wrongs is shared above a class-line that to some extent and unevenly cuts across race and the North-South divide” (16).

Spivak does not try to “write off the righting of wrongs. [All in all] [t]he enablement must be used even as the violation is re-negotiated” (15). She does not absolve the privileged from their responsibilities regarding human rights. After all, they are indeed responsible for the inequalities and they do have the resources that enable them to claim and dispense rights for themselves and others, something that the subalterns are usually not able to do since, although they are entitled to them by virtue of being

human, they most certainly do not enjoy human rights in a concrete fashion.¹⁸ She does not suggest “that human rights interventions should stop [or] [...] that the human rights activists themselves should take time to learn” (42) her suggested Humanities pedagogy, which for her is part of the solution. Indeed, she recognises that “[g]iven the number of the wrongs all the world over, those who right them must be impatient” (42). What she questions is the naturalised presupposition that arises from the responsibility-for-stance of the nowadays dispensers of Human Rights, namely the “dominant states, [...] transnational agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs)” (16), and the descendants of the colonial subject. What she criticises is their belief that the dispensing of rights is their “manifest destiny”; that they are the beneficiaries of the new covenant¹⁹, the sole dispensers of democracy and rights.²⁰ She challenges this doctrine that leads “Human Rights [to] feed (on) class apartheid” (14).

The title of her essay “Righting Wrongs” is indicative of this. Spivak plays with the homophones “righting,” namely making something right, and “writing”, namely inscribing. A double reading ensues and gives rise to the question whether the actions undertaken for the attribution and establishing of human rights to subaltern groups, in this case the tribals of India, constitute in fact a righting of former wrongs done to these groups, or rather further inscribe these wrongs and their causes onto the collective unconscious of both the subalterns and the dispensers of rights. The source

¹⁸ Jacques Rancière in his article “Who is the subject of the Rights of Man” explains that “the Rights of Man turned out to be the rights of the rightless, of the populations hunted out of their homes and land and threatened by ethnic slaughter. They appeared more and more as rights of the victims, the rights of those who were unable to enact any rights or even any claim in their name” (2004:297-298)

¹⁹ Whereas the old one was about the right and duty to expand, the new one claims the right and duty to distribute Human Rights (see also endnote xxxvi in the translation section of the present thesis).

²⁰ In the first pages of “Righting Wrongs” Spivak makes a remark about the English translation of the name of the humanitarian organization *Médecins Sans Frontières*. She argues that although its most common translation is *Doctors Without Borders* in her opinion the most appropriate translation would be *Doctors Without Frontiers*. She implies a reference to the “frontier doctrine” which had a vital role in the development of American exceptionalism and the construction of the United States national identity. William Appleman Williams suggests that the frontier doctrine was a combination of the ideas of Frederick Jackson Turner and Brooks Adams. The former maintained that “America’s unique ant true democracy was the product of an expanding frontier” with the latter adding that “America’s unique and true democracy could be preserved only by a foreign policy of expansion” (380). This frontier also constituted a “fluid boundary between ‘savagery’ and ‘civilization’” (Spanos, p.196); it is a «perpetual frontier» that forever stands between the supposedly civilised West and the Other that would have no choice but to take the role of the “defeatable enemy who always threatens the fulfilment” of the Manifest Destiny (197). Hence, Spivak’s preference to the term *Frontiers* rather than *Borders* is highlighting the fact that quite often humanitarian missions, in the way they are realised, are basically a re-articulation of the frontier doctrine and the perpetual expansionism of the West.

of Spivak's concern is the undercurrent philosophy of the "righting wrongs" project, namely the tendency "to operate in a top-down power structure in which the empowered [...] are positioned as agents, and take the burden and responsibility of human rights agency upon themselves" (Young 2003:166). Such a development would translate in the perpetuation of "class apartheid and in the rearticulation of the justifications of imperialism and its civilising mission.

Another aspect regarding Human Rights that Spivak finds troubling is what she calls their *primum mobile*. She refers to Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink's argument that pressure towards the nation state is the key factor that sets in motion the whole Human Rights establishment process. They recognise two types of pressure; pressure "from above", namely from transnational organizations, foreign governments and international NGOs, and pressure "from below", namely domestic pressure from local NGOs (2008:16). The problem regarding this pressuring is twofold.

One side of the problem has to do with the notion of pressure itself, both the one "from below" and the one "from above". The former is often implemented by people belonging to the postcolonial elites, in other words to the descendants of Macaulayism and of "the old colonial subject," now transformed into "the new domestic middle class urban radical" (17-18). Being local these people put on the mantle of the Native Informant when in fact they are as far away from the subalterns as the international human rights workers. The reason for this distance is their lack of connection to the "episteme and ethical discourse [...] of the rural poor" (18). Spivak describes it as "a real epistemic discontinuity between the Southern human rights advocates and those whom they protect" (18). The consequence of this discontinuity is that exactly because they are not aware of it they "counsel self-help [for example through participation in "legal awareness" lessons] "with great supervisory benevolence" (26). The fact that the subalterns are, for reasons explained below, unable to achieve it without constant supervision, solidifies the argument that there is "need for continued intervention" (26). In other words, the class apartheid remains as is and the subalterns are condemned to eternally occupy the receiving end of human rights as generosity. Spivak pointedly observes that "[i]t is this discontinuity, not skin colour or national identity [...], that undergirds the question of who always rights and who is perennially wronged" (18). Regarding the second type of pressure, the one "from above" the problem lies not only in the "selectivity of its focus" –as mentioned before–, but also

in the way it is implemented, described aptly by Spivak as the method of the stick and the carrot, with the stick being fear of repercussions and the carrot promises of economic gain (31). Spivak argues that this method can be an effective weapon but only in a short-term capacity, not being able “to bring about either lasting or real epistemic change” (31).

The other side of the problem regarding pressure lies in the issue of what happens when the “engaged persons leave, as they must” (Spivak 2012:131) or when the legal battles “are won in relatively remote courts of law” (Spivak 2008 40). She admits that when she witnesses “rousing examples of ‘people’s movements’ [she wonders] how long would the people continue without the presence of the activist leaders” (55).²¹ Without a “maximal follow up” (Spivak 2012:131) and “constant vigilance” (Spivak 2008: 40) the situation returns to its former, if not in a worse, state. Nothing remarkable can be achieved; in fact the opposite stands true. The Human Rights activists may be satisfied but “the jerrybuilt edifice breaks down” (48) and the legal victories won can be punishing for the subalterns:

The loftiest legal abstracts ... are born ... amid the intercourse of particular groups, in the presumptive ease of the deciding classes, through the trauma of specific atrocities, at the expense of the silent and the excluded, as a victory (usually compromised, often pyrrhic) for the powerless (MacKinnon qtd. in Spivak 2008:40).

What is more, argues Spivak, even in the cases when the subalterns fight back, they do it following “the old rules of violence” reducing the restoration of Human Rights and the righting of wrongs “to a pattern of abyssal revenge” (41) that feeds an endless vicious circle.

For “entering into a responsibility structure with the subaltern, with responses flowing both ways” (Spivak 1996:293) and achieving a substantial change that cuts across the habitualization of the current status quo on the one hand and the “doing good with an implicit assumption of cultural supremacy [...] legitimized by unexamined romanticization” (293) on the other, corporatist benevolence, legal awareness seminars or battles won in distant courthouses are not enough; they constitute only “a quick fix” (Spivak 2008:48) not a reliable answer. Spivak insists that the only viable

²¹ This shouldn’t be read as Spivak’s doubt regarding subalterns’ insurgency on which she has argued elsewhere (like in her interview “Subaltern talk” that was mentioned above). It just reflects her concerns about what happens when the “fighting back” is instigated from the outside.

solution is a new pedagogy both for the rural poor and the privileged elites. For the former, this would entail “a painstaking foundational pedagogy which prepares the subject of rights from childhood and from within a disenfranchised culture of responsibility” (41). She insists on a pedagogy that prepares “the subject of rights from childhood” because she believes that the success in destabilizing the internalised norms, the habitus, in order for democratic reflexes to be developed would be more easily achieved when working with children rather than adults set in their ways. Thus, it is only by working with children, who are burdened with less cultural and social inhibitions than the adults that “the millennially established structures of feeling²² and desires” can become “as tenacious as those shared by the activists” (2012:131). Moreover, the children of the rural poor²³ constitute what Spivak calls the “largest sector of the future electorate in the global South” (17), thus making their development of democratic reflexes not only necessary but urgent. For the privileged, the new pedagogy would include something quite different from the teaching of “(corporatist) benevolence” and the trivialization of “the teaching of the Humanities” that is observed in metropolitan education (23); it would be a training that would foil the cultural absolutism dressed up like cultural relativism (23) that the current educational system upholds.

Hence, when Spivak refers to education, she does not imply the replication “of nice, tolerant, well-off, secure, other-respecting students of [the American] sort in all parts of the world” (Rorty qtd. in Spivak 2008:17),²⁴ nor does she intend as its goal the

²² Spivak here borrows Raymond Williams’ phrase “structures of feeling.” According to the *Dictionary of Critical Theory*, this phrase refers “to different ways of thinking vying to emerge at any one time in history. [...] Williams uses the term feeling rather than thought to signal that what is at stake may not yet be articulated in a fully worked-out form” (Buchanan 2010:455). Hence, although the subalterns obviously have true desires, these desires, because of their forceful rearrangement by the dominant elites and colonialism, remain in an embryonic form.

²³ Young makes the interesting observation that Spivak appears to exclude the urban poor, something that he attributes “to the original Maoist, Naxalite origins of the Subaltern Studies project” (2010:166). According to Young, “[w]ith their Maoist/Naxalite genealogy, the Subaltern Studies historians sought to establish not unity with the working class but a relative autonomy for the peasantry” (2012:30). Although it is indeed strange that Spivak ignores these groups, perhaps another possible explanation could be that Spivak has not worked hands-on with such groups and as she observes “one is obliged to speak of just the groups one works for” (2008:43).

²⁴ Such expectations are striking familiar with expectations expressed at the period of High Imperialism: Thomas Babington Macaulay, a member of the Supreme Council of the East India Company, in his 1835 “Minute on Indian Education”, a rebuttal against the supporters of Indian students’ Sanskrit and Arabic learning, wrote the following: “We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect (1611-1612).

achievement of “an Enlightenment utopia” (17) of the western kind that will ensure the strength and the globality of a solely western human rights culture (17). Indeed, she desires exactly the opposite; she wishes for an education that leaves its “elite safe harbours” (17) and travels in the uncharted waters of “long-delegitimised epistemes” (20) aiming to achieve “global social justice” (17). This type of education which, as mentioned above, is to be implemented both ways, can “find its home in an expanded definition of a ‘Humanities to come’” (17).

Drawing on Derrida, Spivak calls for an education within the framework of a type of Humanities that is perpetually open, not “contained within the traditional limits of the departments that today belong [...] to the Humanities” (Derrida 2002:50), that “will cross disciplinary borders without [...] dissolving the specificity of each discipline into what is called [...] interdisciplinarity” (50) and most importantly that will study history; the history that constructed the concepts that instituted the Humanities disciplines and “were coextensive with them” (50). These Humanities are always in the mode of “to come,” in the same sense that democracy is always “to come”; “not only will [they] remain indefinitely perfectible, hence always insufficient and future, but, belonging to the time of promise, [they] will always remain, in each of [their] future times, to come” (Derrida 2005: 306). The same stands true for the “ethical impulse” that characterises these Humanities; that too is “forever in the mode of ‘to come,’ because [it is] forever dependent upon the qualitative education of the young” (Spivak 2008:25). The Humanities in question cannot follow a fixed, determinate curriculum because such an attempt would cancel the openness that derives from their “to come” mode.

Spivak goes on to observe that the education, under the wings of the “Humanities to come,” “attempts to be an *uncoercive* rearrangement of desires” (2008:17; emphasis in the original).²⁵ In “Can the Subaltern Speak?” she had argued that for the constitution of the subject of the Other of Europe

²⁵ Spivak places this “uncoercive rearrangement of desires” within the framework of the “Humanities to come” because she recognizes that Humanities teaching alone, is not enough; it “simply exercises the imagination, makes it ready for such rearrangement” (2008:4). The future teacher/activist/intellectual must also “fill the vision of the literary form with its connections to what is being read: history, political economy –the world” (1987:95) and there is where Derrida’s vision of a “Humanities to come” comes into play.

great care was taken to obliterate the textual ingredients with which such a subject could cathect, could occupy [...] its itinerary. [...] [T]his entire overdetermined enterprise was in the interest of a dynamic economic situation requiring that interests, motives (*desires*), and power (of knowledge) be ruthlessly dislocated (1999:265-266; emphasis mine).

Thus, for the achievement of the interests of imperialism and capitalism” a rearrangement of the desires of the colonised peoples was necessary;²⁶ it took place in an extremely coercive way through the “obliteration of the textual ingredients” that the subject could use so that it could invest in its own desires. To fully realise how revolutionary the pedagogy of “uncoercive rearrangement of desires” that Spivak proposes is, one should take into account that the rights-based corporatist benevolence taught in the educational institutions of the elite is not interested in the desires, namely the interests and motives, of its beneficiaries, but rather merely in their needs. To add insult to injury, these needs are determined, as the abovementioned example of the Flood Action Plan for Bangladesh clearly illustrated, not by the subalterns themselves, but rather by the dispensers of benevolence and human rights, in other words the dominants, leading to the perpetuation of this vicious circle.

The rearrangement of the desires on both ends would include a “reenvisioning of who we are and the reimagining of the world in which we live. Our desires change as we see ourselves differently,” comments Drucilla Cornell (2010:112). For the rural poor it would mean “a training in democracy” and the opening of a potentiality that would enable them to be in a position to claim and dispense rights for themselves by themselves. It would also constitute, to use Spivak’s concept metaphor, a suturing of the torn indigenous cultural fabric²⁷ –that was removed “from the dominant loom in a

²⁶ Spivak also observes that this coercive rearrangement of the subalterns’ desires has its onset far before Western imperialism and capitalism. It was first implemented by the dominant Hindu classes in favour of their interests. She stresses that in India the model differs from that in Australia, Latin America and Africa because India is a “pre-colonial settler colony” (2008:284). The dominant Hindu classes derived from the colonization of India by the Indo-European speakers, the Aryans, in the second millennium BC. In one of her interviews, “Bonding in difference,” she refers to the “Triumph of Durga” a very important holiday of the Indian Hindus. For the Indian tribals, however, that same day is a day of mourning, a day of defeat. They mourn, through the narration of a myth, “their defeat in the hands of the invading ‘Aryan’ Hindus. [...] It’s like Thanksgiving Day, or indeed the story of Columbus” (1995:26). Also, in another interview with Yan Hairong, she observes that “India itself [is] a multi-ethnic, multicultural, precapitalist *imperial* situation and even a *millennial settler colony* with Indo-Europeans coming because they were more agriculture based and so pushing the nomadic or the forest dwellers, the hunter-gatherers aside” (2008:252; emphases mine).

²⁷ Spivak argues that the anthropological perspective erroneously views this fabric as a “closely knit social texture” (Spivak 2008:36), since “centuries of oppression and neglect” have destroyed it leaving in its place only “group solidarity” (40).

historical moment” (36)– together with its “cultural axiomatics” (30) and delegitimized “ethical intuitions” (36) “into the principles of the Enlightenment” (30) and “*parliamentary* democracy” (40; emphasis in the original). Spivak does not imply that the indigenous are some kind of *tabula rasa* or *terra nullius* regarding democratic principles. In fact, she speaks of a re-activation of “the tribals’ ‘democratic’ structures” (40) and “ethical intuitions” (36) –like the responsibility to the other– that capitalism judged “defective” (29), “archaic” and “deficient” (36) and which lay dormant after “centuries of oppression and neglect” (40) by the dominant elites. As far as the privileged intellectual, student, human rights worker, are concerned this rearrangement of desires would lead them into the realisation that their assumption of being the de facto dispensers of human rights by virtue of being “the fittest,” is nothing more than a presupposition and that instead of righting wrongs they are actually writing wrongs, solidifying the structures of inequalities and class apartheid. Furthermore, it would mean that they would desire to be far more than “solidarity tourists” (55) who brim with “unexamined romanticization,” when they watch rural children struggling to learn in a “mud-floored classroom” (55), seeing only an archaic spectacle. To accomplish this rearrangement of desires in an uncoercive way two things come into play; learning from below, which in order to be achieved necessitates the learning to learn from below, and learning “from the singular and the unverifiable” (Spivak 2008:23) that is literature.

In “A Note on the New International,” Spivak concludes her essay noting that learning to learn from below is, in a way, “a species of ‘reading’” which draws on Derrida’s “plea for slow reading, even at a time of political urgency, [and him] arguing carefully that it must remain always inadequate” (2001:15). Such a ‘reading’ in order to take place would require an opening of the self to the alterity of the Other while resisting the temptation of translating the other into a copy of one’s own original.²⁸ It would remain inadequate because one is not equipped to fully understand

²⁸ Another relevant term she uses in many of her works is “transnational literacy.” It is a term she introduced in *Death of a Discipline* (2003) and it can be described as a mode of reading that allows the subject to examine universalization and to discern its uneven relationship with different nation-states (Olson and Fox 2010:307). It is a mode of reading the world asking questions like “Who needs and leads the movement of universalization? Who celebrates it? In what interest? Why?” and concluding that “[t]here’s never a satisfactory answer to these questions, but learning to ask them is required” (Spivak 2001 in Olson and Fox 2010:307). Mark Sander describes Spivak’s term as “the ability to read the world in its differences even when received categories such as ‘literature’ and ‘decolonization’ impose a uniformity –and before long, an evaluation of what is less and what is more, what worse and what better” (2006:2). Simply put translational literacy is the ability to constantly question one’s own

the alterity that is the Other and the Other is not always willing to reveal himself/herself. Furthermore, learning to learn from below constitutes a collapsing of the walls between the fixed positions of teacher and student. By viewing the subaltern students as the teacher, Spivak manages to remove them from the margin and to place them in the centre (Vinayaraj 2016:47).

She also removes the subalterns from under the magnifying glass of the elite academia (47) by refusing to turn them into an “object of investigation for disciplinary information,” something that would not permit her “to remain focused on the children as [her] teachers” (Spivak 2008:38). She does gather information, of course –what she calls “recoding ritual” (52), but she does it “for training other practitioners, rather than for production of knowledge about knowledge” (52), like her peers would do. Spivak makes it abundantly clear: “I am not there to study them but to learn from the children how to be their teacher” (284). A learning that is achieved through teaching, by “learning how to take children’s response to teaching as [the] teaching text” (49), by “working across the class-culture difference [...], [and by] trying to learn from children, and from the behaviour of ill-educated class-‘inferiors’”²⁹ under the hope that the trainer/teacher³⁰ will learn to recognise both the “benevolently coerced assent”³¹ and the “unexpected response”³² (28). In this way, the teacher as an

knowledge and non-knowledge and the ability to “recognize that we hear a different kind of voice” (Spivak 2012:155) coming from the former colonised. Spivak recognises that literary studies are not enough, that one must be in a position to see the connections between the “literary form” and other disciplines like history and political economy (1987:95). A transnational literate student must achieve “a thorough going interdisciplinarity” (Sanders 2006:3).

²⁹ An example of this is the incident narrated by Spivak about tribal children missing school for months because they followed their parents “East” where they travelled in order to find work. A teacher who has learned to learn from below instead of accusing the parents of irresponsible behaviour and ignorance regarding the value of education, by paying closer attention to their behaviour and the cultural axiomatics of the group, would realise that their action was consistent with their belief system since as “oral tradition folks” they believe that “real education takes place in the bosom of the family.” This realisation would lead to a sympathetic approach towards the community, expressing understanding and respect to the reasons responsible for the students’ absence and it would probably lead, as in Spivak’s narrative, to more children allowed to stay behind and not miss school (Spivak 2008:48).

³⁰ Spivak’s education program in rural India and China is mostly about training local teachers how to teach the children of the rural poor. However, these children may also be taught by foreign activists. The term trainer/teacher is used here in an attempt to include all three entities, namely trainer, local teacher, foreign activist teacher, since all of them must develop the ability to learn from below.

³¹ For example, Spivak describes an incident with one of the teachers she trained telling her that “he now understood what [she] wanted,” but doing so in “the language of obedience,” This led Spivak to the conclusion that “[t]here is more work for the trainer down the road, uncoercive undermining of the class-habit of obedience” (2008:55).

“apprentice[] [...] suturer or invisible mender”, who tries to gain “epistemic access” (38) to the torn fabric of the indigenous culture, attempts “the necessary but impossible task to construct a collectivity among the dispensers of bounty as well as the victims of oppression” (28).

Despite the oppression, in the collective memory of the subaltern communities continue to exist collective habits, rituals and structures, which Spivak calls “ritual – to-order habits” (2008:52), that the tribals managed to conserve even in a covert way. Spivak observes that the “[s]ubordiante cultural systems are creative in the invention of ritual in order to keep a certain hierarchical order functioning” (52). Thus the work of the trainer is, “with the help of the children” (52), first to recognise “the weave of the torn fabric” (40), namely the “ritual-to-order habits of the earlier system” –the one that was stagnated and rendered obsolete by the elites– and then to “imagine” a way to suture them to “the ritual-to order habits of parliamentary democracy” (52) for the benefit of both.

Vinayaraj describes the Spivakian learning to learn from below as listening “to the ‘Echo’ –the silenced memory of the marginalised other,” as a “process of impossible possibility (2016:47). In another of her essays, Spivak writes that in learning to learn from below

the dominant redefines himself [...] learns to *mean* to say –not just deliberately non-hierarchically, as the U.S. formula goes– I need to learn from you what you practice, I need it even if you didn’t want to share a bit of my pie; but there is something I want to give you, which

³² In “Righting Wrongs,” in order to illustrate that in the schools of the rural poor no attention is paid to meaning and understanding, Spivak narrates an incident where she asked the teacher of two aboriginal girls she sent to that school to pay particular attention to them. When the girls returned and she asked them if things were explained to them they reply negatively (54). The whole incident is relayed in another of her essays and we learn that she tried for hours to explain to them the meaning of the lesson –ironically a history lesson about Mandela and human rights in Africa– exhausting herself and the girls. Years later she visited a class which was attended by these two girls and she made a personal reference to them about that past attempt to explain. One of the girls responded with just a “fleeting smile” (2002:28). This is the “unexpected response” that the teacher who is learning to learn from below must be able to recognize. As she observes: “It is unusual for such signals to pass from her class to mine. [...] [I]n order for irony-shared-from below communication to be sustained at this level, would require immense systemic change. Yet, in the supplementary relationship between the possibility of that fleeting smile –a sign of the interruptive emergence of the ethical– and the daunting labor of the political calculus, we must begin with the end, which must remain the possibility of the ethical” (2002:28-29).

will make our shared practice flourish. You don't know, and I didn't know, that civility requires your practice of responsibility as pre-originary right (2000:16; emphasis in the original).³³

Of course, to be able to listen and understand the "Echo" of the subaltern, Spivak insists that it is first necessary to learn his/her language well. Without this knowledge any learning from below would at least suffer because the communication would be mediated and thus there would be an obvious problem of re-presentation. Moreover, this is the only way to gain access to the local societies and the domestic movements so that one can participate in them (2008: 42), as well as to access the epistemic system of the Subalterns without which one cannot claim to "devise a Suturing pedagogy" (43).

All in all, what Spivak proposes is, to change her concept metaphor, a double grafting. The rights-based world would graft the responsibility-based one with "democratic reflexes" and a pedagogy that would enable it to occupy a place in the public sphere of the polis, the civil society; in turn, the indigenous world would graft the rights-based world, including "the metropolitan humanities pedagogy" (24) and the human rights thought, with an "imperative to responsibility which capitalist social productivity was obliged to destroy" (24), thus enabling it to build a relationship to the Other which would allow it to ethically answer its call and potentially lead to a global social justice in the mode of to come.

But for the privileged trainer, intellectual, student, teacher to be able to learn to learn from below, the second factor of the "uncoercive rearrangement of desires comes into play; the "learning from the singular and the unverifiable". In order for someone to be able to willingly give up his/her privileges in favour of learning to learn from below, training in literary reading is a necessity. Spivak succinctly observes, "[i]f the social sciences describe the rules of the game, literary teaching teaches how to play" (2002:22). She argues that while literary reading also leads to generalizations, they "are not on evidentiary ground" (23). She insists that "literature is not verifiable," it contains an openness and "what is known is proved by [...] setting-to-work (2002: 23). By "setting-to-work" Spivak implies that the reader, by paying attention to the

³³ Also, in "Righting Wrongs" she quotes W. Sacksteder and argues that the reason that training in literary reading is so important, is because it creates the conditions for "a situation, in the mode of 'to come' where it can be acknowledged that 'reciprocally recognized rating [to acknowledge a corresponding integrity in the other] is a condition without which no civil undertaking is possible'" (2008:42).

characters in the work and in a way experience their lives, thoughts, burdens and joys, in other words, by using her/his imagination – “[the] inbuilt capacity to other [one’s self] [and therefore] understand[] other people from the inside” (Spivak 2012:111)–, is actually imagining “the other who does not resemble the self” (2002:23) and thus is involved in an act of “*poiesis* –an imaginative making– without guaranties” (2003:31), while at the same time s/he is made by “letting [her/himself] be imagined” (2003:52), hence “entering the arena of the probable” (2002:23).

“[L]iterature cannot speak” and the subaltern cannot speak either. Literary reading, however, is “a species of patient reading” that attempts the impossibility of making “the text respond” (2008:23). For Spivak, this is the method one should engage in when dealing with the Other, namely treat her/him like a text. In the same way one strives to understand a text, or to put it more correctly to obtain a response from the text –even at the risk of being unsuccessful–, one should “strive for a response from the distant other, without guaranties” (2008:23). The “without guaranties” aspect lies in the possibility that in the same way that there is an unbridgeable, “founding gap”,³⁴ between reader and text, making it impossible for the text to be accessed either directly or completely, there is an unbridgeable “founding gap” between the privileged and the subaltern, who may also refuse access or simply refuse to respond.

This “striving for a response from the *distant* other” (23; emphasis mine) is what Spivak calls “teleo-poiesis, a term that she borrows from Derrida’s *Politics of Friendship*. Eli Park Sorensen notes that the term combines “‘imaginative making’ [poiesis] with ‘tele’(meaning ‘distant’)” (2010:32) and Simmons adds that whereas Derrida uses this term to describe “a process of creating toward an ever-distant future (a-venir)” (2014:142) putting the emphasis on the temporal aspect, Spivak uses it as a process of “creating toward a distant future with a ‘distant other’” (142) adding a spatial aspect to the temporal one.

³⁴ Spivak argues that “[b]y definition, we cannot –no self can –reach the quite other.” She names this distance the “founding gap” and explains that it exist “in all act or talk, most especially in acts or talk that we understand to be the closest to the ethical –the historical and the political” (2012:98). So, when one engages in literary reading, “suspending” oneself in favour of the other that inhabits the text, “the quite-other”, s/he attempts the impossible; the bridging of that unbridgeable “founding gap”, the establishment of an ethical relationship with the other. Hence, training in literary reading promotes “the habit of mind that can be open to experience ethics as the impossible figure of a founding gap, of the quite other” (111).

In the *Death of a Discipline*, Spivak uses “teleo-poiesis” as the literary reading’s demand to the reader: “imagin[e] yourself, really let[] yourself be imagined (experience that impossibility) without guaranties”(2003:52). In fact, what the process of teleo-poiesis attempts to do is to somehow bridge the aforementioned unbridgeable “founding gap” and transcend the distance by giving the reader/student “entry to the performativity of cultures as instantiated in narrative” (13) and perhaps later on in field work. The reader/student, however, does not occupy the position of an anthropologist ready to categorise and efficiently efface the Other and her/his episteme. Instead s/he uses her/his trained imagination “for the effort of othering, however imperfectly, as an end in itself [...], a patient, and provisional and forever deferred arrival into the performative of the other, in order not to transcode but to draw a response” (13). It is a process of “metaphorically crossing borders into foreign territory, rather than appropriating or accommodating the other in [one’s] own conceptual framework” (Sorensen 2010:32); a process close to the “suturing” Spivak insists on throughout “Righting Wrongs;” a process that copies and pastes, rather than cuts (Spivak 2003:34), just like the teacher, who has learned from below, is supposed to do when s/he sutures the torn cultural fabric back to the loom, while maintaining its special weave. Simmons argues that the Spivakian teleo-poiesis calls for a “turning off of the self’s voice” (2014:142), a suspension of the self so that space is created for the other to respond. It “is an embrace of a different episteme, which requires a suspension of the hegemonic language” (142) that silences the other.

Spivak argues that when students develop

a habit of literary reading, even just “reading,” suspending [themselves] into the text of the other - for which the first condition and effect is a suspension of the conviction that I am necessarily better, I am necessarily indispensable, I am necessarily the one to right wrongs, I am necessarily the end-product for which history happened, and that New York is necessarily the capital of the world (2008:23),

they get in the position to recognise that “the presupposition that the reasonable righting of wrongs is inevitably the manifest destiny of [fixed] groups [...] and that among the receiving groups, wrongs will inevitable proliferate with unsurprising regularity” (Spivak 2008:21) is nothing more than an unethical non-answer to the call of the other; a non-answer in the sense that in order to answer the other, one must first at least try to listen to the question.

It is training in literary reading that gives the trainer/teacher the necessary tools to work at the silence of the subaltern children when faced with the question “can you tell us something about what was taught?” (2002:26). The origin of this silence, argues Spivak, can be traced to the bad rural education that the children of the rural poor receive, which at best is limited in numeracy and literacy in the form of rote learning. Whereas rote learning is perhaps acceptable as a tool in order for a student to pass her/his exams, it is nothing short of a scandal (2008:44) and a tool of perpetuation of class-apartheid when it is the only form of education available to the subaltern children.

One could argue that Spivak devises a twofold education plan for the supplementation of responsibility- and rights-based cultures. One leg of this plan is to be implemented in the North and the North of the South and the other in the poor rural part of the global South. The first leg aims at the interception of “corporatist ethics, business culture, appropriative New Age radicalism and politically correct multiculturalism” (Spivak 2008: 33) making use of Humanities to come and their tools that were described above. The second leg aims at an education beyond mere rote learning for the children of the rural poor through the training of local teachers and subsequently at “the formation of the rural voter through a ‘training in democracy’ [the reasoning being that] since rural people are the majority of the electorate in the global South, [...] any progressive change ultimately depends on them” (Sanders 2006:24).

Spivak denounces the training provided by the state as “inferior and formulaic”, not even reaching the level of the subaltern. She considers a scandal the fact that while the children of the middle class in global South enjoy an education that promotes meaning –“the felicitous primary use of a page of language is to understand it” (2008:44)–, the children of the rural poor are doomed to a never ending rote learning routine for which the only use of a “page of language” is spelling and memorising³⁵ (44), which

³⁵ A concrete example of that is the misuse of the Iswarchandra Vidyasagar’s primer, a book for the teaching of Sanskrit and Bengali, which originally “undermine[d] rote learning” by encouraging the teacher to jumble the structure” (Spivak 2008:44). Although the primer is still taught in the schools of rural Bengal its useful features that intercepted rote learning have been destroyed by the “well-meaning” intervention of education experts, who without having any notion of the world of the subaltern children have adapted the book, omitting the teacher instructions, rendering it “an instrument for dull rote learning” (45).

often takes place in schools that lack basic material resources like water.³⁶ Besides being a scandal, this difference in education, argues Spivak, is also “an absolute and accepted divide, the consolidation of class-apartheid,” which results in education being perceived by the subalterns “as another absurdity bequeathed by powerful people” (53). She also denounces the training provided by NGOs³⁷ and activists as coming from above and as perfunctory. She chastises them for measuring education merely in “school buildings and teacher bodies” (52), or for providing a training that “emphasizes consciousness raising: rights, resistance, nationalism, identity spliced on to literacy and numeracy” purposed for groups that were delegitimized for so long that all the above constitute not only empty words, words without meaning,³⁸ but also potentially dangerous ones. The deliverance of such ideas, no matter how well-meaning they might be, in the form of slogans (52), combined with the attempt to “instill pride, in these long-disenfranchised groups, in a pseudo-historical narrative” (53) could result in “breed[ing] fascists just as easily”³⁹ (52) proving that identitarianism “is also generally bad news there” (53). Such a training constitutes only a quick fix and in many cases it makes matters worse.

³⁶ In “Righting Wrongs” Spivak refers to a situation that arose in one of her schools with the breaking down of the school’s tube well. She uses this example in order to illustrate the tragic infrastructure of the schools of the rural poor, but also to demonstrate acts of state negligence and consolidation of the class apartheid, as well as acts of resistance. Regarding the first she mentions several of her tries to convince state officials to fix the problem, which were readily ignored. She acerbically comments on how the fact that the tribals could not mend the well was viewed as another proof of their inherent inferiority and indifference towards the education of their children (similarly to the “east” incident), and on the fact that whereas “the infrastructure for the primary education of the poor seems negligible even in the line of official duty, [the] boasting [by a state official] about one’s own spectacular opportunities for higher education seems perfectly plausible” and how both cases make abundantly clear the “internalised axiomatics of class-apartheid” (47). However, she also uses this example to show how she turned this situation into an action of resistance and a lesson in democracy by asking her young students to write on their own –and not under dictation– and ask for what was rightfully theirs. Even though the student’s petition was unsuccessful, a valuable lesson was learned “without short term resistance talk;” the children understood “the heartlessness of administrations” (48).

³⁷ Another concern Spivak has regarding NGOs is that they are what she calls “self-selected international helpers” (2002:18) or “self-selected moral entrepreneurs of the self-style international civil society” (2012:433). Spivak’s concerns focus on the fact that they have “no social contract and no democratic accountability (270), namely in this specific case they are completely out of touch with and in no way ethically bound to the Indian Aboriginals and even when their work has the opposite results they are not held accountable for it.

³⁸ The example of her trying to explain to the two tribal girls Mandela’s struggle for human rights in South Africa (see footnote 32) is applicable here.

³⁹ Spivak describes a relevant incident with a young man, member of the Dhekaros group, who urged her to give fewer sweets to children who were “outsiders,” namely, who weren’t “one of [theirs]” (2008:35).

Spivak's answer to the above situation is "to feed the children a hot meal a day," to live with them, thus "gaining a certain acceptance [...] from men and women" leading to the development of "a mutual accountability," and

to learn from below how to fashion, together, a way of teaching that will put in place reflexes or habits of mind for which the shortcut name is "democracy." Since this is the largest sector of the future electorate, my belief is that without the habit of democracy, no reform will last (2008:289).

Her rules of thumb regarding the education of the Aboriginals are first, that girls must be included and have access to the educational process, no matter "the status of women in the old delegitimised cultural system;" however, this must be accomplished in an uncoercive way by "earning credibility" (53) –like in the case of the children who missed school because their parents had to travel for work– and second, that rote learning must be undermined so as to enable the children to search for meaning and to develop "democratic reflexes" so that when the time comes for them to vote, they will be in the position to make a "rational choice" (2002 25). She insists that if "the largest sector of the [future] electorate [in the global South] misses out on early education, democracy cannot function, for it then allows the worst of the upper sections to flourish" (2002 25).

Spivak firmly believes that the way to fight poverty and disease and more importantly inequalities and class-apartheid is not by attempting to eradicate them with quick fixes and short-term solutions that in the long run prove to be insufficient. For her the only solution is the slow changing of minds on both ends of the spectrum that is only achievable through an education supplemented by the Humanities to come. Only that will ensure that the ethical intuitions of the responsibility-based cultures, their contribution to the suturing that Spivak proposes, will not stagnate and vanish in favour of "consumerization and venality" (Spivak 42-43), but rather will supplement the rights-based culture of Human Rights with an ethic of responsibility currently missing. Similarly only such an education will make certain that the rights-based cultures will respond to that gift that allows them to answer the call of the other in an ethical way with a gift of their own, namely the grafting of the responsibility-based cultures with the "democratic reflexes" necessary for them to become an equal member of the polis, a member who not only has a voice, but whose voice is also heard, rendering her/him a subaltern no more.

One question remains to be answered for the completion of this essay, perhaps the question that should have been answered first. Why Spivak and why “Righting Wrongs”? Why translate this particular author and this particular work? Why would the subject of subalterns and human rights hold any interest for a Greek audience, who perhaps does not even know what a subaltern is? An attempt to answer these questions together with a brief commentary of the translation process and its difficulties can be found in the brief translation commentary section that follows.

Translation Commentary

The translated text presented in this thesis is the first essay of the volume *Other Asias* by the academic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The total volume consists of a total of seven essays many of which, including “Righting Wrongs,” are revisions of older works. There were two main reasons behind the selection of Spivak and this specific essay. The first one is really quite simple. Taking into account that Spivak is a brilliant theoretician, critical thinker and academic whose critical thinking and theoretical work is celebrated all over the world, the fact that her presence in the Greek scene of translated works is quite limited (see footnote 1) constitutes a gap that merits attention. It is a shame that only those with knowledge in English are in a position to engage her work on deconstruction, feminism, comparative literature, post-colonialism and even on the future of the Humanities. Having access to Spivak’s work would prove quite beneficial to the students of many different disciplines, as well as to the layman who would like to develop a deeper understanding in the processes that move the world around her/him.

The second reason is rather more specific. In the last thirty years the demographic image of Greece has changed significantly. The entrance of people mainly from the Balkans, the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, Africa and Asia has forever changed the social landscape of the country. What hasn’t changed is the pedagogy of the formerly homogenous population, who was (and is) in desperate need of a new one in order to help them prepare and adjust to this change. This lack, in combination of course with the dire financial situation of the last decade, has led to phenomena like the rise and entrance to the Greek parliament of extreme right and fascist political formations like the Golden Dawn, which in turn are nothing but an illustration of the narrowing of the borders of the polis and the right of entrance in it. The situation deteriorated further in the last three years with the great increase in the flow of refugees and migrants from Asia and Africa. A large number of people, some with documents, others without, were piled up –if they were lucky– in open accommodation facilities occupying a space that is a non-space as far as the polis is concerned since they are *aneu logou*. Perhaps they are not the subalterns one usually comes across in Spivak’s works but they too cannot speak, or to be more exact they are not to be heard but only to be re-presented. This is what makes “Righting

Wrongs” not only appropriate but necessary for the Greek audience. It does not only contain a remainder that the Other is also entitled of respect, dignity, voice and presence, but most importantly it proposes an new pedagogy that aims at changing mindsets that oppose these very things based on mis-re-presentations and constructions presented as natural truths.

Of course, reading Spivak is not easy, it is not for the light-hearted or the one preferring to cut corners and find easy fixes. It requires patience and dedication, but as Kavafis would have it the journey is of equal if not greater importance to the destination. Translating Spivak is even more difficult.

Every translator should keep in mind that one of the key factors for the success of any translation is to have an awareness of the communicative goal of the source text, or to use Spivak’s words

the translator should make an attempt to grasp the writer’s presuppositions, pray to be haunted by the project of the original. Translation is not just the stringing together of the most accurate synonyms by the most proximate syntax (2012:256)

Freideriki Batsalia argues that that alone is not enough; it is of equal importance that the translator is also aware of the communicative goal of the target text and that s/he also takes into account the conventions that govern the specific genre not only in the source culture but in the target culture as well (Μπατσαλιά 511). Spivak would probably not quite agree with this opinion. According to her, “[i]f you want to make the translated text accessible, try doing it for the person who wrote it. The problem comes clear then, for she is not within the same history of style” (2009:214).

“Righting Wrongs” (“Επιδιορθώνοντας τις αδικίες”) is a theoretical text with political and philosophical echoes. In contrast to many other genres, like literary or technical texts, for which specific translating strategies have been developed, the relevant bibliography, to the extent that the author of this thesis was in a position to determine, stands rather empty. The closest genres for which such strategies exist are those of scientific and philosophical texts.

Scientific translation works with texts, whose main purpose, besides the transmittance of information is to “*discuss, analyze and synthesize* information with a view to *explaining* ideas, *proposing* new theories or *evaluating* methods” (Byrne 2014:2;

emphases in the original). There is a presupposition that the writing of texts of this genre is often “dry, highly objective and impartial”, without any personal style or linguistic creativity. Byrne argues, however, that they are as close to literary translation as they are to the technical one (2-3). The case of philosophical texts is rather similar. While initially philosophical texts were considered non-literary works, which in translation terms means they are informative texts, hence “the underlying message of the text [...] prevails over the form in which the message is presented” (Vârlan 2014:69) and the main concern of the translator is to transfer the message in the best possible way, there is now a debate about their categorization as literary or non-literary among the translation theoreticians (69). Jean-René Ladmiral argues that philosophical texts share characteristics of both categories; they have the specific technical jargon of technical texts, but also the subjectivity of literary texts (in Vârlan 2014:70). The translator should not overlook, in favour of the text’s communicative transaction, the intentions of the author and the way s/he uses language in order to accomplish them. In many cases such texts, besides their informative aspects, are also expressive and persuasive; aspects that are often lost in the translation (Zethsen 74, Stolze 124). On both cases the translators tread on thin ice, on the one hand they need to pass the message of the original text with the greatest accuracy possible, and on the other they need to maintain the style “which defines the subjectivity of the text” (Vârlan 2014:70) and the intentions of its author. This is more that true in the case of Spivak, whose style, as will be analyzed further on, is quite unique serving a specific purpose, namely it is part of the message.

“Righting Wrongs” thus fulfills the demands of both genres; it engages theoretical issues, explains ideas and synthesizes them in order to propose a new theory, in this case a new pedagogy for responsibility- and rights-based cultures; thus it can be described as a scientific text. Moreover, it combines the above with the analysis of philosophical ideas and a subjectivity expressed through a unique style that makes it at least partly a philosophical text. Under these circumstances one would be justified to place the translation process of this specific essay in the domain of scientific and philosophical translation.

One of the characteristics of scientific and philosophical texts is that they are indeed written in what could be described as a special code or a “language for special purposes.” Linguistically these texts are characterized by specific features like

particular terminology (lexical level), prevalence of certain grammatical and syntactical forms like passives, compound nouns, word order (grammatical and syntactic level) and “recurrence of terms”(text-linguistic level) (Schubert 352). These features often raise issues when translated in a different language that does not share the same linguistic forms and concepts with the source language.

A final issue of equal importance regarding this type of translation is that of the subject-matter knowledge in relation to the translator. Unless the translator is an expert in the field to which the under translation text belongs, s/he needs to familiarize himself/herself with the kind of text in question, with the terminology of the field, with the frames of reference used in it and with the how all these conventions are manifested in similar texts written in the target language. This is accomplished by consulting as many related sources as possible and by conducting a discourse analysis in order to be able to identify all the above mentioned factors.

Summing up the above, three basic issues come forward: 1) the preservation of the style, 2) the use of a language for special purposes and 3) the issue of subject-matter knowledge. All three issues were of significance during the translation of “Righting Wrongs.”

The preservation of style was of crucial importance since “syntax bears a message [...] [that] influence[s] the way we perceive and unpack an argument” (Heim and Tymowski (2006:8). As mentioned above in the works of Spivak style is actually part of the message. Spivak has often been accused of “writing incomprehensibly” (Spivak 2008:56) and thus making her work contradict her political aim (Morton 2004:5). However, if one takes into account that Spivak’s theoretical work aims at challenging “the transparent systems of representation through which things are known and understood [but which] are also the systems which control and dominate people” (5), one begins to understand why she does not opt for a simpler transparent style. Spivak’s style is a message on its own; Morton explains that mirrored in her supposedly inaccessible prose are “carefully link[ed] disparate histories, places and methodologies in ways that often refuse to adhere to the systematic conventions of western critical thought” (6). Taking all these into account, it becomes apparent that any thoughts regarding a simplification of Spivak’s language, even in the form of shorter periods, was out of the question. The reader of the target text is supposed to

try as hard as the reader of the original. There was only one forgivable, hopefully, form of cheating, namely the use of footnotes, which was deemed necessary in order to explain some things, so that the Greek reader, who is, as already explained, not familiar with Spivak's work, would be able to follow the text.

The other issue that arose had to do with the use of a language for special purposes. Looking at it first from the perspective of terminology (lexical level), one cannot fail but observe the fact that the greatest number of theoretical works is written in English, immediately creates issues of terminology in the target language because of the amount of words that describe newly formed concepts which more often than not do not exist in the target culture or have different propositional, expressive or evoked meaning in the target language. For instance, in the case of "Righting Wrongs" appear terms like "agency," "manifest destiny," "subaltern," "Aboriginals" and "teleopoiesis," which were rendered in the target text as "εμπρόθετη δράση," "πρόδηλο πεπρωμένο," "υπεξούσιες ομάδες," "Αυτόχθονες," and "τελοποίηση" respectively. The research phase of the translation concluded that for the first two existed, to a large extent, a consensus about the corresponding Greek terms. For the third one, there was a variety of terms used to render it in the target language of which the most prevalent were "υπεξούσιες ομάδες" –and its variations– and "υποτελείς." There was great indecision regarding which one to use, with the second one being perhaps slightly more appropriate regarding the subtle connotations of the term "subaltern" in Spivak, namely people "who are not just in the margin, but outside hegemony, while under its power" (Καραβαντά 2015:14). Despite this, the term chosen to render "subaltern" was "υπεξούσιες ομάδες." The reason behind this choice was that Spivak, besides the term "subaltern", also uses the term "subordinate" to describe the same entity. The best Greek equivalent in this case is "υποτελείς." So, since the difference between the two Greek terms isn't that profound it was decided to use "υπεξούσιες ομάδες" for "subaltern" and "υποτελείς" for "subordinate." As far as the term "Aboriginals" is concerned, the exact Greek equivalent "Αβορίγινες" was avoided because it would create confusion with the Australian Aboriginals. The last term, "teleopoiesis," presented a problem; it is term Spivak borrowed from Derrida's *Politics of Friendship*, a work that has not been translated into Greek. Also the corresponding research didn't produce any usage of an equivalent term in relevant Greek texts. Finally, based on the analysis of the term in foreign bibliography (see for example

Sorensen 2010:32) it was decided to combine the two Greek words Derrida used to coin this term, namely *τέλος* and *ποίησις*.

The issues that arose at the grammatical and syntactic level were connected to the differences between the two languages in terms of grammar and syntax but mostly in the way that specific field is treated by them. One of the dominant structures in English scientific writing is that of the passive. Its prevalence came to be with the emergence of the “Scientific Revolution” in the 17th century that demanded a “scientific reconstrual of reality” with the focus falling not on the agent but “upon what would otherwise be the grammatical object” (Bennett 2011: 194). This demand was the result of the need for objectivity and impersonality, namely “the way in which the scientific paradigm represents the world” and more importantly of the need to “enhance authority by implying that the result of a study does not depend upon the individual” (Ding 1998 in Bennett 2011:194). Although passive is not generally favoured in Greek which prefer active constructions (Laskaratou 1984, Warburton 1970, Fotiadou 2010 in Malamatidou 2013:416), the majority of the passive structures of the source text were maintained in the target text as well (example marked in bold blue letters in excerpt (1) below). This could be interpreted as a phenomenon of structural calque, perhaps not in the way that Hatim and Munday refer to it, that is, as a new structure introduced in the target language (2004:149) –since the passive does exist in Greek and is not something new– but rather in the sense that Karen Bennett argues about in her article, namely, that it is an act of mimesis on behalf of the translator of structures that are not usually favoured in the target language but are, however, opted for due to the power relationship between English and the target language, especially where scientific texts are concerned (2011:195-98).

Another aspect that was taken into account during the translation process was that of the expressive and persuasive characteristics of the source text. These aspects of the source text can be identified in the authors’ use of positive politeness devices such as personalizations –through the use of personal pronouns– and direct questioning. These choices could be translated as an attempt to create a certain rapport with the reader by reducing the social distance. Examples of the first can be found marked in bold in excerpts (1) and (2) and of the second marked in purple in excerpt (2). Although, in similar cases in Greek scientific discourse the choice preferred would be that of an

impersonal structure and direct questions would be avoided, in the translation of the above mentioned examples the choices of the author were maintained.

- (1) If **you are not persuaded** by this simple description, nothing **I** say about the Humanities will move **you**. This is the burden of the second section of this essay. It is this simple but difficult practice that **is outlined there**. It is only when **we** interest **ourselves** in this new kind of education for the children of the rural poor in the global South that the inevitability of unremitting pressure as the *primum mobile* of Human Rights **will be questioned**.

Εάν δεν **πείθεστε** από αυτή την απλή περιγραφή, ό, τι και να **πω** για τις Ανθρωπιστικές Επιστήμες δεν πρόκειται να **σας** συγκινήσει. Αυτό είναι το χρέος του δεύτερου τμήματος του εν λόγω δοκιμίου. Αυτή είναι η απλή, αλλά δύσκολη πρακτική που **περιγράφεται** εκεί. Μόνο όταν **ενδιαφερόμαστε** οι ίδιοι για αυτό το νέο είδος εκπαίδευσης για τα παιδιά των φτωχών αγροτικών πληθυσμών στον παγκόσμιο Νότο, **θα τεθεί υπό εξέταση** το αναπόφευκτο της αδιάκοπης πίεσης ως *primum mobile* των Ανθρώπινων Δικαιωμάτων.

- (2) Such a training of children is also a legitimization by reversal of **our** own insistence on elementary pedagogy of the rural poor. Supplementation by the sort of education **I** am trying to describe becomes necessary here, so that the relationship between child investors and child laborers is not simply one of righting wrongs from above. **How does such supplementation work?** If in New York, to stem the tide of corporatist ethics, business culture, appropriative New Age radicalism, and politically correct multiculturalism, the subterranean task is to supplement the radical responsibility-shaped hole in the education of the dispenser of rights through literary reading, and making use of the humanities, **what about the education of those whose wrongs are righted?**

Μια τέτοια εκπαίδευση των παιδιών αποτελεί επίσης αντίστροφη νομιμοποίηση της **δικής μας** επιμονής για μια στοιχειώδη παιδεία των φτωχών αγροτικών πληθυσμών. Η ενίσχυση από το είδος της εκπαίδευσης που προσπαθώ να **περιγράψω** καθίσταται αναγκαία εδώ, ούτως ώστε η σχέση μεταξύ παιδιών επενδυτών και παιδιών εργατών να μην είναι απλά μια σχέση επανόρθωσης αδικιών άνωθεν. **Πώς λειτουργεί μια τέτοια ενίσχυση;** Αν στη Νέα Υόρκη, για την ανακοπή του κύματος της ηθικής του κορπορατισμού, της επιχειρηματικής κουλτούρας, του οικειοποιητικού ριζοσπαστισμού της Νέας Εποχής, και της πολιτικά ορθής πολυπολιτισμικότητας, το υπόγειο έργο είναι

η συμπλήρωση της ριζοσπαστικής δίκην ευθύνης τρύπας στην εκπαίδευση των παρόχων δικαιωμάτων μέσω της λογοτεχνικής ανάγνωσης, και της αξιοποίησης των ανθρωπιστικών επιστημών, *τι γίνεται με την εκπαίδευση εκείνων των οποίων οι αδικίες επανορθώνονται;*

The greater difficulty in the translation process, however, had to do with the issue of subject-matter knowledge which is also closely related to the intertextuality that characterizes Spivak's text. By her own admission Spivak belongs to “the unabashed walking wounded generalist aspirants from the sixties” (2008:30) and she uses a huge amount of information coming from a number of other sources and fields, like history, sociology, finances, educational sciences and philosophy to name a few. This translates in the need for extensive background research since it was virtually impossible that the translator would be in possession of such extensive knowledge. Also, Spivak often uses thoughts and terms that she has used in other of her works, thus rendering necessary a revisiting of those as well.

All in all, translating Spivak was an amazing journey; frustrating at times but ultimately rewarding. Reading her work, even if one does not necessarily agree with everything she writes, does change the way one thinks. Spivak forces you to examine things deeper and not just stay at the unperturbed and tidy surface. For that reason alone she is worth the trouble of both reading and translating.

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