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Introduction: Postcolonial Reading Publics

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In this introduction to the special issue, "Postcolonial Reading Publics," Mukherjee charts the history of reception of two texts, one a Bengali novel published in British India, the other a Shakespeare adaptation staged in twenty-first-century Kolkata, to examine the fortuitous ways in which reading publics baffle or exceed authorial intention and the given text's addressable objects. Offering summaries of and continuities among the four essays that constitute the volume, the introduction ends with an analysis of the salience of this discursive context for postcolonial writing, theory, and critique in a world literary frame.

Keywords: postcolonial, reading public, discriminatory reading, mass politics, critique

I

In 2010, a play called *Raja Lear* (*Raja* is Bengali for "king") was commissioned by the Left Front government in West Bengal, India. Translated and directed by the reputed playwright and filmmaker Suman Mukhopadhyay, this Shakespeare adaptation had an extraordinarily successful run in the Minerva Repertory Theatre in Kolkata: the thespian Soumitra Chatterjee's Lear was acclaimed for the human frailty and regal majesty he brought to the role. The play, however, was unceremoniously truncated on May 22, 2011, and the government reneged on its promise of remounting it. Commercial viability was the reason cited, though this made little sense because the play was running to packed houses. Raja Lear migrated to another playhouse, Girish Mancha, but these shows subsequently suffered from a lack of financial backing and failing public relations. The political regime had changed in 2011, and Mukhopadhyay took to media platforms to protest that it was the lead actor Soumitra Chatterjee's Marxist leanings that had made the new Trinamool government interrupt the performance.

So, what exactly was the controversy about? Suman used a conventional set at a time when Indian productions where flirting with both maximalist regional forms such as Kathakali or Peter Brooks–inspired bare white stages. In fact, the only departure from Shakespearean stagecraft was probably in the way the dead Cordelia

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was carried out on a stretcher—the seventy-six-year-old thespian was too frail to carry her in his arms. “I like to remain faithful to the source texts,” Suman had said by way of introducing his production. “Lear is a timeless work of art and [was] particularly relevant when West Bengal was reeling under the arrogance of the CPI(M). But I didn’t want to bring in political allusions.” Suman’s Lear is about *khomotar ondhotto* (the blind arrogance of power) and its fatal consequences, and as such, it speaks to all kinds of despotic rule. Let all who wield power be chastened by the *bedonar itihas* (the tragic history of Lear): “*Je shashoki thakuk, se jeno Lear ke mone rakhe*” [“whoever the ruler, let them not forget Lear”].[1] The entanglements and intrigues of *King Lear*, depicting terrifying human folly and human cruelty, make it very clear that, in the tragedies, as Franco Moretti says, “sovereign power has become an insoluble problem.”[2] It is only after giving up the pursuit of power as a meaningless enterprise, after fellowing with the wolf and the owl, that the beggar, blind, and insane king is reconciled momentarily with the unmitigated human condition.

The curious case of *Raja Lear* can be outlined as follows. Despite being commissioned by the Left Front government, it was widely read as an indictment of the Left Front government. Yet, when the opposition party—Trinamool, a breakaway faction of the Indian National Congress—came to power, they clearly saw in *Raja Lear* an excoriating account of their own party politics. Shakespeare’s *King Lear* became, once again, as it does in the best adaptations, an endlessly narratable text for the segmented readerships that make up the social totality of pluralized reading publics, segmented on the lines of culture, creed, politics. It created plural reading publics by enabling what Juliet Fleming calls a “non-propositional mode of cognition”[3] in that its stage technologies generated directions of reading alongside, and also above and beyond, the text’s propositional content. A section of the press saw in Suman Mukhopadhyay, a “Cordelia or the Fool,” a character who offers, to their detriment, the antinomian voice, the disenchanted critique, and unheeded cautions whose prescience is registered belatedly. Others saw in Suman, with his changing political allegiances, an opportunistic, Machiavellian political consciousness, a veritable Edmund of King Lear, who believes “Edmund the base/shall top the legitimate”: “Why brand they us/ With base? with baseness? bastardy?”[4] Unpleasant as all of this must have been for Mukhopadhyay, his play had succeeded in making theatergoers confuse civic life with art, and creating a reading public that interpreted the body politic transversally through a history lesson narrated by Shakespeare.

This special issue on “Postcolonial Reading Publics” wishes to initiate a discussion about the relationship between postcoloniality, emergent models of reading, and the diversity of postcolonial “valuing communities”:[5] local, national, diasporized, and transnational. Reading in postcolonial locations is an especially fraught activity that continually challenges how public history is told (within dominant or subaltern frames) and which collectives are recognized publically. We will consider the assumption that how, what, and why we read are contextual and contingent, delimited by the politics of publication, the selective consecration of texts, and the inequality that marks the relationship between the core, periphery, and semiperiphery of print capitalism. In what follows, we will examine what Ato Quayson, in the context of reading in Africa, calls "the wider ecologies of discourse"—orality, literacy, Christianity, Islam, urban text, to mention a few determinants Quayson cites—that frame the "hybrid repertoires" of heterogeneously constituted postcolonial publics.[6] We will ask if a reorientation of the idea of the public beyond that implied by the "public sphere" of the nation is possible. We will consider the "chicken-and-egg circularity of publics," whereby, as Michael Warner observed, publics exist by virtue of the very rhetoric that addresses them (50).[7] We will also take into account the subversive possibilities of resistive reading, nonreading, and misreading. The far-reaching implications of such a discussion may include: a reorientation of the idea of the public beyond that implied by the "public sphere" of the nation and its implications for changing conceptions of class and gender; new textual mutations and their morphologies; a re-articulation of what the activity of reading itself entails; giving accounts of counter-publics that arise when reading emerges as a collective, not private act; literature-reading publics and the role of illiteracy or unsound reading in forming subaltern publics; a consideration of transnational or digital publics and social webs on how the postcolony is read; new views of modernity itself that arise from realigning our assumptions about how reading makes or unmakes citizenship.

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[1] These comments by Suman Mukhopadhyay are available in this recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SphQUY7arhg.

[2] Franco Moretti, *Signs Taken for Wonders: On the Sociology of Literary Forms* (New York: Verso, 2005), 64.

[3] Juliet Fleming, *Graffiti and the Writing Arts of Early Modern England* (New York: Reaktion Books, 2011), 15.

[4] Sourav Roychowdhury, “The Return of the King,” *The New Indian Express*, November 13, 2011, http://www.newindianexpress.com/entertainment/hindi/article243142.ece?service=print.

[5] John Frow, *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 154.

Our concerns are tied to recent discussions within literary and cultural studies that evaluate bedrock practices of reading within the discipline. Although the purpose of this special issue is not to rehash important trends in how reading has been conceptualized so far, the subject matter is influenced by the ongoing "method wars," as Rita Felski calls them:[8] close reading, distant reading, slow reading, deep reading, hyper reading, suspicious and generous reading, postcritical reading, and others. In an influential special issue of *New Literary History*, titled "Interpretation and Its Rivals," Felski claims that the linguistic turn of high theory has given way to "matters of method and mood, style and sensibility—in short, the various procedures and practices that inform our encounter with a text."[9] In this context, the importance attached to interpretation—and the critical task of interpreting—has been supplanted by a renewed attention to the phenomenology of reception, to "an erotics rather than hermeneutics of art."[10] Postcolonial reading publics help us understand interpretation as inseparable from the transmission and *transduction* (Felski's word) of texts across space and time and their reception in a heterogeneously constituted social imaginary. They move us with alacrity from the monadic model of the critic as the

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[6] Ato Quayson, "Kòbòlò Poetics: Urban Transcripts and their Reading Publics in Africa" *New Literary History* 41 (2010): 413–38, esp. 414, 415.

[7] Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture* 14.1 (2002): 49–90.

[8] Rita Felski, "Interpretation and Its Rivals," *New Literary History* 45 (2014), v–xi, esp. v.

[9] Ibid., v.

[10] Ibid., vi.

Lacanian "subject presumed to know" to challenging triangulations of the world, the text, and the critic.

II

In an article titled "Discriminatory Reading," Mary Poovey points out how mid-nineteenth-century critical and cultural differentiations of reading in Britain followed perceived differences between writing as information and writing as imaginative. Looking at an example from Victorian England, she sees emergent readerships structured along the lines of "the great divide that now separates informal writing from its imaginative cousin and mere perusal from the more laborious work of interpretation" (15).[11] Reading a bank note doesn't have the same "evaluative component"[12] as painstakingly following the arc of meaning in a literary text. Similarly, the evaluative and interpretive challenge offered by texts varies significantly according to their legibility and difficulty or the degree of cultivated and trained reading each (written, oral, or aural) text presupposes. In the *literary* reading debates that Poovey outlines, contributors seem more concerned about *how* to read than ascertaining what readers actually read or emergent patterns in reading. The resultant taxonomies, unsurprisingly, present attributes of reading that seem to, in fact, refer back to intrinsic qualities of the writing in question: the proclivities of "dipping and skimming," for instance, pertain to "light" literature, whereas more studious reading is necessarily a reflection of serious, classic writing. Poovey reads Wilkie Collins's anxiety around the "unknown public" of 3 million working-class readers, whose existence he was made aware of in 1858, as a reflection of his mistrust of their reading practices:

> These readers, according to Collins, read almost exclusively one-penny, unbound weeklies, and they read not for information or moral instruction but simply for the diversion provided by the stories that appeared in the penny novel-journals. This discovery provoked consternation even among relatively popular authors, like Collins, for if the number of readers was really as great as he estimated and the quality of what they read as low, this audience had the potential to shape the direction that British literature took.[13]

The reading of literary texts is discriminatory, or it is not serious reading at all, Wilkie Collins seems to say, attempting thus to disengage his work from the patterns of indiscriminate consumption that had developed around it. Over in the colony, a similar anxiety attaches to the voracious reading of minor British novelists in nineteenth-century British India. As the scholarship of Meenakshi Mukherjee, Gauri Viswanathan, and Priya Joshi has highlighted, the British novel, used as an "educational tool" and the consolidation of British literary culture, "was widely consumed outside and beyond the sphere of education for leisure" and came to play a central role in "challenging the authority and privilege of that culture," as Joshi puts it (201).[14] The most popular and sought-after books during the British Raj were not to be found in the colonial curriculum or the lists issued by the Department of Public Instruction. In the libraries and reading rooms of a Presidency capital like Calcutta, records show that requests for "prose works of imagination" far outnumbered those for "general literature," despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that the latter works were in plentiful supply.

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[11] Mary Poovey, "Discriminating Reading, "*Victorian Review* 31.2 (2005): 10–35.

[12] Ibid., 11.

[13] Ibid., 23.

> The British novels that were most popular throughout the colonial period remained romances (historical and adventure), melodrama, gothic, and sensational novels. If there should be any single feature that is common to the novels of Reynolds, Bulwer-Lytton, James, or Meadows Taylor (who wrote a number of historical romances about India), it is that their novels provided entertainment without forcing the self-realisation that the action of the novel was simply too disjunct from the reader's own experience.[15]

Joshi's argument is that the antirealist "Prose works of Imagination" appealed to the colonial reading public by offering literary forms most suited to adaptation and distortion: she attributes the late-nineteenth-century rise of the novel in English and vernacular languages in India to the salutary failure of British high culture to influence "the Indian marketplace of ideas" (216). Moreover, the colonial novel, associated with volitional—or "indiscriminate," to use Poovey's term—reading, was also often regarded as a harbinger of the participatory and mass politics of anticolonial movements, as the following example will show.

The Bengali novelist Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's *Pather Dabi* (1926),[16] translated often as "Right of Way," expressed views about self-determination and nation building like its predecessors *Anandamath* (by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay) and Tagore's *Ghare Baire*. Unlike the patriotic novels that had come before it, however, *Pather Dabi* had added political dimensions. It cannily connected empire with the brutal business of empire and the equally exploitative structures of global capitalism: it also showed how decolonization would be incomplete without a concomitant social revolution, which ended the tyranny of the *ancien régime*. Modeled on the "cult of militant youth power" associated with Subhas Chandra Bose in the Bengal of the 1920s, as the historian Tanika Sarkar rightly observes,[17] *Pather Dabi* was also uncannily prescient of the rise of the Naxalite movement in West Bengal (in the sixties and seventies) in the way it presented the social engineering delusions of well-meaning middle-class leaders, trying to mobilize a workers' movement. A novel about a secret society in Burma, which aims to free India of colonial rule, the action revolves around the revolutionary Sabyasachi, who advocates messianic violence, and Apurba, a well-educated gentleman, if also an effeminate mama's boy, who, in sharp contrast to Sabyasachi,

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14 Priya Joshi, "Culture and Consumption: Fiction, the Reading Public, and the British Novel in Colonial India," *Book History* Vol. 1. (1998), 196–220.

15 Ibid., 209.

16 Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, *Pather Dabi. Sarat Rachana Samagra* (Collected Works of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay), ed. Haripada Ghosh III (Kolkata: Ananda Publishers, 1989), 9–190.

17 Tanika Sarkar, "Bengali Middleclass Nationalism and Literature: A Study of Saratchandra's *Pather Dabi* and Rabindranath's *Char Adhay. Economy, Society and Politics in Modern India*, ed. D. N. Panigrahi (New Delhi: Vikas, 1985), 451.

clings to inherited Brahmanical traditions and middle-class values. Sabyasachi, or the Doctor, is the Bengali "bhadralok" turned terrorist. A veritable superman, he is trained as a doctor in Germany, an engineer in France, a lawyer in London, and has miscellaneous educational qualifications from the United States. It was all, he says, a recreation for him, as is the superhuman feat of crossing the Eastern Himalayas on foot to evade capture. His revolutionary ideals are also a hodgepodge of cosmopolitan influences—European insurrections of 1848, the Russian rebellion of 1905, the nationalist war of liberation in China in 1911—but it is made clear that he is no Bolshevik. The organization falls foul of the colonial authorities when it starts indiscriminately inducting members and has a precipitate end due to the treachery and incompetence of its recruits. All muscular rhetoric and no action, and constantly on the run from the police, Sabyasachi is ultimately forced to dismantle the society. The failed political plot mirrors the failure of the lachrymose family romance, and the novel would have faded into oblivion were it not for circumstances culminating in a government order of January 4, 1927, which recommended the confiscation of the book and a ban on its distribution.

With *Pather Dabi*, it wasn't simply the case that the ban popularized the contraband item: the addressable readership of the book had been incited and formed in the very anticipation of the ban and government censorship. Sarat Chandra had known several members of the Bengal Volunteer Corps and the "Anushilan Samiti," and was reputedly sympathetic to these pre-Gandhian terrorist groups in Bengal, whose radical politics had contrasted sharply with the nonviolent creed of the Indian National Congress, especially in the period after Gandhi's withdrawal of the Khilafat movement. Anticipating trouble, the publishers of the book form of the novel (it had been serialized in *Banga Bani* before), the brothers Ramaprasad and Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay, had made it widely available underground well before the ban: 5,000 copies of the book were purportedly sold in the first week itself. At the behest of the chief secretary and advocate general of Bengal, the ban was issued by Charles Tegart, the reigning police commissioner of Kolkata, four months after the publication of the book. The ban was met with intense debates in the Bengal legislative assembly: protests were organized, and newspapers decried the government's decision. And, as Subho Basu notes, "the government proscription of the novel phenomenally increased the popularity of *Pather Dabi* among Bengali readers, a common result of censorship" (*Censorship* 445).[18] *Pather Dabi* is a fascinating instance of the fortuitous formation of colonial reading publics, no doubt: it is also a reminder that those who read, do, and that the mobilization of a text-based reading public is often indissociable from the way in which political resistance organizes itself against state, church, the law, and "formal frameworks of citizenship."[19]

III

This special issue brings together five scholars who have already made notable contributions to the study of postcolonial literary cultures as they influence and are influenced by forms, histories, and practices of reading. The inclusion of different postcolonial locations—broadly, Africa, South Asia, and the Caribbean—as well as the heterogeneous cultural traffic among these areas, ensures that the special issue will offer a robust geographical survey of the topic. In "Differential Publics: Reading (in) the Postcolonial Novel," Elleke Boehmer explores the scene of reading in selected postcolonial novels, in particular Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, and Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The essay contrasts how reading operates as an activity staged within the narrative (at the level of "the told," to use a formulation by James Phelan) against how the reading process is invoked and styled at the level of what Phelan terms "the telling" as part of the narrative unfolding. Looking first at scenes of respectful and proximate reading posited by the colonial newspaper, the essay comparatively explores how such reading transfers to and is evoked within the postcolonial contexts of these three novels, and considers how the transnational reading publics the narratives imaginatively evoke or expansively connect with differ from the audiences or readers dramatized in the immediacy of the texts. Boehmer's essay foreshadows themes that will be revisited in Goyal's, Owen's, and de Bruijn's offerings: national literary repertoires that demonstrate cross-cultural or cross-continental elective affinities; postcolonial reading and the postcoloniality of reading; the written, oral, metropolitan, and vernacular intertexts of a given postcolonial text, which asks to be received as both English literature and its "noncompliant" (Boehmer's term) other.

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[18] *Censorship: A World Encyclopedia*, ed. Derek Jones (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 445.
[19] Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," 51.

In "The Genres of *Guantánamo Diary*: Postcolonial Reading and the War on Terror," Yogita Goyal tracks the reinvention of the genre of the Atlantic slave narrative in a contemporary account of detention without trial as part of the War on Terror declared by the US government after the 9/11 attacks. Mohamedou Ould Slahi's *Guantánamo Diary* (2015) not only illuminates the present, but also returns to the past—by replaying tropes of the slave narrative, including accounts of exile and natal alienation, the concept of social death, the quest for literacy, the journey north to freedom, and dreams of the Jubilee. In doing so, it chronicles the history of violence in a world that has not yet figured out a politics of reconciliation or reckoning. Situating such neoslave narratives from the global south as part of the explosion of interest in slavery in the past four decades, Goyal argues that slavery has become the defining template through which current forms of human rights abuses are understood, and that the slave narrative is now a new world literary genre. Such a development necessitates a rethinking of race and racial formation in a global frame, as well as the ethics and aesthetics of literary globalism. Goyal's layered essay redefines the temporal and existential crux of postcoloniality: no longer primarily relating to erstwhile colonies, the term stands for a range of mutating transhistorical connections and, in some instances, describes urgent articulations of solidarity between subjugated peoples. The essay also explores affiliations and disjunctions between African American and postcolonial studies, showing how the relationship between race and form forged by African American writers mutates as slave narratives are appropriated and reinvented across the postcolonial world.

Esther de Bruijn's essay, titled "Sensationally Reading Ghana's *Joy-Ride* Magazine," uses a specific example—a literary magazine from the 1980s and 1990s—to trace the transposition of the lively aesthetics of oral narrative performance (especially Concert Party and Ananse Storytelling) to modern media, such as serialized comics, in order to cultivate a feeling of cultural continuity for the magazine's readership. de Bruijn expertly analyzes the ways in which a textual medium defied the logic of the limit by brazenly appropriating elements of interactive performances and popular visual culture. The reading publics created by *Joy-Ride* were cultural players who repurposed and re-created texts: reading, in this instance, became a sensational staging of the accreted cultural meanings of Ghanaian popular fiction. The essay demonstrates how the multimodality of the image-intensive text made the magazine accessible to Ghanaians of varying literary competencies and, thus, across class categories. The vicissitudes of publication and readership associated with *Joy-Ride*, which its editors intended to buoy a readership devastated by socio-economic tumult in that period, allow for a lively interrogation of some of the reading practices and emergent reading publics that chart Ghana's decolonizing efforts and the unmistakable articulations of a postcolonial, and increasingly Westernizing or globalizing, modernity.

In her essay, " 'Toward a Truly Indigenous Theatre': Sylvia Wynter Adapts García Lorca," Imani D. Owens turns to the Caribbean to explore the role of translation—linguistic, cultural, and otherwise—in shaping new reading publics and illuminating the stakes of both diasporic connection and nation building. Following the work of Jamaican theorist, dramatist, and translator Sylvia Wynter, this essay theorizes dramatic adaptation, translation, and performance as strategies of postcolonial reading. The Caribbean's unique entanglements of European and US empire and its multilingual, transnational contexts make it an urgent space for theorizing connection and difference across various postcolonial reading publics. Owens's essay makes two singular contributions to the topic in hand: first, it presents Sylvia Wynter's useful distinction between false and true publics, or the public as a coerced and hypermediated entity, against which the unitary notion of "people" or *pueblo* must be upheld and performed; second, in Wynter's transposition of Lorca's play *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* to a Caribbean setting, it offers a model of Jamaican (national) publics that are cosmopolitan and hybrid. Drawing on critical essays, plays, and works of dramatic theory, Owens's essay enriches postcolonial vocabularies associated with reading publics by examining the following concepts and phenomena: alienation, translation, adaptation, and the uncanny correspondences between non-adjacent and non-contemporaneous cultural values.

As the editor of this special issue, I have self-consciously worried about the role of the literary critic in relation to the postcolonial reading publics we have anatomized in each of the essays, deploying acquired critical skills (as linguist, translator, comparatist, historian, sociologist, or anthropologist) to contextualize singular acts of collective reading in literacy practices that are largely idiosyncratic, historically contingent, and not necessarily critical. "Is critical reading really reading at all?" Michael Warner had asked in an essay titled "Uncritical Reading."[20]

> Or is it more like a discipline, seeking to replace the raw and untrained practices of the merely literate with a cultivated and habitual disposition to read by means of another set of practices? . . . A heroic pedagogy can be founded on textual techniques because of an imputed relationship between the practice of reading and critical reason, but what is that relationship?[21]

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[20] Michael Warner, "Uncritical Reading," in *Polemic: Critical or Uncritical*, ed. Jane Gallop (New York: Routledge, 2004), 15.

[21] Ibid., 15.

Rising to the challenge posed by Warner's questions, but decidedly less sanguine than he on the matter of "heroic pedagogy," Emily Apter and Elaine Freedgood suggest that an effective way of reconciling the "Kantian program of individual autonomy, pure reason, human agency, and universal freedom"[22] traditionally associated with critical reading is to cultivate an expanded and excursive sense of literary culture, closing ranks with "a larger public" and "multiple literal literacies."[23] Not reading better, but reading more, and reading differently, in modes that are "negatively dialectical, not additive";[24] finessing a negative or intersubjective critical capability that renders us more susceptible than ever to new or newly recovered textual objects and media circulating outside pregiven frameworks of commonality and social totality.[25]

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's lifelong scholarship on postcolonial reading methods sheds valuable light on the relationship between the postcolonial critic, postcolonial critique, and postcolonial reading publics. Spivak's *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999) traces the figure of the "native informant" through philosophy, literature, history, and culture. In the ethnographic sense, the native informant is denied autobiography despite being instrumental in generating a text of cultural identity. The literary or philosophical texts that Spivak reads in the *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* are not traditionally received as ethnographic texts: European, instead, is posed as the human norm in these works, which "offer us descriptions and/or prescriptions."[26] The figure of the native informant in Kant, Hegel, or Marx, Spivak concludes, is both "needed and foreclosed."[27] After 1989, Spivak states, a certain self-marginalizing and self-consolidating postcolonial subject has been appropriating the position of native informant necessitated by normative programs of colonial reading. Whether a metropolitan migrant or the citizen of a decolonized nation-state, he or she serves as a facilitator for exchange between metropole and nation or transnational corporation and country of origin. It is for this usurper figure, the class of "functionary intelligentsia"[28] participating in international civil society, that the meaning of postcolonial critique—which relentlessly tests its relation to truth and measures its degree of interestedness—must remain relevant.

Spivak's brand of critique, Mark Sanders says, is "broadly Kantian": "there are limits to what human beings can know . . . and therefore any claim to know, to have information, is to be subjected to a kind of examination called critique."[29] If we read "critique" as criticism, Spivak's strongest criticism of postcolonial as a figure is that "it masquerades as and overwrites the foreclosed position"[30] she is calling "the native informant." She proposes that a different standard of literary evaluation, necessarily provisional, can emerge "if we work at the (im)possible perspective of the native informant as a remainder of alterity, rather than remain caught in some identity forever."[31] Spivak finds such a remainder of alterity in Christophine, Antoinette's Martinican nurse in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys's rewriting of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. Despite her commodification—she is a wedding present to Antoinette's mother—Christophine is briefly entertained as an enunciating subject in the text. She is an adept reader of (and mediator) between cultures and script worlds and also someone who understands the limits of cultural translation (for instance, it is she who makes the judgement that culture-specific black ritual practices cannot be used by whites as cheap remedies). A post-emancipation consciousness—"No chain gang, no tread machine, no dark jail either. This is a free country and I am a free woman"[32]—Christophine is given the license to talk back to Rochester about his gross exploitation of Antoinette. Soon after the exchange, however, she is "quietly placed outside the story," Spivak observes, "with neither narrative nor characterological justification."[33] She reads in Christophine's parting words "Read and write I don't know. Other things I know," in that flouting of the textual, "a singular strength, not a weakness," a valorization of the anti- or postcolonial illiterate reading public.[34] Spivak reads the voice consciousness of the native informant in the way only she can, the only way a postcolonial critic can mediate on behalf of the reading public. The site of the native informant can only be read "by definition, for the production of definitive descriptions"—she cannot be reclaimed, Spivak cautions, as a reading position. In response to the foreclosed native informant in Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak says, "I am calling for a critic or teacher who has taken the trouble to do enough homework in language and history" who can analyze the address structure of the text, with its own openings and occlusions, in the interest of [what Spivak calls] "active interception and reconstellation." Not advocacy on behalf of the silenced, but going beyond hegemonic readings and out of one's self—in the act of reading—to figure a lost perspective, a lost reading public not yet conjured into being. That other cannot, and must not, be selfed. The subaltern must die to achieve residual, remainder-of-alterity signification. The postcolonial native informant posing as a contemporary reader of sovereign but unrealized discourse publics, old and new, must die a little, too.

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[22] Emily Apter and Elaine Freedgood, "Afterword," *Representations* 108.1 (Fall 2009), 139–46, esp. 141.

[23] Ibid., 142.

[24] Ibid., 143.

[25] On the topic of susceptible reading, or reading susceptibly, see Anne Anlin Cheng's discussion in *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[26] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 6.

[27] Ibid., p. 6.

[28] Ibid., p. 61.

[29] Mark Sanders, *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: Live Theory*. (New York: A&C Black, 2006), 9.

[30] Critique of Postcolonial Reason, 29.

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[31] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 352.

[32] Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, 130–31.

[33] Ibid., 131.

[34] Ibid., 131.