The Making of World Literature:

The Afro-Asian Nexus, the Aesthetics of Resistance, and the Cold War

Thuyen Viet Truong, English Literature, McGill University

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Abstract

The Cold War, in terms of ideological tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies, the Western Bloc and the Eastern Bloc, carved the world into separate spheres of alignment known as the "First World," the "Second World," and the "Third World." As a historically constructed discourse, the three-world model relies on a paradigm of hierarchical knowledge epitomized by Western modernity and creates a space in which such a model is hegemonic. Resistance to such a worldview is also a prominent component of this paradigm, as evident in the alliances between the socialist states and the decolonizing countries. Such historical circumstances create an opportunity to explore the cross-cultural movements and identities under-explored in literary and cultural studies, especially from a Third-Worldist perspective.

Revolving around the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the Afro-Asian Writers' Association and its poster child, the Lotus Prize for Afro-Asian Literature, as well as reading Ousmane Sembène's *God's Bits of Wood* (1960), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* (1977), and Alex La Guma's *Time of the Butcherbird* (1979), this thesis considers how cultural institutions, international awards, and Third-Worldist movements resist the discourse of the Cold War's Manichean ideology. By contextualizing the institutions, analyzing the prize, and scrutinizing the texts' unconventional interplay of resistance aesthetics, I argue how Third-Worldist literature embodies the uneasy relationship with modernity and the idea—or ideal—of world literature. Along with conventional references to Goethe and Marx, this thesis gestures toward the possibility of rewriting the genealogy of world literature with an eye toward more inclusive panoramas—it takes into consideration the positions and perspectives of the (post)colonial and (post)socialist worlds.

Résumé

Au regard des tensions idéologiques entre les États-Unis et l'Union soviétique et leurs alliés respectifs, le bloc de l'Ouest et le bloc de l'Est, la Guerre froide a découpé le monde en trois sphères, le « premier monde », le « second monde » et le « tiers monde ». En tant que discours historique construit, le modèle des trois mondes repose sur un paradigme hiérarchique du savoir prédominé par la modernité occidentale et crée un espace dans lequel un tel paradigme est hégémonique. Comme en témoignent les alliances entre les États socialistes et les pays en décolonisation, la résistance à une telle vision du monde est également une composante éminente de ce modèle. De telles circonstances historiques créent une opportunité d'explorer les identités et mouvements interculturels peu connus dans les études culturelles et littéraires, et particulièrement dans une perspective tiers-mondiste.

Tournant autour du Congrès pour la liberté de la culture, l'Association des écrivains afro-asiatiques et son porte-étendard, le prix Lotus pour la littérature afro-asiatique, ainsi que destextes *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* d'Ousmane Sembène (1960), *Pétales de sang* de Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1977) et *L'oiseau meurtrier* d'Alex La Guma (1979), cette thèse examine comment les institutions culturelles, les récompenses internationales et les mouvements tiers-mondistes résistent au discours de l'idéologie manichéenne de la Guerre froide. En contextualisation les institutions, en analysant les prix et en examinant l'interaction non conventionnelle de l'esthétique de la résistance de ces textes, je discute de la manière dont la littérature tiers-mondiste incarne un rapport difficile avec la modernité et l'idée même—ou l'idéal—de la littérature-monde. Soutenue par les références conventionnelles à Goethe et Marx, cette thèse suggère la possibilité que la généalogie de la littérature-monde puisse être étudiée avec un

panorama plus inclusif—prenant en considération les positions et les perspectives des mondes (post)coloniaux et (post)socialistes.

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INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS WORLD LITERATURE?: TRANSLATED, HYPHENATED, ORIENTALIZED

Bibliolepsy—that is, "a mawkishness derived from habitual aloneness and congenial desire"; "a quickening between the thighs and in the points of the breast, a broad aching V when addressed by writers, books, bibliographies, dictionaries, xerox machines, a sympathy for typists of manuscripts" (Apostol 11). So begins Gina Apostol's *Bibliolepsy*, which tells the story of a protagonist who falls in love with books and, by extension, their authors. From Homer to Shakespeare to Dickens to Dostoyevsky and José Rizal, the national hero of the Philippines, Primi Peregrino reads indiscriminately, voluptuously, and passionately. When she is twenty, she finds solace in the company of poets, writers, essayists, owners of bookstores, and everyone who is tangentially related to the arts. Avoiding politics, she looks for escapism in erotic escapades, deliberately merging her bookish and sensual desires in what she calls a "fabulous monster of incongruous parts—text and body, manual and man" (Apostol 200). While the events surrounding the Philippines, from the 1983 assassination of Ninoy Aquino to the 1986 EDSA Revolution, which was named after the Epifanio de Los Santos Avenue, where hundreds of thousands of protestors filled up in demonstrations against the Marcoses, suffuse the plot, Primi remains sleepwalking, virtually glossing over them in her indefatigable pursuits of books and men. When the magnetism of the revolution proves irresistible, she joins millions of others on the street, celebrating the fact that the Marcoses have fled by "dancing with a stranger in a red shirt, doing a kind of cha-cha in a wild, out-of-tune surprise" (Apostol 199). If this celebration is immature because the Marcoses do not leave until the next day, in an airlift provided by President Reagan, the victory of the Filipino people appears to be decisive—the country caught up "in this motion-picture pause, trapped in the festivity of a long false-alarm" (Apostol 200).

The connection between book, desire, and revolution is evident in the notion of "Third World" literature and the idea—or ideal—of a borderless world. Writing in his now canonical essay "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," Fredric Jameson argues for the concept of "*national allegories*" and suggests that "Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic—necessarily project a political dimension in the form of [a] national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society" (69). While critical of Jameson and mindful of the response to Jameson's essay from Aijaz Ahmad, I emphasize, nonetheless, that Jameson's intent, if not necessarily his essay's outcome, is insightful when it comes to conceptualizing the "Third World" as an entity that is at least qualitatively different from the "capitalist first world, [and] the socialist bloc of the second world" (Jameson 67). If the body of Third-Worldist literature is the writings associated with decolonization and emancipatory efforts rather than the sum of all literature written in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the Third-Worldist invocation in this case not only lessens the brunt of the accusations against Jameson but also allows for a more critical, in-depth analysis of the experiences of colonialism and imperialism. Of further concern for this thesis, however, is Jameson's intuition that Third-Worldist literature produces an allegory out of the private—a relationship that is not dissimilar from what Peregrino has with her country—in order to illustrate the necessity of theorizing on a global scale, in which the three-world model is subsumed within the rise of neoliberalism when the Second World disappears from the map.

This thesis is preoccupied with unfolding a nexus of relationships between the First World, Second World, and Third World to make visible their connections and conflicts in the formation of a world literary canon through the sponsorships of the Congress for Cultural

Freedom, the activities of the Afro-Asian Writers' Association, and three postcolonial texts' portrayals of resistance movements in the Cold War period: Ousmane Sembène's *God's Bits of Wood* (1960), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* (1977), and Alex La Guma's *Time of the Butcherbird* (1979). While I approach each text individually in the third chapter, this introductory section is primarily intended as a survey of world literary studies and the so-called rise of a world literature paradigm in academia. It is roughly divided into three main parts to outline the different schools of thought in the ongoing debate and comparatively systematize them into interpretative angles and theoretical frameworks that this thesis seeks to italicize, including Cold War institutions, international awards, and aesthetics of resistance. The first part identifies three major clusters of thought in the new-millennium revival of world literature as a scholarly discipline, including the notion of "gain[ing] in translation" proposed by David Damrosch, the focalization around center-periphery dynamics and world-system theories in the works of Franco Moretti and the Warwick Research Collective, and the shift toward a philosophical articulation of the "world" evident in the writing of Pheng Cheah. To elevate oppositional voices to these positions, the second part highlights three responses from three different angles, which argue against the notion of world literature and question the validity of many of the methods of doing it, including the comparativist rejoinder from Elleke Boehmer, the refutation from Emily Apter on the grounds of "untranslatability," and the Orientalist criticism from Aamir Mufti.

Positioned within this definitional—sometimes ideological—contention, the third part gives emphasis on the sociological approach inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's theories of "field" and "capital." Underlining the socio-historicity and practicality of this approach, my thesis identifies three key issues in the creation of world literature made more evident through a

sociological lens and argues that they constitute a set of specific phenomena particularly germane to future studies. These three key issues are Cold War institutions, secret sponsorships, and recognition through prizes. If conventional approaches to world literature typically revolve around taxonomy and its ensuing debates, I seek to shed light on alternative ways of viewing and understanding world literature by historicizing its institutions and deconstructing the so-called "weaponization of literature" (Orsini, Srivastava, and Zecchini 1). Maintained and endowed for approximately two decades, the institutions and the prize mentioned reflect the different sociological aspects of the making of world literature in the high Cold War years and the ensuing decades of détente. In formulating my thesis in such a manner, I recognize the cultural and historical particularities of African countries—Senegal, Kenya, and South Africa—in an effort to push against the generalization of the "Third World" as static and the claim of universality undergirding the three-world model.

Damrosch's *What is World Literature* (2003) is widely cited and regarded as the monograph that has reinvigorated world literature as a discipline. Attuned to open-ended debates, Damrosch provides a definition:

> A work enters into world literature by a double process: first, by being read as literature; second, by circulating out into a broader world beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin. A given work can enter into world literature and then fall out of it again if it shifts beyond a threshold point along either axis, the literary or the worldly. Over the centuries, an unusually shifty work can come in and out of the sphere of world literature several different times; and at any given point, a work may function as world literature for some readers but not others and for some kinds of reading but not others. The shifts a work may undergo, moreover, do not reflect the unfolding of some internal logic of the work in

> itself but come about through often complex dynamics of cultural change and contestation. (Damrosch 6)

The emphasis is on the creative aspect of texts as opposed to other utilitarian forms of writing such as travel brochures or employment contracts. Seen from such a vantage, Damrosch is invested in the "characteristics" of literature(s) in motion rather than the "systems" which enable them to move. This "gains-in-translations" notion—which he defines as how "works of world literature take on a new life as they move into the world as large"—can be applied to the so-called origin of the idea of world literature: the German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's coinage of the term *Weltliteratur*, as recorded by his disciple Johann Peter Eckermann, was inspired by his reading of a Chinese novel in translation and was thus the product of a literary circuit (Damrosch 24).

Jing Tsu, however, challenges this observation about literary circulation. Reading the particular Chinese novel that Goethe referred to, *Hao qiu zhuan (The Fortunate Union)*, Tsu emphasizes the inauspicious, albeit more invisible, nature of textual mobility. First translated into English around 1719, *Hao qiu zhuan* was an outcome of the Chinese-language lessons for James Wilkinson, a merchant who worked for the East India Company and studied with a Jesuit priest (Tsu 124). When he died in 1736, Wilkinson's nephew lent his incomplete translation to Thomas Percy, who, thanks to what he had learned from missionary accounts and European travel writings, completed and published the novel in English in 1761 (Tsu 125). The supposedly high reputation of *Hao qiu zhuan* in its native context merited translation, although, as Tsu implies, such a cultural transference would have been impossible had it not been for the presence of missionaries based in Canton at the time: a socio-political factor that foreshadowed the rise of European imperialism in China. In other words, when critically examined, Damrosch's idea has

generated more contentions and questions than answers, and an exclusive focus on circulation as a point of departure for different interpretations of world literature has obscured more than instructed. Given that all texts can be said to have been transported from their cultures of origin in one way or another, it only makes sense that, in following and debating Damrosch, many clusters of thought have pivoted on the socio-political factors that continue to shape and reshape literature instead.

This turn toward socio-political structures is salient in the approaches taken by a range of scholars, most prominent among them being Franco Moretti and the Warwick Research Collective. Following recent contributions in digital humanities, Moretti's method of distant reading borrows from Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system theories to hypothesize a problem: "World literature is not an object, it's a *problem*, and a problem that asks for a new critical method: and no one has ever found a method by just reading more texts. That's not how theories come into being; they need a leap, a wager—a hypothesis, to get started" (55). Much like Wallerstein's division of the world into dominant metropoles and dominated colonies based on political and socioeconomic analyses, world literature, especially in the form of the European novel, follows evolutionary laws and constitutes a hybrid between the West and non-West. Accordingly, Moretti declares that the introduction of the novel in the periphery is not "an autonomous development" but "*always* a compromise between foreign forms and local materials" (58, 60). Objecting to the "theological exercise" that is close reading, he proposes distant reading as a new method of reading, which dispenses with careful, sustained encounters with texts and invests instead in indexing an inventory of scholarships to grasp the general characteristic of literature (Moretti 57). Less ground-breaking than it actually is—as distant reading can be characterized as a mixture of established socio-political approaches and

computational analyses—the notion of reading the world's literature "distantly" nevertheless sparks conversations and debates about the substance and meaning of world literature.

Taking the focus on geopolitical factors a step further, the Warwick Research Collective (WReC) pronounces "a *single* world-literary system" governed exclusively by "*capitalism as a world-system*" (8, 14). Unlike Moretti's independent undertaking, WReC's effort is collaborative, reflected in the shared authorship among scholars whose expertise ranges "from postcolonial studies to American studies to modern European and Scottish literary studies" (ix). Despite their varying interests, what unites these scholars is the "common conviction that the existing paradigms of literary analysis, in whatever field, are not equal to the challenge of theorizing 'world literature' in the new millennium" (ix). Drawing on the works of Trotsky, Wallerstein, and Jameson, WReC pursues a theory that foregrounds "combined and uneven development" (8). They define world literature as "*the literature of the world-system*—of the modern capitalist world-system" (8). Similar to how Jameson has spoken of modernity in the singular rather than the plural, WReC identifies one and only one "world-literary system" (8). World literature is the "literature of the modern capitalist world-system" since the nineteenth century and a direct outcome of British and European colonialism that has brought forth the "*capitalization* of the world and of the full *worlding* of capital" (15). While there are differences in degree regarding how world literature registers the world system, WReC insists that the unevenness of the world is most conspicuous in the "peripheral," where the work's symbolic forms share not only "common themes, plots and subjects, but also a range of formal features" that they concurringly call "irrealist" (51).

The irrealist examples offered—from Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1969) to Ivan Vladislavíc's *The Restless Supermarket* (2001) and Victor Pelevin's *The Sacred*

Book of the Werewolf (2005)—are nuanced and persuasive; they anatomize the interaction between the socio-political forces and the writer's conscious engagement with non-Western, localized forms. As these scholars indicate, while there is a gradation of complexity in terms of how literary texts index developments, these works do not imbue world literature with resistance aesthetics and therefore do not intrinsically exhibit a position of resistance vis-à-vis capitalist modernity. In a similar fashion, Monica Popescu highlights how arguments for a *singular* world-literary system as opposed to *multiple* world-literary systems do not account "persuasively for the position of the socialist states during the Cold War" (Popescu 73). Drawing on the work of sociologist Peter Worsley, Popescu counters the WReC hypothesis by quipping that the model advanced by Wallerstein and his followers either "completely overlooked socialist states, as if they did not exist, or made them fit an explanatory frame that was unnecessarily rigid" (Popescu 73). Just as Moretti assigns peripheral aesthetics to a fixed rubric of evolutionary laws whereby margins move or tend to move toward centers, so WReC sees countries labeled as socialists performing an auxiliary role within the system: they slightly destabilize as an anti-systemic force while strengthening and ultimately buttressing a single order.

If WReC's laudable theorization of world literature draws sustenance from its rejection of *worlds*, thereby enclosing the possibility of expanding boundaries away from the North Atlantic, Cheah expands the debate by asking: what is a world? Informed by the philosophies of Immanuel Kant and Martin Heidegger, Cheah regards the "world" not solely as a planet that exists—a material phenomenon in the physical world—but as an idea, a creative endeavor with world-shaping capabilities. Unlike WReC's proposition, wherein the "world" of "world literature" is synonymous with capitalist systems, the "world" in Cheah's argument is to be distinguished from the globe, which is a spatial category created by the globalization of capital.

His larger hypothesis is that postcolonial literature is world literature with a cosmopolitan purpose. His monograph *What is a World?: On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature* (2016) explores "how the conceptualization of the world in temporal terms provides a normative basis for transforming the world made by capitalist globalization and how this normative understanding of the world leads to a radical rethinking of world literature as literature that is an active power in the making of worlds" (Cheah 2). In response to formulations that construe world literature as a synecdoche of the capitalist system, Cheah posits that such concepts risk restricting literature to mere objects that reflect socio-political phenomena. Instead of seeing an analogy between world literature and the circulation of commodities, he proposes "a more rigorous way of understanding world literature's normativity as a modality of cosmopolitanism that responds to the need to remake the world as a place" that resists globalization (Cheah 19).

Whereas WReC is concerned with how world literature tabulates uneven developments, Cheah contends that the ontological power of world literature crystallizes ethical critiques that resist globalization. In his analyses, he turns to phenomenology and deconstruction for a more radical articulation of time, with recourse to works by Heidegger, Arendt, and Derrida. For him, literature "can play an active role in the world's ongoing creation because, in its very existence, it enacts the opening of a world by the coming of the other, and it makes the world by disclosing and constituting actors" (Cheah 186). While WReC examines fiction from the periphery and semi-periphery, Cheah scrutinizes postcolonial texts from the Caribbean, the Indian Subcontinent, and the Horn of Africa: Michele Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987), Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2008), and Nuruddin Farah's *Gifts* (1992). By homing in on a roster of socioeconomic issues, ranging from "calculations of sugar and tourist capital" to "environmental movements and ecotourism" to "humanitarian aid" and "military and economic

neocolonialism in collaboration with the crony capitalism of a patrimonial state," Cheah maintains that these fictions not only chronicle the violence perpetrated by globalization but also deliberately resist it by re-conceptualizing the world through the adoption of indigenous resources that provide "alternative temporalities" and "worldly ethics" (Cheah 13-4).

Although the debate on world literature assumes an important role, few critics have questioned the mission of the field. Boehmer, Apter, and Mufti have addressed this lacuna in their respective interventions. Because of the overlap in the canon of texts that they study, comparative and world literature tend to be at loggerheads with each other. Gayatri Spivak, in a conversation with Damrosch, implies that world literature "can very readily become culturally deracinated, philologically bankrupt, and ideologically complicit with the worst tendencies of global capitalism" (Spivak 456). Likewise, Peter Hitchcock, in *The Long Space: Transnationalism and Postcolonial Form* (2009), believes that world literature allows readers to "consume postcolonialism without that nasty taste of social struggle in which a reader's own cosmopolitanism may be at stake" (5). Focusing more on its pedagogical effect, Boehmer expresses a concern for the future of the field when she voices a fundamental difference between postcolonial critiques and world literary approaches. Postcolonialism, for Boehmer, implies "global interaction, especially when viewed from the condition of the less empowered, as something imposed from without, often violently, without choice or consultation" (Boehmer 305). World literature, in contradistinction, has "conventionally always tended to enshrine large-scale entities or powers as arbiters or standards of 'universal' critical opinion, and no less so today, with literature from interstitial spaces inevitably cast as contingent and inconsequential, or as untranslatable and hence inaudible in the so-called neutral forums" (Boehmer 306). Hence, for postcolonialism to join forces with world literature, Boehmer believes that the enterprise "risk[s]

forgetting some of the core geo-political legacies of the postcolonial, and to overlook the fraught histories through which worlds and worlds collide" (Boehmer 307).

Together with Boehmer, Apter cautions against the tendency to homogenize and erase the cultural and linguistic idiosyncrasies of literary texts which are brought into comparison or simply grouped together. Building on her earlier arguments in *The Translation Zone* (2006), Apter underlines the value of textual materials that, one way or another, resist the practice of translation vis-à-vis the gigantic expansion of world literature since the turn of the millennium. *Against World Literature* (2016) aims to "activate untranslatability as a theoretical fulcrum of comparative literature with bearing on approaches to world literature, literary world-systems, and literary history, the politics of periodization, [and] the translation of philosophy and theory" (Apter 3-4). In the face of an "entrepreneurial, bulimic drive to anthologize and curricularize the world's cultural resources," Apter insists on counter-moves by advocating for the importance of "non-translation, mistranslation, incomparability, and untranslatability" (3-4). While her criticism of world literature as a flattening index is well-taken, her scholarly engagement is best understood as reinforcing rather than questioning the legitimacy of the field.

More than in Apter's and Boehmer's theories, Mufti's contribution in *Forget English! Orientalism and World Literatures* (2016) displays a sharp awareness of the limits of the world literary debate. This sharpness is evident in a constellation of questions he poses: "What are the rhetorical and epistemological conditions of possibility of the concept of world literature and whose interests does it serve?" (11) "What kinds of literary practice does it reference, envision, or produce?" (11) "What other forms of 'world thinking' does world literature rely on or, alternatively, replace or suppress?" (11) "What is its relationship in this current avatar to, for instance, the literature of Afro-Asian and Global South solidarity or to the literary

cosmopolitanism of the Soviet cultural sphere?" (11) "Under what conditions exactly—methodological, conceptual, and institutional—can the practices of world literature be revalued and re-functionalized for a radical critique of our world, or 'the world made by capitalist globalization,' as Cheah has put it"? (Mufti 12). In essence, his investment lies in the socio-political structures that give rise to the notion of a borderless world and the faulty belief that literature can freely traverse. Conscious of the paradoxes embedded in such notions, Mufti insists that "*world literature has functioned from the very beginning as a border regime,* a system for the regulation of movement, rather than a set of literary relations beyond or without borders" (Mufti 9). Although the world system seems to be frictionless every so often, the international order is "a regime of *enforced* mobility and therefore of *immobility* as well" (Mufti 9).

For Mufti, world literature is imbricated in Anglicism and Orientalism. If the latter is a set of practices believed to be representations of the non-West in stereotypical manners, the latter is a linguistic system: "English as the language of the original composition ('Anglophone literature'), English as the language of reading ('the Anglophone reader'), and English as a medium of translation, evaluation, and adjudication in literary relations on a worldwide scale (that is, in 'world literature')" (Mufti 12). The irony is that theoretical debates on world literature are all staged in English. Mufti insists on an awareness of how the English language operates as a "*vanishing mediator*" across the world's geographical and cultural spaces (Mufti 16). In this regard, he locates the origin of world literature in the "structures of colonial power" and "the revolution in knowledge practices and humanistic culture more broadly initiated by Orientalist philology" (Mufti 19). As an imperial practice, Orientalism gives birth to "the conception of the world as an assemblage of civilizational entities, each in possession of its own textual and/or expression tradition" (Mufti 20). In its effort to bridge the West and East, the core and

peripheries, the First and Third World, the North and South, world literature is a practice inextricable from Orientalism.

The juxtaposition of these eloquent theorizations demonstrates that the study of world literature strategizes different perspectives to attend to different forms of circulation, structural modes, and the ruthless criticism that critics deploy to resist the status quo. It is also helpful to construe these theories as complementary rather than competing or conflicting. Taking the work of Mufti one step further—that is, to go beyond "appeals to diversity" to reveal "the history (and contemporary workings) of relations of force and powers of assimilation and the ways in which writers and texts respond to such pressures," this thesis proposes a more materially grounded and self-reflective way to study world literature (250). My analysis is a corollary to Stefen Helgesson's and Pieter Vermeulen's belief that world literature is "made, not found" and that the discipline needs not to be "defended, but rather that it should be investigated in its actuality (Helgesson and Vermeulen 1-2). Applying Bourdieu's theories of "field" and "capital" to the consecration of world literature, this thesis follows Helgesson's and Vermulen's advocacy for an understanding that "there is nothing in and of itself that makes a given work a work of world literature. It is only when it moves when it is translated when it is read at a remove, that the term 'world literature' becomes a relevant descriptor" (Helgesson and Vermeulen 7). Differing from the multiple efforts to determine what world literature is or should be, the sociological approach highlights the various mechanisms in which world literature is manufactured as such. In other words, world literature is "an interrelated set of phenomena"—"the production, circulation, distribution, and consumption of literary products" that go against the grain of established configurations (Helgesson and Vermeulen 12).

In *At Penpoint: African Literatures, Postcolonial Studies, and the Cold War* (2020), Popescu argues for the continued relevance of the Cold War in the studies of world literature. Highlighting how a revival of interest in the idea of world literature since the 2000s is a result of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the disintegration of the "three worlds" model of conceptualizing cultural productions, and the rise of an international purview for the study of the humanities. Popescu emphasizes how a Cold War paradigm, with its fault lines and its competing ideologies, has pitted Euro-America against Sino-Soviet, capitalism against socialism, and democracy against autocracy while threatening to subsume the rest of the world under its orbit. While much of the recent works on world literature strive to create an inclusive pattern that attends to and integrates literary productions from the Third World, the genealogy of world literature should—and can—be rewritten with an eye toward more inclusive panoramas. Along with conventional references to Goethe and Marx, it should hark back to the decades of the Cold War and address the blind spot that the triumph of the Western Bloc at the end of the Cold War erased, including the secret sponsorships of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the rise and fall of the Afro-Asian Writers' Association, and the Lotus Prize for Afro-Asian Literature with the support of—or in defiance of—the superpowers' ambitions.

This thesis considers a sociological approach to be particularly germane to the purpose of rewriting the history of world literature. In relation to both its analytical lens and methodological rigor, a sociological approach is descriptive and can be combined with other theoretical readings, which facilitates the examination and interpretation of social phenomena. A sociological approach is also inherently self-reflective in its awareness of both the socially constructed nature of scholarly discourses and their limited capacities in changing the fundamental realities that dictate which works are read and taught in academia. Relatedly, a sociological approach

scrutinizes the institutionalization of world literature as a marketing strategy and a discursive tactic of dissemination. Such an approach can reveal both the political and apolitical, historical and ahistorical forces that have shaped this field since at least the end of World War II. This thesis brings into play and puts into force the socio-institutional focus in many forms, including the analysis of Cold War secret sponsorships (the Congress for Cultural Freedom), the emergence and extinction of multilingual book prizes in the global South (the Lotus Prize for Afro-Asian Literature), and the rediscovery of literary connections beyond the North Atlantic (the Afro-Asian Writers' Association). The inclusive and comparative methods underpinning this thesis guarantee that their contributions to the current debate and their decisive advancement of a more critical approach to world literature are timely and significant.

Besides a sociological approach, this thesis also concerns literary texts written by Third-Worldist authors. Sembène, Ngũgĩ, and La Guma address world literature from different angles, portraying an alternative Third-Worldist perspective under the long shadow of the First and Second Worlds. From the integration of the oral forms into the narrative prose in *God's Bits of Wood* to the immersion of leftist speeches in the characters' dialogues in *Petals of Blood*, the valences of the Cold War and its ideological contest permeate these texts in formal and thematic elements. To establish the shared background for these writers, I discuss the Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Afro-Asian Writers' Association in conjunction with postcolonial Third-Worldist studies. Rarely engaging with postcolonial critique until now, the Cold War provides valuable insights into relationships between countries that form "the ties that bind" even after the Soviet Bloc disintegrated and the Free World was victorious. Studying these authors, who evince the postcolonial African preoccupation with decolonization yet have rarely been studied alongside and against one another, aligns my thesis with contemporary scholarship

examining the Cold War from a Third-Worldist perspective. I also address the shift in epistemology addressing the First-Second-Third trichotomy, from the hierarchical developed-underdeveloped system to more geographically neutral terminology such as global "North," including the U.S., Europe, Russia, Canada, Australia, and global "South," comprising Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East.

Resting upon this historical framing, my analysis revolves around how acts of resistance—whether they are unions, marches, protests, or assassinations—reflect the problems of modernization in this Cold War moment. It underlines issues of race, gender, and economic inequality that undergird the official calls for cooperation and solidarity. All three texts contain portrayals of resistant tactics that challenge developmental registers. In *God's Bits of Wood* and *Petals of Blood*, such tactics are highlighted by trade unions organized by the "underdeveloped" black African subjects receiving a Western education who are supported by the "developed" white Europeans sympathetic to the cause of socialism. In these cases, unionist activities resist the encroachment of Western development as it envisions Euro-American modernity as the epitome. Each respective text depicts a different kind of leftist effort—from a refusal to work to gain concessions from employers on the part of workers in *God's Bits of Wood*, which can be interpreted as the most conventional with its reference to Western texts such as Émile Zola's *Germinal*, to an organized march from town to city and a premeditated riot as forms of dissent in *Petals of Blood*. *Time of the Butcherbird* offers a more nuanced perspective as the act of vengeance portrayed is not activism per se but justice-seeking. As I will show, the character in question is under the influence of leftist politics. These texts allow me to analyze First-Third World interactions as they are complicated—or rather triangulated—by the Second World, which few analyses have done. This analytical angle is particularly relevant to postcolonial studies

since it establishes the link between the Cold War and the consolidation of a world literary paradigm. Just as geopolitical rivalries during colonial times have been said to reveal Orientalist structures of knowledge, I argue that postcolonial texts employ similar functions for such rivalries to delineate even more complicated realities under new forms of imperialism in postwar eras.

CHAPTER I: CULTURES AT WAR: AGENTS, INSTITUTIONS, AND THE COLD WAR

In "What Is a Classic?," written as a response to T. S. Eliot's essay of the same title, J. M. Coetzee takes stock of judgments of aesthetics by discussing his reaction to Bach's music when he was a teenager in South Africa:

> Is there some non-vacuous sense in which I can say that the spirit of Bach was speaking to me across the ages, across the seas, putting before me certain ideals; or was what really going on at that moment that I was symbolically 'electing high European culture,' and command of the codes of that culture, as a source that would take me out of my class position in white South African society and ultimately out of what I must have felt, in terms however obscured or mystified, as a historical dead end—a road that would culminate (again symbolically) with me on a platform in Europe addressing a cosmopolitan audience on Bach, T. S. Eliot, and the question of the classic? In other words, was the experience what I understood it to be—a disinterested and in a sense impersonal aesthetic experience—or was it really the masked expression of a material interest? (Coetzee 14)

The question is not what a classic is but whether or not it is a channel—a "route," as Coetzee puts it—that elevates a person from his or her class position. Scholarly consensus has swung away from notions of "individual talent" and "time-tested genius" to a concurrence that aesthetic values are a mixture of both nature and nurture. Focusing on one's individual reading experience tends to obscure the extent to which social and political factors affect the attribution of literary value and, by extension, the fashioning of a canon.

One of the most central prejudices in canonization—alongside class, gender, and race—is the Eurocentricity of the works chosen. The institutions that uphold it—the university curricula

from which students learn and according to which instructors teach; the anthologies and compendia, both educational and popular, that scholars compile, sell, and profit from—are mainly produced for Euro-Americans, in Euro-America, and by Euro-American intelligentsia, critics, and publishers. Deducing from the current framework of literary studies, the old prejudice which presupposes that Euro-Anglo literature is somehow superior to that of the rest of the world had not changed much since 1835, when Thomas Babington Macaulay, on the subject of Indian Education, declared that "a single shelf of a good European library is worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia," or worse, that "all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England" (Macaulay, "Minute by the Honorable T. B. Macaulay"). If the books scholars and critics read are those that they believe to be valuable, and those books happen to be Euro-Anglo literature, their preferences must be based on an implicit judgment that is still much akin to that of Macaulay, no matter how much they are aware of the problematic issues associated with canon formation.

Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* is a textbook example that puts the current discussion into perspective and exemplifies the judgments embedded in this debate. First translated into English in 2004, Casanova's monograph was widely received by critics. Terry Eagleton reviewed it as "a milestone in the history of modern literary thought" and part of a "distinguished lineage" including "Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, Georg Lukacs's *The Historical Novel*, and Northop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*" (Eagleton). The book aims to canvas a paradigm of world literature of inequality and competition rather than a realization of the Goethean ideal of cosmopolitanism. The book's main argument is that the contingency of literary production on the politics of nationalism in the past four centuries has generated a literary market

wherein the national languages which possess the advantage of accruing more capital due to their dominant status in international affairs emerge as leaders of the realm. They established powerful metropoles—Paris, London, and New York—which act as exchange channels through which writers negotiate in order to be transposed to the fame-making domain of the Republic of Letters. These metropolitan intersections are the repertoires of capital determined by the longevity of their traditions, the influence of their classics, and the professional milieu of their critics, reviewers, and publishers. This cultural field is subject to fluctuations depending on the ways writers and artists from the periphery adopt and adapt the Western European fashions: they can either assimilate like V. S. Naipaul or rebel like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. Either way, the center of the world—that is, Paris from Casanova's perspective—continues to hold firm amidst these cultural shifts.

The World Republic of Letters is fundamentally at odds with current trends in postcolonial and comparative literature. Casanova's monograph aims at nothing short of providing a totalizing template to account for all elements of world literary histories—a gambit that most scholars in the field would avoid given its sheer scope. Second, this paradigm is built upon Bourdieu's theory of "field" as France emerges in competition with other cultures around the globe. It is also aligned with a Darwinian narrative of literary value such that traditions with less capital are understood as inferior until they catch up with the Western European manner. Recognition in Paris enables writers to extricate themselves from the traps of their mother tongues and original countries to graft themselves onto a world-making domain. It is, therefore, decidedly Eurocentric in the literal sense of the word and appears to have no engagement with the postcolonial or post-Cold War modalities of deprovincializing Europe in the global scheme of things. *The World Republic of Letters* purports to study the making of world literature in the

twentieth century while resolutely ignoring all non-European literary histories and reinforcing Eurocentrism in canonization in a rather disputable manner.

The argument in the following pages addresses these controversies in three fundamental ways. First, it debates Casanova's template of globalization of culture and internationalization of literature in light of postcolonial and especially, post-Cold War, transformations of our present understanding of the world. Second, it evaluates whether her Bourdieu-inspired approach, with its conceptual dependence on theories of "field" and "capital," is conducive to valid judgments about large swathes of non-European spaces. And third, it canvases alternative perspectives on the study of world literature that has emerged in recent decades, especially in the works of Andrew Rubin and Monica Popescu. In the process, it weaves in aspects of a post-1991 cultural manifesto that has been emphasized by a variety of schools of thought and whose theoretical assumptions are in contradistinction to those of Casanova.

Historically, the Cold War is understood as a global rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union from roughly 1945 to 1989, in which culture played a significant—albeit distorted or underestimated—role. In contrast to the First World War and Second World War, where battles are commemorated as sites where a particular conflict has taken place, the Cold War is often understood as being "conflict-less," meaning that the tension was "diffuse, and as the name wrongly suggests, a war without physical battles—given that the US and USSR were not engaged in direct combat" (Popescu 4). Although the Western and Eastern Blocs did not involve in conflict, they ramped up military stockpiles and waged nuclear threats that impacted all countries. A global survey of the Cold War negates the notion of a "cold" militarization, for the absence of a confrontation merely masquerades the existence of proxy wars, dirty tricks, psychological warfare, and so-called passive-aggressive diplomacies in Africa, Asia, and Latin

America, where intensely "hot" conflicts did transpire (Popescu 4). During the Angolan Civil War, for example, a war between the communist People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the anti-communist National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) was in fact pitched between the Soviet Union, Cuba, and other socialist states, on the one hand, and the U.S., South Africa, and pro-Western governments, on the other.[1] It spanned three decades, leading to millions of combatant and civilian deaths as well as the destruction of key infrastructure that crippled the country. Likewise, Southeast Asia in the grip of decolonization was subjected to multiple proxy wars from the 1950s to the 1970s, which devastated countries such as Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam due in part to American and Soviet agendas. Rather than directly challenging the Soviet Union, the U.S. covertly intervened in Iran (1953), Guatemala (1954), Lebanon (1958), and Congo (1960) in an attempt to safeguard the world from the threat of "Communist subversion" (Heller 118).

This global Cold War coincided—and to some extent, mediated—a constellation of distinct and connected phenomena that proliferated from late decolonization to the early 1990s and continued to motivate ideas and movements around the world. These cultural campaigns, inspired by the leftist landscape on the other side of the Iron Curtain, included: the 1955 Bandung Conference in Indonesia, the 1957 Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Congress in Egypt, the 1961 Belgrade Summit which launched the Non-Aligned Movement, and the 1966 Tricontinental Gathering which established the Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America (OSPAAAL). During the latter half of the twentieth century, these decolonial gestures influenced writers, artists, and filmmakers, who saw themselves as sympathetic to the cause of anti-imperialism and thereby, outside of the pro-capitalist and

[1] See, for example, Monica Popescu, "On the Margins of the Black Atlantic: Angola, the Eastern Bloc, and the Cold War," *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 45, no. 3, (2014), 91–109.

imperialist West. As the history of the Cold War was itself the history of a prolonged competition between two opposing forces, individuals and groups were routinely torn between two antagonistic faces of the Earth: the universal applicability of patriarchal capitalism and liberal democracy and the dialectical historicism that "aimed to overturn some of the most pernicious exclusions and forms of exploitation inherent to the capitalist logic" (Vanhove 7). Consequently, both sides believed that their vision of the world was the one that would prevail, one that in the end would assume its victory.

Each of the above movements, and the subsequent activism they spawned, is dissimilar from and at times in disagreement with each other; yet they are solidary stratagems and cultural assets for the intelligentsia to formulate paradigms that opposed Anglo-American imperialism and socialist authoritarianism. International conferences brought together an array of politicians, activists, and writers; films, posters, journals, magazines, and photographs motivated empathy for those facing colonialism, racism, and brutality in far-flung regions and across linguistic differences. This planetary sensibility introduced new contours of alliances, esprit de corps, and camaraderie, which connected nations and communities through literature, culture, and person-to-person contacts. The Chinese writer Mao Dun, for example, spoke of Afro-Asian solidarity at the first Afro-Asian Writers' Conference in Tashkent in 1958.[2] South African activist Alex La Guma proclaimed "hold[ing] up radio stations" to fight Apartheid at the African-Scandinavian Writers' Conference in Sweden in 1967.[3] Senegalese poet-president Léopold Sédar Senghor appraised Négritude and Arabism in the inaugural issue of *Lotus* in 1968.[4] More than just a

[2] See, for example, Pieter Vanhove, "China and the Restaging of Afro-Asian World Literature," in *World Literature After Empire: Rethinking Universality in the Long Cold War* (Routledge, 2021), 27-50.
[3] See, for example, Monica Popescu, "Pens and Guns: Literary Autonomy, Artistic Commitment, and Secret Sponsorships," in *At Penpoint: African Literatures, Postcolonial Studies, and the Cold War* (Duke University Press, 2020), 31-64.
[4] See, for example, Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Negritude and Arabism," *Lotus: Afro-Asian Writings* 1 (1), (1968), 20-34.

political force, this world-making sensibility embraced new ideas among disparate groups, transmitted across the globe in the hope that a combination of persuasion and emotion might provide a seedbed for equality without borders.

Taking its cue from Marx and Engels' exhortation that there is a "world literature" that shall arise from the many national and local literature, as well as more recent contributions by Damrosch, WReC, Cheah, Mufti, among others, this chapter aims to supplement the field of world literature by opening up its discursive purview to include alternative paradigms of community, internationality, and universality.[5] Insofar as the Cold War was not only a "hot" conflict but also a cultural battle—a dimension of struggle that did not replace physical combat but was waged in conjunction with it—the canon of world literature as critics and scholars now understand was a product of the efforts made by the two superpowers to influence culture and orientation through secret sponsorship and other means of narrative control. On the one hand, works on the Soviet Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) reveal a sophisticated network of propagandistic mechanisms applied on the socialist side.[6] On the other hand, more recent studies, particularly that of Frances Stonor Saunders, have unearthed new evidence on the forms of cultural duress deployed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) through its umbrella organization, the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF). Established in 1950 to counteract Cominform's campaign against Western dominion, CCF was an advocacy group that "employed dozens of personnel, published over twenty prestige magazines, held art exhibitions, owned a news and features service, organized high-profile international conferences, and rewarded

[5] In *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), Marx and Engels identify "world literature" as an inevitable after-effect of the internationalization of capital. According to them: "In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature" (39).

[6] See, for example, Fernando Claudin, *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform* (1975).

musicians and artists with prizes and public performances" (Saunders 1). A philanthropic organization, the Fairfield Foundation, was discovered to be a front providing the impression of disinterestedness when in reality, funding was offered as bait to attract writers and artists sympathetic to the values of democracy, freedom of speech, and ironically, socio-political neutrality. Without the knowledge of most of the participants involved—whether they were editors, columnists, or proprietors—venues where independent and ostensibly art-for-art's-sake ideas were discussed, promoted, and published had been inadvertently bankrolled from the United States.

Andrew Rubin researches the CCF extensively and notes that this influence extends into the realms of "great books" as well, with the appearance of CCF-sponsored journals marking "a significant stage in the history of literary and cultural production" (Rubin 58). Rubin observes that through a number of its journals—*Encounter* (published in London from 1953 to 1990), *Forum* (published in Vienna from 1954 to 1965), *Der Monat* (published in Munich from 1948 to 1986), *Preuves* (published in Paris from 1951 to 1975), *Quadrant* (published in Sydney from 1956 to present), *Quest* (published in Mumbai from 1955 to 1976), *Transition* (published in Kampala from 1961 to 1976), *Ḥiwār* (published in Beirut from 1962 to 1967), *Solidarity* (published in Manila from 1966 to 1996), and *Horizon* (published in Jakarta from 1966 to present)—the CCF had a significant impact on the changing condition of humanistic practices from 1950 until at least 1989 (see Appendix A). U.S-sponsored organizations, like the CCF, did not leave the canon untouched but rather helped to "shape it, define it, regulate it, administer it, co-opt part of it, and in some cases silence and marginalize writers, particularly those whose dissenting practices threatened to undermine the episteme upon which the Cold War was based" (Rubin 8). Figures like T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, and Arthur Koestler found their fiction, poetry,

and essays translated and transmitted with high speed and published in multiple countries. London, Paris, Berlin, Mumbai, and Beirut were cities where CCF enlisted their support and framed them as cultural ambassadors. All these efforts and attempts, Rubin reveals, were employed to legitimize and sustain the transfer of imperial power from Western Europe to the U.S. in the aftermath of WWII to fashion and reinvent the idea of world literature.

The fact that the CIA would secretly fund an organization of intelligentsia under the banner of freedom for over a decade has fueled the imagination of scholars. For some, it represented the hypocrisy of highbrows for being part of a covert campaign disguised as a cause for freedom.[7] For others, regardless of the involvement of the CIA, it bespoke responsibility on the part of those who spoke out in favor of free speech when such liberty was at risk. While Giles Scott-Smith and Charlotte A. Lerg emphasize that none of the journals "swayed far from the 'line' that excluded communists—or those acting in the 'service' of supporting a leftist-communist position—from the community of legitimate producers of culture"; a connection between the victory of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the now ubiquity of journals once sponsored by CCF is no easy-to-dismiss suspicion (Scott-Smith and Lerg 9). The financial vulnerability of many so-called "journals of freedom" meant that they were in truth turned into poster children to spread messages of gentle culture and moderate democracy. The boundaries between the working class and the elite were reinforced, diluted—or rather distracted—by the idea of "trickle-down" progress and what Greg Barnhisel terms "Cold War modernism" (3). The secret undergirding this whole enterprise, Barnhisel suggests, was the

[7] See, for example, Giles Scott-Smith and Charlotte A Lerg, editors, *Campaigning Culture and the Global Cold War: The Journals of the Congress for Cultural Freedom* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). See also Peter Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe* (Free Press, 1989); Giles Scott-Smith, *Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Political Economy* (Routledge, 2001); Hugh Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* (Harvard University Press, 2009); Sarah Miller Harris, *The CIA and the Congress for Cultural Freedom in the Early Cold War: The Limits of Making Common Cause* (Routledge, 2017)

support offered by government offices like the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) and private organizations such as the Ford Foundation. Together, they propelled the belief that the "innovation and anti-traditionalism that had once made modernist art and literature so threatening to middle-class society proved that Western culture was superior to the new model of culture being forged in the Soviet Union and its satellite nations" (Barnhisel 3). Consequently, the American government shifted from suspicion to endorsement of avant-garde arts as an embodiment of the values of freedom; by the late 1940s, the "idea that Abstract Expressionism could become a vehicle for the imperial burden began to take hold" (Saunders 215). This burden involved combining local roots with what Americans perceived as the universality of Western traditions, fashioning themselves as harbingers of progress hailing from the First World and from beyond the restriction of national boundaries.

In *Cold War Assemblages: From Decolonization to Digital* (2016), Bhakti Shringarpure elaborates on the motive behind such an approach:

> [American] imperial power worked on two parallel planes: the first plane deployed aggressive violence and was intent on redrawing the physical and governmental maps of regions and the second plane was committed to the use of soft power that mainly aimed to influence opinion and often even claimed to improve people's conditions through aid and education. While it is easy to disavow physical and militaristic violence, there is a tendency to profess that soft power has inadvertent positive consequences, and the cultural Cold War is no exception in this push to assert the good effects of empire. (Shringarpure 142-143)

From this vantage, violent interventions cannot be sustained unless they are simultaneously backed up by strategic programs. The goal of the cultural Cold War, therefore, is not merely to

obfuscate the truth of aggressive military campaigns but also to reassure foreign countries that Pax Americana is the rising tide lifting all boats. Such a strategy could only be accomplished by inoculating the world against the "contagion of Communism" (Saunders 1). The premise of the CCF and the entire clique of agents it brought into being was to usher in a "new age of enlightenment, and it would be called the American Century" (Saunders 1). It was a civilizing mission and psychological warfare par excellence: it put into place systems of thoughts, modes of emotions, and horizons of expectations that have become an undergirding ideology allowing American imperialism to remain at winning the hearts and minds of the world over.

Reading a 673-page report compiled by the U.S. Senate titled "Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities United States Senate: Together with Additional, Supplemental, and Separate Views," Shringarpure explains how governmental interventions shape "the production and circulation of texts during the Cold War and continue to influence literary culture to this day" (Shringarpure 138). This report details the CIA's covert intelligence activities, foreign and domestic, and the agency's understanding of publishing:

(a) Get books published or distributed abroad without revealing any U.S. influence by covertly subsidizing foreign publications or booksellers.

(b) Get books published that should not be 'contaminated' by any overt tie-in with the U.S. government, especially if the position of the author is 'delicate.'

(c) Get books published for operational reasons, regardless of commercial viability.

(d) Initiate and subsidize indigenous national or international organizations for book publishing or distributing purposes.

> (e) Stimulate the writing of politically significant books by unknown foreign authors—either by directly subsidizing the author, if covert contact is feasible, or indirectly, through literary agents or publishers. (qtd. in Shringarpure 149)

Hypothesizing that such a constellation of ideas is the "Cold War paradigm," Shringarpure contends how certain guiding principles and overarching practices—a process of how to do things in publishing, so to speak—have put into place "a manufactured consensus" that pushes international and translated works to the margins, silences dissenting voices, and constructs the notion that literature is ultimately separate from the public sphere (Shringarpure 138). The Cold War paradigm, in short, advances a particular cluster of tastes, aesthetics, and narratives in the literary space.

This paradigm, an offshoot of the Cold War, is an example of how inquiries into the situations of writers, the frameworks that structure their beliefs, the material forces that determine their translation, and the systems that structure the readerships will yield illuminating results. If there is a mode that can be identified with the legacy of CFF, it is one that centers on disseminating support for the arts, political detachment, and personal freedom while concurrently condemning totalitarianism. What unites the different expressions of CFF's activities is the necessity of forging a front of elites so that it could rein in the supremacy of the West from various locales in the world. The writers and artists who attempted to spread CFF-sponsored messages were negotiating the kind of cosmopolitanism that was an outcome of migration and globalization. In fact, the CFF represents an impulse toward globalization—one that prompts a reconsideration of global networks outside those conventionally associated with post-1991 eras. For artists and writers during this period, this choice presented as one between adapting the messages of the First World to their own cultures or adapting their own cultures to the concern of

the First World. In most instances, the practitioners had to do a bit of both. If the CFF's administrative center was Washington, the literary canon and the art that supported, radiated from, and interfaced with this center necessitated an expression of modernism. The modernist movement, therefore, was adapted to the specific needs of the cultures and people that the West aimed to modernize.

It is clear, then, that the Cold War contributed to the "making" of world literature or at least the conditions for its possibility by bringing writers and artists into contact. In *The Form of Ideology and the Ideology of Form* (2022), Francesca Orsini, Neelam Srivastava, and Laetitia Zecchini note that from the vantage point of "our current Anglocentric world," going back to the postwar decades is "a shock" because the Cold War makes visible literature from most of the world to an extraordinary degree (Orsini, Srivastava, and Zecchini 22). Their counterintuitive assessments beg the question of what exactly constitutes today's *Weltliteratur* when critics and scholars often tout the myth of a borderless world and the triumph of neoliberal capitalism at "the end of history."[8] Prima facie, the nation and the market provide an impression of harmonious interactions to produce internationally renowned authors. Writers like Gabriel García Márquez, Wole Soyinka, Naguib Mahfouz, Nadine Gordimer, Derek Walcott, J. M. Coetzee, V. S. Naipaul, Orhan Pamuk, Herta Müller, Kazuo Ishiguro, among others, appear to belong to the clique of world-renowned authors. Still, the notion that Chinua Achebe represents "the African writer" more fully than any other writer brings to the foreground the misconception that all fifty-four countries of the African continent are more or less the same; or that Salman Rushdie, as an Anglo-American writer, "gives voice" to the Indian subcontinent highlights the marginalization of yet untranslated writers such as Geetanjali Shree, who won the 2022

[8] See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Free Press, 1992).

International Booker Prize.[9] As these examples illustrate, a great many talented writers are rendered invisible by the seemingly "totalizing circuitry" of world literature (Rubin 3). Upon closer examination, their absences provide the possibilities for the future of the field.

Amidst the debate on the crisis of the humanities and the future of literary studies, talks of "realist wars" (and "modernist wars" in the Eastern Bloc) have re-entered academic discourse through comparative studies. A so-called realist-modernist rift implies a division of tastes and canons; it also entails heightened disciplinary attention to cultural institutions recently uncovered from their lesser role in the myth of writers as geniuses. As the story goes, the advocates of modernism pushed against the reductive mimesis that could only represent life in its most mundane aspect. Ambiguity and unintelligibility became the buzzwords for those who championed a more nuanced understanding of literature. On the American side, modernism came to represent the epitome of free will unchained by the state, while realism—especially in its socialist realist iteration—came to constitute a subservience to dogma and an appropriation by political authoritarianism, which was artistically and intellectually inferior to modernism in terms of creativity and innovation. Conversely, the Soviet side argued that modernism, with its fixation on form and meter, was a symptom of moral degeneration, an indicator of egomania, and a behavioral disease of a society that had begun to choke on its excess.[10]

The remainder of this chapter sets out to nuance this debate. My starting point has been the casting of the Cold War as a clash between modernism and realism. Since realism—

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[9] Specifically, in "The Postcolonial Exotic" (*Transition*, vol. 64, no. 64, 1994, pp. 22–29), Graham Huggan notes how Rushdie's 1981 novel *Midnight's Children* is marketed as the "representative" voice of India. Huggan explains that such a label is part of the exotic strategies—the construction of the representative foreign writer, the appeal to local colors, the assertion of authenticity not usually ascribed to one's culture, etc.

[10] See, for example, Ernst Bloch's "Discussing Expressionism" and Georg Lukás' "Realism in the Balance" in *Aesthetics and Politics* (Verso, 2007). For further discussions, see Louise Blakeney Williams, *Modernism and the Ideology of History: Literature, Politics, and the Past* (Cambridge University Press, 2009); Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (Verso, 2013) or *The Antinomies of Realism* (Verso, 2013).

particularly socialist realism—is the mantle-carrying aesthetic of the Soviet Union, and since socialist realism was promoted around the world through Soviet channels, it is tempting to think of Soviet aesthetics as synonymous with socialist realism. In contrast, modernism breaks free from the restrictions of top-down approaches by leaving room for experimentation, pastiche, and irony. However, as Katerina Clark emphasizes in *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941*, within Soviet and Soviet-inflected circles, there was no solid divide between realism and modernism. Accordingly, the blurring of East-West, center-periphery, and abstract-mimesis is well documented by critics who insist that stylistic experimentation continued in the Soviet Union even after all the Bloc's artists had been amalgamated into state-controlled unions.[11] Further problematizing the modernist-realist binary, other studies indicate how socialist realism fell into pieces when confronted with a more vibrant, heterogeneous socialist culture across Eastern Europe after WWII.[12]

In *Comintern Aesthetics*, Steven S. Lee identifies the Bloch-Lukás-Brecht exchange playing out on the pages of the journals *International Literature* and *Das Wort* as one of the origin moments of the realism-versus-modernism debate and socialist-versus-capitalist tug-of-war. As Lee explains, these thinkers were "all committed to a Soviet-led world revolution," even though, if positioned across a spectrum, Bloch and Brecht embraced the fragmented effects that we associate with modernism whereas Lukács espoused the nineteenth-century realist novel as the most fitting form to resist capitalist systems (Lee and Glaser 16). As Lukás explains, a realist writer is one who: "fashions the material given in his own experience, and in so doing makes use

[11] See, for example, Christina Kiaer, "A Comintern Aesthetics of Anti-Racism in the Animated Short Film *Blek end wait,*" in *Comintern Aesthetics*, edited by Amelia Glaser and Steven S. Lee (University of Toronto Press, 2020).
[12] See, for example, Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941*, (Harvard University Press, 2011), 160-2, 179. Steven S. Lee notes that for an overview of debates on socialist realism from the 1950s to the 1990s, see Thomas Lahusen, "Socialist Realism in Search of Its Shores" in *Socialist Realism without Shores*, edited by Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 5–26

of techniques of abstraction, among others. But his goal is to penetrate the laws governing objective reality and to uncover the deeper, hidden, mediated, not immediately perceptible network of relationships that go to make up society" (Lukás 38). For that reason, modernism originates from realism insofar as modernist elements exhibit a "new immediacy" that depart from what he understands as the superficial, ineffectual abstract of expression. This conviction unites Bloch, Lukás, and Brecht in their efforts to capture the complexity of reality even when they may disagree about what means to accomplish such ends (qt. in Glaser and Lee 16).

The Bloch-Lukás-Brecht affair brings forth the serpentine, voluminous understanding of realism that allows for the innovations that are associated with modernism. From this vantage, realism becomes, in the words of Jameson, "not a purely artistic and formal category" but rather an idea that "governs the relationship of the work of art to reality itself, characterizing a particular stance towards it" (Jameson 205). As he explains:

> The spirit of realism designates an active, curious, experimental, subversive—in a word, scientific—attitude toward social institutions and the material world; and the 'realistic' work of art is, therefore, one which encourages and disseminates this attitude, yet not merely in a flat or mimetic way or along the lines of imitation alone. Indeed, the 'realistic' work of art is one in which 'realistic' and experimental attitudes are tried out, not only between its characters and their fictive realities, but also between the audience and the work itself, and—not least significant—between the writer and his own materials and techniques. The three-fold dimensions of such a practice of 'realism' clearly explode the purely representational categories of the traditional mimetic work. (Jameson 205)

Jameson, along with Brecht, defines realism not by any single stylistic form but by what it is capable of. The key is not to assign labels but to cultivate an expansive understanding of

aesthetics that sidesteps any reductive opposition to one mode of style or structure of representation over the other.

In "Peripheral Realisms Now," Jed Esty and Colleen Lye, borrowing from the argument of Jameson, seek to grasp the post-Cold War by positioning realism "within a genealogy of ethnic and postcolonial studies and within an expanded field of literary practice not solely organized by the historical referent of the nineteenth-century European nation-state" (Esty and Lye 279-80). While not refuting this position, this chapter is not interested in arbitrating a dispute or casting a vote in a ballot in favor of realism. Instead, as previously mentioned, this chapter is designed to address the sedimentation of modernism and realism as linguistic signifiers when scholars and critics deploy them in a literary context. More than mere slogans or stylistic choices, modernism or realism became a weapon of narrative control because the American and Soviet governments invested heavily in specific modes of cultural dissemination. In the same fashion in which Jameson defines postmodernism as the cultural logic of late—or post-war—capitalism, I apply this form of analysis to the rivalry between modernism and realism during the Cold War years. Not only did these two modes of aesthetics metonymize the forms of social and political organization on both sides of the Iron Curtain; but due to the lavishing of funds by the US and the USSR into agents and institutions that privileged, respectively, modernism over realism, they became catch-all emptied of original meaning and intent. Therefore, this chapter homes in on the ossification of "modernism" and "realism" as they are adopted, defended, or rejected. In the process of adjudicating the right label, critics and scholars inadvertently shape the contour of world literature as a field and contribute to debates about decolonization.

If the analysis moves from the globe to the African continent, things look more in shape and in tune. From this perspective, I may rather say that it is less the unrelenting political and cultural dominance of empires that triumph over alternative decolonizing projects but more a certain Cold War division—with equally relentless leverage and influence—that emerges as a credible model for post-independent Africa. Critic Georg M. Gugelberger discusses a Cold War bifurcation of aesthetics in a chapter synthesizing the main debates in African literature:

> African literature for quite some time now has struggled between modes of writing which are essentially modernist, Eliotic, and/or Poundian, longing for permanence and everlastingness (the increasing difficulty of Soyinka's style, particularly of his Idanre, 1967, and his modernist "miniature" epic Ogun Abibiman, 1978, are a case in point) and an aesthetic of resistance and commitment inherent in the writings of Okot p'Bitek, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Sembène Ousmane, Alex La Guma, and others, writers who are less formalistically achieved but politically more engaged, even if they are less modernist. African writers themselves are fully aware of this bifurcation as can be witnessed in Okot p'Bitek's *Song of Lawino* and *Song of Ocol*, works which, according to one of the founders of African radical aesthetics, Grant Kamenju, are "the neo-colonial aesthetics of capitalism and subjugation" versus "the aesthetics of black pride, black affirmation, resistance, and ultimate liberation. In order to come to terms with this apparent bifurcation not only in literature but in literary criticism, it is necessary to look at a specific tradition (by no means the African tradition) to which Marxism and its outlook toward realism, modernism, and postmodernism and populist modernism might very well provide the only answer on this long and troublesome journey from aesthetics to ethics. (Gugelberger 2)

Whereas Gugelberger did not explicitly mention "realism," his discussion highlights one of the most salient examples of cultural binary along the lines of Cold War ideologies. The author most frequently associated with T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound was Wole Soyinka, whereas Ngũgĩ, Sembène, and La Guma were euphemistically appraised as "less formalistically achieved but more politically engaged" (Gugelberger 2). Gugelberger's evaluation uncritically assumes that whatever is gained by accentuations to form is lost to commitments to politics. The African literary contours are more complex: political engagements and aesthetic innovations can and do co-exist in meaningful ways.

What all these theories and accounts have in common is the emphasis on the complicity of Third-Worldist literature with capitalist (or socialist) modes of production and consumption in a divided world. Third-Worldist literature is an inauspicious testimony to the crushing power of Soviet-American hegemony. Under a veneer of cosmopolitanism—the nationality of postcolonial writers may range from Kenya to Senegal and South Africa—fiction produced during the Cold War years serves in fact to solidify the existing inequality in the cultural field. Starting with Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* and ending with Gugelberger's *Marxism and African Literature*, this chapter shows that the coupling between Western canonization and Cold War bifurcation is neither a natural outcome nor an inherent order but an essential unfolding of the story of Cold War agents and institutions who have shaped the canon as such. Only through such a perspective can we appreciate the tongue-in-cheek irony of "NATO literature as world literature."[13] Put otherwise, how can we think more capaciously about the aesthetics of resistance

[13] See, for example, David Damrosch, *Comparing the Literatures: Literary Studies in a Global Age* (Princeton University Press, 2021). Damrosch notes that in the 1950s and 1960s, "NATO literature as world literature" was ironic because most comparativists focused on a handful of major Western powers. Even within the literature of NATO, women's writings, minority writers, popular culture, and film were not taken as seriously as Virgil, Dante, Flaubert, and Joyce.

and decolonization if we include in our account the legacies of neo-colonialism and the complications of Cold War imperialism? Although aestheticism is not a single substance, what light does a more global perspective on the modernism-versus-realism tug-of-war shed on contemporary literary debates?

CHAPTER II: THE LOTUS PRIZE AND THE MAKING OF AN AFRO-ASIAN LITERARY FIELD

In *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value* (2005), James English describes cultural prizes as "practically invisible within the prevailing optics of cultural studies" and suggests that "unless we begin to examine some of these neglected agents and instruments of cultural exchange, whose rapid rise is one of the most striking features of cultural life in our time, we cannot hope to discern reliably the ways in which the 'games of culture' have changed since the nineteenth century" (English 14). Since the 1990s, scholarship on this topic has proliferated, most of which, such as Richard Todd's *Consuming Fictions: The Booker Prize and Fiction in Britain Today* (1996) or Graham Huggan's *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001), has focused on the Booker Prize, while others, such as Burton Feldman's *The Nobel Prize: A History of Genius, Controversy, and Prestige* (2000) and Julia Lovell's *The Politics of Cultural Capital: China's Quest for a Nobel Prize in Literature* (2006), have offered commentaries on the Nobel. Most of these studies, like English's, have cited Bourdieu's theorization of cultural capital to underline how prizes act as "the very means" of the production of value by facilitating the "circulations and interconversions of capital" (English 10).[14] In these studies, the focus is on successful prizes that have had, and continue to have, significant influence on literary studies, either in a global or regional context. As English notes, the proliferation of cultural awards in the latter half of the twentieth century means that only a small number of prominent prizes like the Nobel or Booker will survive and dominate the field, while others become either obsolete or extinct.

[14] According to Lovell (2006), the absence of a Chinese Nobel laureate became a national anxiety that generated articles, conferences, and delegates to Sweden in the 1980s. Chinese exiled writer Gao Xingjian's win in 2000 did not resolve this issue, and the controversy surrounding the Nobel committee's decision continues to simmer.

This chapter pivots on one of these extinct prizes, the Lotus Prize for Afro-Asian Literature (1969-1988), as a case of non-success, in which the stated ambitions of the prize do not effectively intervene in or bring about the desired changes to existing power structures in what Pascale Casanova calls "the international literary space" (25). Firstly, I present a survey of the establishment, development, and decline of the prize and make observations about the shifting politics of Afro-Asian resistance during its two decades of operation. In this synopsis, I bring together and examine a variety of textual and documentary sources, including the transcript of the jury's discussion in connection with the first cluster of Lotus recipients, the publicized list of Lotus winners, as well as relevant discussions of the prize in the first issue of the journal *Lotus*, published in March 1968. Bourdieu's and English's theories about different forms of capital and their corresponding fields are also applied to this analysis to emphasize the fact that in a scenario of non-success like Lotus, the partial "agency of the cultural prize" is demonstrated not through the prize's role as agent and source, but as recipient and beneficiary, of prestige and recognition (English 320). Secondly, I situate the prize and its defunct status in the debate on world literature and provide three possible rationales for the prize's demise, including the inadequacy of financial capital, the lack of cooperation among member states, and the contradictory elements in the prize's functioning that ultimately negate its stated ambitions. This chapter cautions against over-confidence in or over-reliance on prizes as brokers of cultural value. It also hypothesizes that since prizes necessarily act as mediators through which different stakeholders in the field barter different forms of capital, their survival and credentials depend on what they can bring to the table for these players. The extinction of prizes, especially those like Lotus that aim to intervene in or challenge existing power structures, indicates that without significantly diversifying or decentralizing the source of prestige in existing models, it is

difficult, if not impossible, for any new paradigm to secure a firm foothold in the cultural hierarchy of a "republic of letters" (Casanova 4).[15]

The Afro-Asian Writers' Association (AAWA) held its inaugural conference in Tashkent, the capital of the Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan. This event brought together over a hundred writers from Africa and Asia. The archival documents of this occasion, a 523-page publication of the conference proceedings and numerous clippings from newspapers with articles about the Tashkent conference that participants had published upon returning to their countries, profusely thank the hosts for their hospitality but also inform of Soviet efforts to impose an agenda on the gathering.[16] According to Rossen Djagalov, the city of Tashkent was chosen to "offer a successful model of development and also the greatest Third-World country of all time" (qtd. in Djagalov 70).[17] The conference's itinerary, while productively highlighting Central Asian culture and tradition, was meticulously curated so that Uzbekistan's victory in conquering issues commonly faced by their Asian and African counterparts, such as poverty, mass illiteracy, and threats of segregation, was spotlighted, and the USSR's achievements in the cultural realm, namely the creation of a Central Asian tradition and the elevation of a socially engaged literature under Soviet rule, were applauded.

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[15] In *The World Republic of Letters* (2004), Pascale Casanova theorizes a global literary field carved up into central and peripheral regions, languages, and aesthetics. Insofar as authors and artists from the peripheries of the global literary field manage to gain access to its prestigious networks of economic and cultural capital, they do so primarily through the dual mechanism of Western literary prizes and translation into major Western languages. Both prize and translation work in tandem to provide the "consecration" of a text and the subsequent "canonization" of an author vis-à-vis a set of literature-worthy standards, and only by being thus sanctified can a presumably marginal literary text achieve its ubiquitous success.

[16] As Rossen Djagalov notes, the USSR documents the event exhaustively. In the archive of the Soviet Union of Writers, there are over eighty folders devoted to the Afro-Asian Writers Association and its Tashkent conference (f. 631, op. 2, ex. 6100– 80).

[17] Originally coined by Alfred Sauvy in 1952, the term "Third World" was used to distinguish countries that neither aligned with the West (NATO) nor the East (the Socialist Bloc). However, this nomenclature lost meaning after the end of the Cold War. Today, "Third World" refers broadly to the region of Latin America, Asia, and Africa and is thus somewhat synonymous with "Global South" or "periphery."

Within Bourdieu's theory of cultural production, this uncommon triangulation between an artistic congregation, a socialist state, and a cultural prize can be viewed as conspicuously constructed by the flows of different forms of capital in the international market. In "The Forms of Capital," Bourdieu explains that capital "takes time to accumulate and which, as a potential capacity to produce profits and reproduce itself in identical or expanded form, contains a tendency to persist in its being" (241-2). He further describes three different types of capital that can be converted into one another: "economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and maybe institutionalized in the form of property rights"; "cultural capital, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications"; and "social capital, made up of social obligations (connections), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility" (243). In the case of Lotus, the Soviet Union—and to some extent, the German Democratic Republic and Egypt—provided the economic capital for the prize and conference (in 1958 and 1983 in Tashkent, 1962 in Cairo, 1967 in Beirut, 1970 in Delhi, 1973 in Almaty, 1979 in Luanda, 1988 in Tunis) through its sponsorship, which included administration fees, publicity costs, and most importantly, the funding for awards. In return, the AAWA, as a poster child of the 1955 Bandung Conference, where prominent leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Sukarno, and Zhou Enlai issued an official statement of solidarity among Third World countries regarding self-determination and cooperation, provided the cultural capital for the Socialist Bloc.[18] As Bourdieu points out, "the

[18] See, for example, Christopher J. Lee, ed., *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives*, (Ohio University Press, 2010). See also: Duncan Yoon, "'Our Forces Have Redoubled': World Literature, Postcolonialism, and the Afro-Asian Writers' Bureau," (*The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Enquiry*, 2.2, 2015), 233–52; Hala Halim, "Lotus, the Afro-Asian Nexus, and Global South Comparatism," (*Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 32.3, 2012), 563–83; Vijay Prashad, ed., *The East Was Read: Socialist Culture in the Third World* (Left Word Books, 2019).

most powerful principle of the symbolic efficacy of cultural capital no doubt lies in the logic of its transmission" (246). The transmission, in this case, is the institutionalization of Afro-Asian-ism through the insertion of "Afro-Asian" in the official titles of both the conference and the prize.

Two factors problematize the transmission of capital in this triangulation. Firstly, the Soviet Union had its own source of cultural capital, which had been accumulating since 1949, when the Lenin Peace Prize was awarded to writers, artists, and scientists who contributed to the cause of world peace. Long forgotten, the Lenin Peace Prize was the communist world's answer to the Nobel Prize. Its roster of awardees, including some of the best-known non-Western authors such as Pablo Neruda, Mulk Raj Anand, Kwame Nkrumah, and Agostinho Neto, formed a significant portion among the more-than-ten-dozen peace prize recipients before the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc. Modeled after the Lenin Peace Prize, the Lotus Prize acquired its share of prestige by inserting itself into the Soviet orbit and, in the process, contributed to the creation of an Afro-Asian canon. The continuing celebrity of this prize was reflected in the enduring fame of its beneficiaries: South African Alex La Guma in 1969, Senegalese Ousmane Sembène in 1971, Kenyan Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in 1972, and Nigerian Chinua Achebe in 1975. Some of them, such as Mahmoud Darwish, Agostinho Neto, and Faiz Ahmad Faiz received both the Lenin Peace Prize and the Lotus Prize. Thus, the Soviet Union offered direct support to Afro-Asian intellectuals sympathetic to the cause of socialism and, by directly transmitting cultural capital from its peace prize to Lotus, worked to win the hearts and minds of Third World writers through soft power diplomacies, such as prestige-laden awards.

Second, the social capital the AAWA gathered through the conferences was also essential to the establishment of this triangulation. For Bourdieu, social capital is "made up of social

obligations" and embedded in "a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (243, 248). According to Joseph Lampel, cultural events such as fairs and festivals are "institutions that allow participants to perform both valuation processes"—namely, the valuation of cultural products as social resources and the valuation of these resources, such as reputation, social connections, and face-to-face interactions, to attain the highest return for cultural capital (Lampel 335). As the journalist Krishnalal Shridharani affirmed in an article he published after his sojourn in Uzbekistan, the real success of the AAWA conference lay not in the ambitious visions of the emerging movement but in the "person-to-person contacts it enabled between Asian and African writers who had so far lacked basic familiarity with each other despite their common schooling in the nuances of European literature" (Djagalov 71). These contacts, he asserted, "took place on the periphery rather than [in] the main conference auditorium" (qtd. in Djagalov 71). Likewise, poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz submitted a proposal to the Soviet Writers Union in 1963 after his idea of an Afro-Asian journal had been introduced to multiple writers and artists in Tashkent. While Shridharani and Faiz were by no means representatives of the Afro-Asian writers in attendance, their experiences cast light on how social capital was converted into cultural capital in festivals and fairs, where political reputation, social obligation, and in-person contacts would be two-fold amplified.

It would be amiss to speak about the Third World without briefly discussing the watershed event that aimed to reclaim this name—and the countries that were grouped under it—from a system revolving around the First and Second Worlds. Writing in *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (2007), Vijay Prashad identifies the creation of a Third-Worldist "platform" from its first meeting in Brussels at the League against Imperialism to Bandung, where twenty-nine Afro-Asian countries in 1955 proclaimed themselves outside the

East-West divide (14-5). The idea of a non-aligned Third World, as Christopher J. Lee explains, represented "a coalition of new nations that possessed the autonomy to enact a novel world order committed to human rights, self-determination, and world peace" (Lee 15). Dipesh Chakrabarty, describing "development" and "dialogue" as two underlying principles for this vision of solidarity on the part of Third World countries, argues that whereas the developmental mindset is a remnant of the colonial machine's failure to deliver the promise of modernity, global dialogues can genuinely acknowledge cultural diversity without distributing such diversity over a hierarchical order of civilization (46). This so-called "dialogical side of decolonization," as Chakrabarty names it, urges for international exchange without the shackle of imperialism: a corollary to Rabindranath Tagore's notion "Vishwa Sahitya," or "World Literature," the title of a lecture he delivered to the Indian National Council of Education in Calcutta in 1907 (Chakrabarty 47; Tiwari 29).

Solidarity, cooperation, and exchange are key terms for considering the dynamics within and beyond the Afro-Asian alliance during the Cold War. With the support of different forms of capital, the Lotus Prize was launched with a clear target group and an ambitious focus on "world literature" (qtd. in Yoon 241). As the prize should be explicitly Afro-Asian, the target group of candidates—and eventually, winners—was restricted to writers who were citizens or residents of one of the more-than-one-hundred Asian and African countries. In *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (1997), Martin W. Lewis and Kären Wigen examine the basic geographical frameworks that scholars take for granted but govern how they perceive the world. "Asia" and "Africa," Lewis and Wigen argue, are cultural frames that are "particularly debilitating when married to a key metahistorical concept: the notion that the West is coincidental with modernity and that the non-West can enter the modern world only to the extent

that it emulates the norms established in Europe and northern North America" (Lewis and Wigen 7). In the case of Lotus, the Asian and African countries encompassed the near East (e.g., Turkey) and Southeast Asia (e.g., Indonesia), reinforcing a Cold War definition of these countries as Third World, thereby separate from the West. Notably, countries in Central and South America were not included in this big picture, possibly due to the tension between, in Hala Halim's words, "a vestigial ethnocentric tendency that attribute[d] a fixed essence to Afro-Asian-ness and an unfulfilled tendency to steer beyond the geographical coordinates of Africa and Asia" (Halim 580). This somewhat arbitrary selection indicated that the Lotus Prize's rhetoric of Afro-Asian-ism did not take into consideration the geographical reality of the global South and was deliberately strategic in essence.

The specific target group of recipients had a direct influence on what the prize organizers perceived as "world literature." As Duncan Yoon explains, world literature at Tashkent was "understood as a cultural embodiment of a third world postcolonialism," and the AAWA played a crucial role in providing an alternative literary history rooted in the experiences of decolonization (Yoon 241). The conference and the prize valorized Afro-Asian histories through cultural exchanges and extolled these traditions as the quintessence of humanism's ethos. In so doing, organizers hoped to "rehabilitate" the category of humanism on a global scale via an Afro-Asian literary movement that was couched in the language of struggle, resistance, and reformation (Yoon 241). It was Youssef El-Sebai, the secretary-general of the AAWA, who took up these notions in the journal *Lotus*:

> We, Afro-Asian writers, represent people along the entire length and breadth of Asia and Africa from different climates, different environments, and different traditions. Yet we are all bound by a deeply-rooted unity, which is both the foundation and the basis

> underlying our superficial differences. It is our common inheritance apart from the solidarity of our Afro-Asian peoples that is a gift and a responsibility at one time. It is a right, even a distinction, but also a heavy burden and a duty that we have to fulfill. I mean by this the power of expression, the ability to forge words that transform silence into a driving force, which reveals the truth, and which indicates the path and lightens it, contributing to the progress of man, the transformation of the world, and the establishment of values which make life more just and consequently, more beautiful. (El-Sebai 5)

As El-Sebai acknowledges, the Afro-Asian literary field operated as an arena of struggle for cultural freedom. Its existence could not be reduced solely to the quest for autonomy; rather, to exist as a literary field in the first place, it had to achieve a degree of coherence and cohesion with respect to the outsider. In this regard, the outsider was Western literature which continued to dominate the bookshelves in libraries and the syllabi of universities in Africa and Asia. In this aspect, the prize's diverse agents—its administrators, organizers, and campaigners—intuitively shared with dependency theorists such as Andre Gunder Frank, Walter Rodney, Raúl Prebisch, Samir Amin, and Immanuel Wallerstein a tacit understanding of how Third World countries could conquer their destiny from peripheral positions.[19] By unlinking themselves from Western dominance, developing their literary resources through cultural endeavors, and setting the rules of the game for their presence on the world stage, Afro-Asian countries could "move the center"

[19] See, for example, Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age,* (University of California Press, 1998); Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, (Verso, 2018, originally published 1972); Raúl Prebisch, *The Economic Development of Latin America and Its Principal Problem*, (United Nations, 1950); Samir Amin, *Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism*, (Harvester Press, 1976); Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*, (Duke University Press, 2004).

so that the spotlight would not shine on London and Paris, which had hitherto kept them in subordinate positions by virtue of their gatekeeping authority.

These ambitious aspirations were ingrained by the AAWA's commitment to anti-imperialism and decolonization, and the Lotus Prize judges made an uncommon effort to put certain "resistant" or "in-danger" national literature on the map. Palestinian literature, for instance, was a major beneficiary: in the two decades of the prize's existence, Palestinian writers won five Lotuses (Mahmoud Darwish, Kamal Nasser, Ghassan Kanafani, Abu Salma, and Muin Bseiso), making them the victor in this category (Djagalov 93). The literature of nations or territories fighting for independence such as Vietnamese (Tô Hoài, Thu Bồn, Nguyễn Ngọc, and Nguyễn Đình Thi) and Lusophone African (Agostinho Neto, Marcelino dos Santos, Antonio Jacinto, and José Craveirinha) were each given four prizes, making them a joint second (see Appendix B). Apart from a persistent emphasis on decolonization, the roster of recipients reads like the contents of an introduction to postcolonialism or an anthology of world literature given that there is no singular genre encompassing the sundry creative endeavors of its winners. From the corrosively satirical, anti-Apartheid prose of La Guma to the vigorously socialist, realist vein of Ngũgĩ, from the eloquently assertive, anti-colonial oeuvre of Neto to the metaphorically allusive, lyrical verse of Darwish, Lotus Prize recipients were marked not by a rigid aesthetic, but by overall creativity, mastery, and contribution to internationalism.

Based on the transcript of a discussion among the judges, the prize's focus on "resistance" illuminates the AAWA's awareness of various structural imbalances.[20] This transcript also bears witness to the prize's interventionalist nature, manifested in three principal

[20] The transcript of the jury's discussion of the first set of Lotus awards (Cairo, June 22, 1970) is translated from Russian into English by Rossen Djagalov. It can be found in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (f. 631, op. 27, ex. 767, l. 51-84).

ways. Firstly, the rhetoric of a fixed Afro-Asian-ness features prominently in the publicity around the journal and, by extension, the prize. Penned by Mulk Raj Anand, one of India's foremost twentieth-century writers, "The Concept of an Asian Mind" circulates the notion that: "There is undoubtedly an Asian spirit, the flavour arising from a more or less shared historical process. And this aroma has not yet evaporated, in spite of the perfumes imported from Europe. As this aroma arises from the common culture of Asia and is like the poetry of that culture, therefore one may permissibly describe the essence of the Asian spirit as an introvert poetic attitude towards life" (Anand 15). In "Negritude and Arabism," Léopold Sédar Senghor, Senegal's poet-president, further advocates for such belief:

> Contrasts in such a spirituality (that of Asia) allow us to find out African characteristics easily: fabrics have more rigid folds, the richest jewels are sober, weapons are simple and are not far removed from their original functions, even those fantastic knives with several blades, sculpture has harsh and severe lines. Nothing tries to captivate you by an expression of enfolding softness. Everything has a [sic] precise, harsh, severe, tectonic purposes [sic]. (Senghor 22)

Zeyad el Nabolsy hypothesizes that due to their struggles against colonialism and racism, contributors to the journal *Lotus* would think of themselves as being "the vanguard of modernity," thereby having a privileged epistemic vantage point from which to criticize modernity in its Eurocentric form for not being modern enough (Nabolsy 3). While I build on Nabolsy's work, I do not aim to provide an account of Lotus by tracing a Marxist line of dissent as he attempts to do. Instead, I aim to show how the jurors (Youssef El-Sebai, Yoshie Hotta, Mouloud Mammeri, Doudou Gueye, and Suhayl Idris) sought to re-conceive Afro-Asian-ness in a way that would make anti-Eurocentrism constitutive of the new decolonizing movements.

Essentially, the rhetoric of a fixed Afro-Asian-ness demonstrated the judge's awareness of the changes a prize focusing on promoting Afro-Asian literature could make, and their constant evocation of this rhetoric signaled their ambition to facilitate these changes in a proactive manner.

Secondly, not only were the prize organizers aware of the power imbalance between the West and the rest, but they were also aware of the power imbalance in the representation of Africa and Asia in the English-speaking world. In *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* (2007), Sarah Brouillette points out that postcolonial writers, usually consisting of migrant writers writing about their birth countries and their colonial histories within Western empires, significantly contribute to the multicultural discourse in Euro-America, where they come to dominate the representation of the geographical and cultural Other through various kinds of intercultural "self-consciousness" (Brouillette 190). Halim's article, "Lotus, the Afro-Asian Nexus, and Global South Comparatism," takes stock of the "complicity" of postcolonial criticism as practiced in the U.S. academy, which articulates "hybridity and in-betweenness" as "uniformly a hybridity between the postcolonial and the First World" but never between one postcolonial or third world intellectual culture and another (qtd. in Halim 565). By homing in on new voices embodying an "Asian mind," "Negritude," and "Arabism," the Lotus jury was aiming to challenge the dominance of postcolonialism in the representation of Asia and Africa to the West. This intervention was evident in the fact that in the first years of the prize's operation, the list of winners contained a considerable number of writers from Southeast Africa (Mozambique), Central Asia (Mongolia), and the Levant (Lebanon), who wrote, published in indigenous languages, and addressed local realities, among them Marcelino dos Santos, Mikhail Naimy, Aziz Nesin, and Sonomyn Udval.

Thirdly, the shift from diasporic to nationally acclaimed writers presented a departure from the existing paradigm of the economy of prestige. This paradigm, as English explains, is built upon "the tendency of prizes, festivals, and related forms of competitive cultural events to facilitate the exchange of symbolic capital between the indigenous and metropolitan marketplaces" (English 271). English observes that following the acceleration of globalization from the 1970s onwards, the flow of symbolic and cultural capital between the global and the local has primarily been achieved by "circumventing" the national (English 271). Likewise, Andrew Jones understands the international economy of prestige as characterized by the "larger problem" of "Western cultural hegemony vis-à-vis the so-called 'Third World'" (176). African writers, in particular, must rely on non-literary factors to gain Euro-American recognition, which explains why attending to empires' "institutional, thematic, and stylistic influences substantially modifies received wisdom about African literature" (Popescu 3). The Lotus Prize sought to challenge this paradigm by proactively recognizing the importance of the national. All African winners—except for La Guma perhaps because he was exiled—had been successful with their home readerships. In its third year of operation, the prize even included Taha Hussein, a figurehead of Egypt's twentieth-century literature and the so-called "Dean of Arabic literature," which signaled the jury's approval of and advocacy for nationally acclaimed writers. The reformist intention of the prize was never fully realized. The aim of discovering talented writers who had not had a wide readership was minimally achieved, and these attempts failed to establish Afro-Asian writers' long-term presences in the literary market. The 1969 winner Mahmoud Darwish, the 1973 winner Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and the 1975 winner Chinua Achebe were arguably the best-known authors among Euro-American readership in the English-speaking world. Despite their moderate successes in the anglophone market, none of these writers has ever

received a more Western-oriented or prestigious award, such as the Nobel or the Neustadt International Prize.

The decline of Lotus, in terms of its inability to materialize its ambition, can be observed in the transcript of the jury's deliberation and the strategy of capital accumulation employed thereafter. The principles discussed by the jury on 22 June 1970 in Cairo were contradictory and confounding. According to the judges, the award should be given to "representatives of countries that are currently fighting against imperialism and colonialism" and for "overall contribution to the Afro-Asian Writers' Association" (El-Sebai, "Lotus Transcript"). Mouloud Mammeri, a member of the jury from Algiers, rejected such geographical considerations:

> I have received two volumes of Prudencio's poetry. It seems to me that his candidacy came about for geographical reasons. I understand that we would like to have an African writer next to the Arab ones, but I suggest that we do not act on such geographical considerations, which could result in awarding the prize to random writers rather those who really deserve it. Since our prize is annual, there will always be a case when we have a gap in some continent. It will be inevitably filled in the future. (Mammeri, "Lotus Transcript")

In Mammeri's view, a geographical deliberation would widen the scope of selection to many arbitrary writers who were not well-established and who were not, therefore, deserving of the prize. More significantly, this consideration created an overlap between the target group of Lotus and that of more prominent awards such as the Nobel. Such an overlap meant that the prize would gradually lose its distinct function in the global market because, as English argued, the key to a new prize's success was for it to situate "in a relationship of marked, and possibly

antagonistic, complementarity to the dominant one, establishing its own apparent necessity by reference to some failing or lack in its more esteemed predecessor" (English 63).

Year by year, the prize experienced a "Brezhnevization of the sort" and lost out on its source of prestige (Djagalov 94). World-renowned politicians like Agostinho Neto and Faiz Ahmad Faiz were winners in 1970 and 1975, respectively, while other familiar names like Sembène Ousmane, Chinua Achebe, Kateb Yacine, Aziz Nesin, and Kim Chi-ha also entered the roster of recipients. Including these celebrities boosted the visibility and popularity of the prize in mainstream media. Nevertheless, as one administrator of the Soviet Writers Union observed at the last AAWA conference in 1988, the main criteria for the prize over the years had become: "If you were a literary official heading your national section of the Afro-Asian Writers Association, sooner or later you would receive your Lotus" (qtd. in Djagalov 94). Viewed from this vantage, the prize's positionality in the flows of recognition shifted from active to passive, pushing it toward the propagandist end of prestige and cultural value. While the inclusion of big names might be regarded as a marketing strategy to improve the capital of the prize, the transference failed over time because it was mired in bureaucratic quicksand, which ultimately resulted in the loss of the prize's unique desirability to African and Asian writers. By 1988, when the last prize was given to Kyrgyz author Chinghiz Aitmatov, the Eastern Bloc's number of prize-winners had surpassed those of Palestine, making them the absolute beneficiary. Although the prize was primarily reserved for countries fighting neocolonialism, bureaucracy eventually triumphed over well-meaning intentions. Quantity was institutionalized over quality.

Following President Anwar Sadat's peace treaty with Israel and the subsequent Arab boycott of Egypt, the AAWA moved to Beirut, where it remained until the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The association then decamped to Tunisia, where the Palestinian delegates

who primarily administrated it had relocated. In Tunis, in the early 1990s, the Lotus Prize was discontinued on account of the Soviet Union's dissolution and hence, the rolling back of all funding. In a discussion of the Booker Prize, Sharon Norris posits that if a prize has successfully consolidated its own "symbolic profits" after a period of time, it may still possess the power to attract new sources of economic capital (142). This was certainly not the case for Lotus, for it attracted virtually no interest after funding from Egypt and the German Democratic Republic was disrupted in 1989. When the collapse of the Communist Bloc was imminent in 1991, most of the stakeholders in the AAWA seemed unconcerned or unmotivated to preserve a literary prize specifically for Afro-Asian writings and productions. Without new sources of funding, the prize was completely abandoned in 1991 and has remained extinct ever since.

The story of Lotus, manifest in its aspiration, gradual decline, and eventual demise, speaks to English's paean for the cultural prize, especially in its ability to intervene in or challenge existing power structures in a "globalized economy of prestige" (English 320). Like Graham Huggan and Julia Lovell, English focuses on highly successful prizes and the celebrities they have generated. In these cases, the economic, social, and various other forms of capital invested in the prize have been thoroughly assimilated, and as a result, these prizes would accumulate enough cultural capital in and for themselves to secure their position in the field where they are created to enter. For Bourdieu, the field—or market—is simultaneously a "structuring structure" and a "structured structure," in which social differences and mechanisms of identification and hierarchization are not only practiced but also "internalized" by the stakeholders (166). In this regard, the field consists of social classes shaped by hierarchies: each class is "defined, simultaneously, by its intrinsic properties and by the relational properties" which it derives from "its position in the system of class conditions," which is also "a system of

differences, differential positions, i.e., by everything which distinguishes it from what it is not and especially from everything it is opposed to" (Bourdieu 166-7). Literary prizes become legitimate institutions through the interconversion of capital they build for other institutions (associations, conferences, festivals, etc.) and the prominent writers they recognize. In other words, their status as legitimate arbitrators of prestige and creators of value is assumed and naturalized in the field over time.

Regarding Lotus, three possible explanations can be offered for its non-success, which are illustrative of the difficulties mentioned above as well as English's theorization regarding "the agency of the cultural prize" (English 320). Firstly, the prize lacks a "strategy of condescension" which is a key to accumulating journalistic capital (English 244). Here, journalistic capital is not only "visibility and celebrity" but also "scandal" or what English names the "negative affirmation" of the value of prizes (English 244). English suggests that with the Nobel and "countless other prizes, judging scandals arise practically from the moment of the inaugural award presentation precisely because such scandals go to the very heart of the prize's initially fragile claim to legitimacy" (English 192). This practice of negative affirmation is located in the "suspension of belief and disbelief" where participants in the field, especially the judges and administrators, need to balance enthusiasm with indifference in order to generate media attention while maintaining legitimacy in the eyes of the public. This kind of "scandalous currency" or "strategy of condescension" can be found in almost all of the prominent prizes mentioned (English 187-8). To understand the effect of this strategy, one can take into account the numerous controversies that the Nobel Prize has set in motion since its inception. Most notably, Jean-Paul Sartre declined the prize in 1964 on the grounds that it conferred bad faith: "It is not the same thing if I sign Jean-Paul Sartre or if I sign Jean-Paul Sartre, Nobel Prize laureate.

A writer must refuse to allow himself to be transformed into an institution, even if it takes place in the most honorable form" (English, "Odd Facts about Nobel Prize Winners"). In contrast, for Lotus, scandals were few and far between, and the possibility of stirring controversy had actually been avoided by the judges. In 1970, when the jury deliberated over the first awards, Suhayl Idris, a Lebanese member of the AAWA's Permanent Bureau, claimed that the committee was experiencing a "mini-crisis" because certain judges opposed "the nominations of representatives from countries engaged in wars of independence without having studied their books" (Idris, "Lotus Transcript"). For this reason, the non-inclusion of an African Francophone writer among the first cohort of recipients became a major source of contention, due to which the Senegalese delegate Doudou Gueye asked that his disagreement be officially registered in the record. These deliberations and their discords were never disclosed to the public; therefore, it can be inferred that in an effort to maintain the AAWA's legitimate image, the prize administrators failed to acquire enough journalistic capital in the form of "negative affirmation," which resulted in the loss of recognition and popularity over time.

The prize, which was founded by a Cairo-based supranational organization and a multilingual conference in Tashkent, lacked cooperation with national stakeholders in Africa and Asia. The prize's mission—namely, to promote the exchange, translation, and circulation of Afro-Asian literature in the world without circumventing the national—was indeed in line with the increase in diplomatic interests of decolonizing countries. As Bowskill's analysis of the Premio Cervantes Prize demonstrates, such a new paradigm of recognition, which seeks to facilitate an interconversion of cultural capital between the national and international, demands the active participation of the nation-states involved. Rather than the "neo-colonial relationships which are said to characterize privately-run English-language awards such as the Booker," the

relationship that the Premio Cervantes Prize creates between Spain and Latin America is more equal because the postcolonial countries have vested interests in the cultural capital that the award affords to boost their images vis-à-vis the former metropole (Bowskill 308). The Lotus Prize possessed this potential resource of cultural capital for the nation-states in Africa and Asia, especially for a country like China, which was rich in economic capital but lacked diplomatic credentials in a market dominated by Euro-American interests. By focusing on healing a rift that the Sino-Soviet split had caused, rather than excluding all Chinese authors altogether, the prize could have presented itself as a channel through which to challenge the stereotypes about Maoist literature as often read through the lenses of both the Capitalist and Socialist Blocs. Given that the Colombo-based Afro-Asian Writers' Bureau did not back down after the split but continued to function as a mouthpiece of Maoist propaganda, this type of gambit was risky. Instead of making peace between the Soviet Union and China, the prize could be seen as complicit in Maoism and the general purge of the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. This kind of risk, however, might just as well generate the "scandalous currency" the prize needed to secure its survival in the long term. In the end, none of these possible collaborative scenarios did happen, for none of the Chinese delegates was ever invited to participate in the prize.

As progressive as the initial ambition of the prize was, its actual operation embodied many conservative elements that contradicted its seemingly revolutionary focus on resistance. Although it seeks to establish a new paradigm of international recognition by espousing voices from Africa and Asia, the prize-winners (or those from Asia at least) still seem to conform to the "technologies of recognition" that Shu-mei Shih expounds. In her essay, Shih lists five technologies employed by the West to reaffirm its power as "the agent of recognition" vis-à-vis "the rest" as "the object of recognition," including the "systematic," the "time lag of allegory,"

"global multiculturalism," the "exceptional particular," and "post-difference ethics" (17-8). The first technology is particularly germane to the African and Asian winners of the Lotus Prize. In Shih's explanation, the "systemic" refers to the West's tendency to categorize non-Western literature into structures such as nations and politics so that it becomes "manageable" and "decipherable" (Shih 21). The example she provides is the proliferation of Cultural Revolution fiction written by Chinese exiles in the West, which usually are not accessible in mainland China but tend to shape Euro-American understanding of communist or even post-communist Chinese literature in a narrow-minded Cold War mentality. Indeed, national and political narratives still occupied a prominent position in the body of colonial and postcolonial literature in the West, and the Lotus Prize did not challenge so much as reinforce these categories. Upon closer examination, eleven out of fifty-one prize-winners from 1969 to 1988 were sub-Saharan Africans, yet almost all eleven writers produced anti-colonial or anti-imperial works. Therefore, the extent to which the prize was really "revolutionary" or "resistant" needs to be questioned.

Even though the jury transcript shows that the prize organizers were aware of the dominance of imperial interests in shaping the representation of Afro-Asian literature and sought to change it, the governing structure of assessment and appraisal actually reinforced cultural imperialism. As previously mentioned, the first conference of the AAWA took place in Tashkent, the capital of the Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan; and under the guise of lending solidarity to the peoples of Central Asia, the Soviet Union took on a central role in planning the meeting, hosting several conferences, and providing publicity as well as funding for the prize. Consequently, while the implementation of entry rules had been co-organized, and prize-winners had been exclusively Africa- or Asia-based writers, the dominance of communist—or Soviet—interests continued in the form of judging panels (a.k.a. gatekeepers). Notably, the jury chair was

Youssef El-Sebai, who, in 1969, replaced Sri Lankan Ratna Senanayake with the backing of the Soviet side as the secretary-general of the AAWA after the latter had decided to side with China over the Sino-Soviet split (Djagalov 89). Thus, it could be interpreted that the USSR tacitly influenced the orientation and decision-making process of the prize, weaponizing it as one of its cultural arsenals against the US and its allies.

The three rationales offered here are not exhaustive, but they do demonstrate the significance of keeping a balance between accumulated capital—albeit economic, cultural, or social—and idealistic ambitions for the survival of a "resistant" or "reformist" prize. On the one hand, the champions of the prize were over-confident in the successful conversion of the economic capital offered by the Soviet Union and the AAWA. Without a serious accumulation of "scandalous currency" or the enthusiastic participation of African and Asian countries, it was assumed that the prize would create cultural value and become a prestigious agent of recognition. The organizers had been over-reliant on the trophy that they forgot that since prizes necessarily act as mediators through which different forms of capital are bartered, the intertwinement of interests and the distribution of beneficiaries are of utmost importance. On the other hand, such over-confidence was injurious to the prize's flexibility in terms of the structural constraints it still had to face when confronted with persisting inequalities in the literary market. The hierarchies in the system, as buttressed by either Euro-American or Soviet interests, were practiced and rehearsed by the prize itself instead of challenged, let alone abolished. Despite its two-decade existence, the management of Lotus revealed that with the gatekeeping mediation of the communist coterie as sponsored by the Eastern Bloc, the Soviet Union was expected to act as the metropole while the rest of Asia and Africa as subordinate peripheries.

Although I largely agree with English's theorization of the cultural prize as a "creator" rather than a medium of value, this case analysis of Lotus qualifies such optimistic assessments and raises the alarm about the limited—and skewed—nature of the agency of cultural prizes (English 138). This agency manifests in the context of success when the assemblage of prestige generates enough cultural capital for previously unnoticed but deserving-of-recognition talents. In such a scenario, the cultural capital is smoothly absorbed into the field so that the prize secures its irrevocable habituation in a cultural market. However, the limited nature of prizes tends to display itself in a context of non-success, in which the inadequacy of capital constantly demands the prize to receive more recognition from within a specific pre-existing hierarchy, the market of which usually centers around more prestigious and well-established players. As the case of Lotus demonstrates, without drawing in a broader range of motivated participants, creating a strategy whereby the image of the institution in the public eye is improved, and building up a sufficient network of interests for existing stakeholders, the cultural politics of a prize—as well as its mission to facilitate "resistance" and "intervention"—is likely to be compromised and the prize becomes extinct.

Even though Lotus has been defuncted since 1991, its ambition is not entirely lost to a forward-looking generation of authors from Asia and Africa. South Korean author Hwang Sok-yong made his name by writing working-class literature and an extended allegory of the Park Chung-hee dictatorship in the 1970s. In 1985, he penned a scathing critique of South Korea's role in the Vietnam War, and in 1989 took an unauthorized visit to the communist North for which he had to spend five years in prison upon his return to the South. In 2020, during a press conference on the occasion of the release of his latest novel, Hwang remarked that the Nobel Prize did not matter to him: "The judges of the Nobel Prize, how many of them do you think

have visited Asian countries?" (Song, "Hwang Sok-yong Hopes to Revive Discontinued Lotus Prize Rather Than Win Nobel Literature Prize"). As he went on to explain, he emphasized the "unique political and historical backgrounds" of Asian countries that he believed the Nobel judges would not be able to "fully understand" or "appreciate." (Song). He suggested that the Nobel Prize was passé now that Korean literature had dramatically outgrown its "ancient history," when the Korean people would still think that winning a Nobel Prize was somehow synonymous with achieving an Olympic medal (Song). Because of this, Hwang would rather bring back the Lotus Prize for Afro-Asian Literature than be named as a candidate for the Nobel, an award for which he has been nominated several times. As the international literary market keeps shifting and restructuring, Hwang's dream is neither authentic nor delusional. In 2016, the Afro-Asian Writers' Union revived the journal *Lotus*, and a second issue was published in 2017 (Halim, "Afro-Asian Third Worldism into Global South: The Case of Lotus Journal"). In this issue, the AAWA was renamed the Writers' Union of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (WUAALA)—a rebranding of the organization that takes into consideration the similar economic and political interests of the three continents (Halim). Furthermore, the editorial board now appeals to what it identifies as the support offered by their states to the people's rights to "freedom and independence," as well as their resistance to the exploitation of resources by "world powers" (Halim). Despite these large gestures of inclusiveness, the funding, which currently depends on union members' subscriptions, allows for one issue per year, while the Lotus Prize, which suffers from a similar problem, is to be awarded once every three years. Although these attempts to revive Lotus may give reasons for optimism, only time will tell whether Hwang Sok-yong's dream will come true or not.

CHAPTER III: OUSMANE SEMBÈNE, NGUGI WA THIONG'O, ALEX LA GUMA, AND THE AESTHETICS OF RESISTANCE

In this chapter, I look at how African writers, like their counterparts around the world, respond to modernist and realist modes of writing and how their aesthetic choices shape the African canon presented in anthologies, lists of prizes, and classroom syllabi. Sembène's *God's Bits of Wood* (*Les bouts de bois de Dieu,* 1960), Ngũgĩ's *Petals of Blood* (1977), and La Guma's *Time of the Butcherbird* (1979) index the ideas of resistance and transformative changes specific to three moments: exhilaration in French West Africa in 1947, when hopes for a better future seemed at hand, disenchantment in British East Africa in the late 1960s, when promises of independence were unfulfilled, and precarity in South Africa in the late 1970s, when resistance to Apartheid was at its peak. Instead of grouping these texts under the banner of "realism," I focus on nuanced elements in the narratives that account for the writers' resistance to global division and ideological rift while also testifying to their attempts to beat the system and safeguard creative endeavors. The focus of this analysis is to trace an alternative lineage of "world" and by extension "world literature" from a Third-Worldist perspective.

National liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people, commonwealth: whatever may be the headings used or the new formulas introduced, decolonization is always a violent phenomenon (Fanon 35). So begins Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (*Les Damnés de la Terre*, 1961), a famous inquiry into the postcolonial condition and a cautionary tale of betrayal by the national bourgeoisie. Arguing that violence is a natural response to the sustained dehumanization inflicted by the colonizer on the colonized, Fanon canvases a deeply stratified world that the only means of resistance for those crushed under its weight is to revolt if they hope to be transformed from objects to humans. His memorial

remarks on decolonization introduce a constellation of concepts that are not only historical but also actual: the relationship between decolonization—a fundamental expression of the vast majority of Third-Worldist countries in the latter half of the twentieth century—and revolution—a quintessential process via which the postcolonial intelligentsia believe decolonization is achievable. To emphasize such a relationship, Fanon explains the "empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty" of national consciousness that potentially derails the fruits of independence and impedes the blossoms of reforms. The crux of the matter, he argues, is the bifurcation that forces Third-Worldist countries to choose between a capitalist state and a socialist system while in fact they should not get imbricated in such binary thinking. Although nonalignment allows the developing world to receive economic aid from both the U.S. and USSR, the Cold War:

> does not allow either party to aid underdeveloped areas to the extent that is necessary. Those literally astronomical sums of money which are invested in military research, those engineers who are transformed into technicians of nuclear war, could in the space of fifteen years raise the standard of living of underdeveloped countries by 60 percent. So, we see that the true interests of underdeveloped countries do not lie in the protraction nor in the accentuation of this Cold War. (Fanon 82)

As such, the geopolitical confrontation between capitalism and socialism—between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Warsaw Pact—is insignificant from a postcolonial perspective. As Fanon suggests, the question "looming on the horizon" is the "need for a redistribution of wealth" and a "new humanity" that takes into account a new way of thinking and enacting resistance (Fanon 98, 246).

Heeding Fanon's wisdom, I choose *God's Bits of Wood*, *Petals of Blood*, and *Time of the Butcherbird* not as representative or authoritative texts on Africa; there is by now a large corpus

of works on Senegal, Kenya, and South Africa. Rather, Sembène's, Ngũgĩ's, and La Guma's fictions stand out for their complex engagement with thematic conventions of Third-Worldist literature and its now more common rubric, world literature; I suspect that this perception contributed to the fact that these fictions were read and circulated widely beyond their local contexts. I frame my analysis in terms of a mélange between legal and literary genres for several reasons. First, as powerful texts that attend and give nuances to the Cold War, it is difficult not to read Sembène's, Ngũgĩ's, and La Guma's work in terms of "engaged literature" about human rights in general or as part of what Joseph Slaughter has called the "imperatives" in "advocating for human rights" and "reading world literature" in particular (Slaughter 44). These novels include testimonial-like narratives, witness statements, re-enactments, and a catalog of abusers' perpetrations and abusees' suffering, although they do so in a highly mediated fashion that is anything but straightforward expositions of evidentiary facts. Nonetheless, they critically reflect on the violence of decolonization by framing a "normative process of human personality development" in connection with atrocity, suffering, and reconciliation (Slaughter 43).

Beyond the obvious human rights elements, I am also interested in the Bildungsroman aspects that these fictions reveal. If the idea of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is the "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family,"[21] accounts of human rights that exclusively dwell on their "Enlightenment-based lineage" are inadvertently implicated in the ethos of imperialism that postcolonial studies have labored to dismount (Anker 4). Writing in *Human Rights Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law* (2008), Slaughter underlines how "the

[21] Article 1 of the UDHR proclaims that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. For further discussions on dignity and human rights, see David Kretzmer and Eckart Klein, ed., *The Concept of Human Dignity in Human Rights Discourse* (Kluwer Law International, 2002). See also Jack Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice* (Cornell University Press, 2013).

plots to modernize the world and the individual are connected," which in essence aligns the plot of the Bildungsroman with the ideal of human rights. That being said, such a framing does indicate a limitation of this genre, and this chapter revisits this aspect in order to critique it. By definition, the plot of development is linear. The goals and forms of development through human rights are possible only if there is an "underdeveloped" subject requiring proper "correction" in its journey toward modernity. The objectives of human rights vis-à-vis modernity say as much about the First World's perception and intention as they do about the condition and position of the Third World. As Slaughter explains, to perpetuate the ideal of human rights as a force of modernity, the primary drafters of the UDHR advocated in "Cold War terms" and described human rights as "the moral advantage that 'Western, Christian civilization' has over the material, developmental promises of communism in a Manichean struggle for the hearts and minds of the 'underdeveloped' Third World" (Slaughter 107).

How does a society "develop" through human rights? In one sense, the right to development relies on an evolutionary plot whereby the unadvanced elements recede as more open and democratic elements emerge. Yet as a phenomenon deeply tied to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of neoliberalism as the only political model, the concept itself is a reiteration of the way the Cold War and its three-world model were maintained or "managed" in terms that could "secure the globalized system of [a] liberal economy" (qtd. in Watson 159).[22] Writing on the recent surge of right-wing populism and antidemocratic regimes, Jini Kim Watson emphasizes that the contemporary notion of human rights as limited to individual rights has "contributed to the erasure of those earlier, more capacious models of human rights" (Watson 190). Instead of a more pluralized and collectivist concept of human rights that had

[22] Specifically, Watson quotes Lisa Yoneyama in *Cold War Ruins: Transpacific Critique of American Justice and Japanese War Crimes* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

been central to the discourse of Third-Worldist emancipation and the watershed moment of Bandung, the shift in human rights discourse to neo-liberal concerns for economic reforms is an outcome of "overt and covert operations to undermine communist and democratic socialist governments across the globe" (Slaughter 757). To this compelling account, I would add that the countries examined in this chapter—Senegal, Kenya, and South Africa—have played a significant but often overlooked role in the larger confrontation between capitalism and socialism. The complex internal contests between activists, unionists, and pro-Western elites constitute a key terrain on which battles were fought during the high Cold War years and the easing decades of détente. Ironically, what today is recognized as the proper "development" in terms of human rights can also be thought of as an exclusion of an earlier model of Third-Worldist solidarity.

Building on these premises, this chapter is interested in how Third-Worldist texts present resistance movements that at once testify to—and affirm—the logic of the Cold War's Manichean ideology. In reflecting carefully on how the contour of resistance movements is rendered in the work of Sembène, Ngũgĩ, and La Guma, I want to ask what form of opposition can and cannot be imagined. Simultaneously, I explore in these texts the ways that literature is "instrumental" in "shaping the notions of human personhood, good life, moral responsibility, and forms of freedom that rights claims seek to address" (Parikh 1). By paying close attention to the aesthetic forms that register abuses and maltreatment, Crystal Parikh suggests that literary critics can think of the intersection of human rights and literature in terms of how texts say what "those rights to be, to whom and how they should be distributed, the geographies by which that distribution occurs, and critiques of the ideological systems that govern human rights discourses and politics" (Parikh 2). Accordingly, I am invested in how, during the Cold War anti-leftist

governments of Senegal, Kenya, and South Africa, the terrain of ideological contestation was organized around the silhouettes of marches, protests, and demonstrations. Furthermore, I will show how resistance is the transit point mediating the gap between, as Watson puts it, the "somewhat 'abstract' global and structural context [of the Cold War] and the 'concrete' lived experiences of individuals within their immediate social environment and relationships" (qtd. in Watson 159).[23] In other words, if a human rights perspective on the study of literature underlines the relationship between rights claims' procedural character and literary studies' imaginative one, this thesis shows how resistance tactics subtend the genre of human rights in ways that problematize the tri-partition of the world. Insofar as scholars and critics read fiction because literature provides them with an opportunity to think rigorously and carefully, Sembène's, Ngũgĩ's, and La Guma's texts are valuable because they are critical renderings of a particular resistance aesthetic—an unwillingness to accept the status quo—in Cold War Africa.

I will begin a comparison between Sembène's, Ngũgĩ's, and La Guma's texts by examining the ways that they each draw from the temporal arc implicit to the genre of human rights, whereby they move from suffering and atrocity to justice and reconciliation. Part historical, part fictional, *God's Bits of Wood* revolves around the 1947-48 railroad workers' strike and spans three cities: Bamako, Thiès, and Dakar. It canvases not only labor unions and worker communities but also their defiance and victory in the face of hard-handed oppression on the part of colonial authorities. Whereas *God's Bits of Wood* has earned a venerated status within the postcolonial canon, I read it as a harbinger of resisting ideas with regard to the paradigm of world literature. Sembène's portrayal of the workers' strike is regarded as the first salvo of decolonization, which ushers in a cataclysmic shift toward larger social movements aiming to

[23] Specifically, Watson quotes Ariel Heryanto in "Great and Misplaced Expectations," *Critical Asian Studies* 46, no. 1 (2014).

overturn the imperialist order. The affairs of the strike, "a watershed event in colonial history," are preserved in the colonial archives of the French administration, told by eyewitnesses who recollected their versions of the events to interviewers in the early 1990s, and in the form of "a historical novel" which was widely read in Senegal and Mali where the strike occurred (Jones 117). Sembène's writing can be understood as providing insights not only into resistance movements in the late 1950s and early 1960s (when the novel was published) but also into the impacts that the Cold War was able to execute on the future of French West Africa.

God's Bits of Wood balances individual characters against collective communities. By arranging the narrative in such a fashion, Sembène advances socialist realist aesthetics alongside a theory of collaborative resistance. The novel represents strikers and their families: Ad'jibid'ji, who is wise beyond her years; Maïmouna, the blind mother of twins; Ramatoulaye who goes to war against a goat; and Bakayoko, the absent yet inspiring strike leader. Whereas the first half of the novel zeroes in on various characters, the second half translates into cluster sections and communal chapters—"The Trial," "The March of the Women," "The Meeting"—to showcase the outcomes of structured opposition. The language is imbued with strength and energy; the syntax lends a robust and suspenseful temper; the tone is buoyant and ambitious. Several passages convey the ambiance in Thiès before the strike is declared; one single-sentence segment marks the beginning of the confrontation: "That was when the soldiers charged" (Sembène 60). According to Omafume F. Onoge, socialist realist aesthetic, a category under which he classifies *God's Bits of Wood*, is intrinsically positive and future-oriented because, in addition to criticizing the surrounding reality which marks the realist approach, socialist realism implies "the artist's or writer's fundamental agreement with the aims of the working class and the emerging socialist world" (Onoge 36). From a socialist realist perspective, it is not enough for the artist to distance

himself from reality by adopting a critical position; rather, because of his or her historical materialist outlook, the artist's aesthetics are visions on behalf of the mass who can bring about revolution and transform the country's socio-political system.

What phenomena bring forth this alignment? What are the formative experiences that shape Sembène's commitment to an art that transforms the lives of the oppressed? A brief survey of his early career years provides valuable answers. According to Samba Gadjigo, whose monograph *Ousmane Sembène: The Making of a Militant Artist* is one of the few biographies that document the experiences that make Sembène a celebrated author, his ever-deepening political consciousness arose from exposure to the General Confederation of Labor (CGT), the French Communist Party (FCP), and the Movement against Racism and for Friendship between Peoples (MRAP). When joining CGT in 1948, Sembène was cherished by the dockers among whom he worked because they "saw something in this new recruit" (Gadjiro 112). For them, not only did he represent the "ideal militant for the postwar French communist— an African from the colonies, a former colonial soldier, and a lumpen proletarian"—he was also talented and among the very few who "wanted to increase their cultural capital" (Gadjiro 114). Sembène explains: "When I arrived in Marseilles, CGT was a major entity, and I joined it as a worker, without bothering to know whether there were in it Blacks like me or Yellows. Moreover, I saw in it a tool for self-improvement, for you to learn an awful lot through trade unionism; it's a real school" (qtd. in Gadjigo 112-3). While being receptive to Marxist-Leninist ideas, Sembène recognizes that genuine emancipation comes only after all colonized countries are liberated. In his writing, he accentuates the privileges white workers are entitled to when compared to black counterparts, with the former benefiting from better labor conditions, higher compensations, and more opportunities for promotions to higher positions. In life as well as in fiction, he fought on

two fronts: he was advocating for the workers in France while acquiring more knowledge—he made himself serviceable to those living and working in the colonies.

Marxist-Leninist thoughts, to which Sembène was introduced in France, cast a long shadow over his career. In his fiction, one cannot help but detect the echo of dialectical materialism in which plural voices interact. The crisscrossing of views is one of the tenets of Bakhtin's theory. Taking Dostoevsky's work as an example, Bakhtin argues that literary language contains many different voices, unmerged into a single perspective and insubordinate to the writer's own: "At any given moment of its evolution, language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects in the strict sense of the word (according to formal linguistic markers, especially phonetic) but also…into languages that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups, 'professional' and 'generic' languages, languages of generations and so forth. From this point of view, literary language itself is only one of these heteroglot languages—and in its turn is also stratified into languages (generic, period-bound, and others)" (Bakhtin 271-2). Under this umbrella, instead of a single objective world held together by the author's voice, there is a plurality of "worlds," each with its own perspective. The reader does not perceive a monolithic reality focalized through a single perspective but a kaleidoscopic lens reflecting all. In *God's Bits of Wood*, Sembène weaves contentious issues into the dialectical discourse of some characters. Niakoro, for instance, with whom the novel opens and around whom the first chapter revolves, focalizes her anxiety about resistance and deep disappointment that the strike was called without consulting the elders. Niakoro's thoughts and emotions suffuse the plot, yet they are balanced by the naïveté, nonchalance, and indifference of Ad'jibid'ji, her granddaughter. If the reader sees from the perspective of Niakoro that a strike is nothing but "a savage memory for those who had

lived through it," they equally glimpse a different version of the events through the eyes of Ad'jibid'ji (Sembène 34).

The generational difference between Niakoro and Ad'jibid'ji is only one among multiple fractures when it comes to age group, social status, and ideological leaning. As Jim Jones points out, Sembène "includes several other elements in his novel that appear in the colonial record" (126). Besides narrating the "union grievances" and the "administration's counter-offer" in "broad but recognizable terms," he includes all the major persons as seen from the perspective of strikers, including European bosses, their spouses, African traders, Lebanese sellers, and religious leaders (Jones 126). Crucially, eyewitness accounts and colonial records show that the precursors to the strike are more complicated than those narrated. Whereas the events in the novel took place in a single year, the strikers' journey from oppression to equality transpired for fourteen years. African workers, who were displeased with the system, had been going on strike from 1938 to 1952, with 1938 being the bloodiest and 1952 the most effective. The 1947 walkout, however, was the longest and affected most people, so it makes sense that the story focuses on this year. Unlike the colonial records, which emphasize the invaluable contributions of the French bureaucracy and intelligentsia, Sembène displays ordinary Africans as heroes. During this period, the French administration employed Africans to work in construction and perform unskilled labor on the railway. In contrast to higher salaries, generous allowances, and extra benefits that the European technicians and administrators were entitled to, African workers did not receive any of these and were denied the right to assemble peacefully and express their views. Seen in this light, the story of the strike is primarily a class struggle rather than a racial and decolonial resistance.

However, Popescu pinpoints that Sembène is "among the supporters of African feminism" (Popescu 113). Insofar as female characters are the engines of resistance, the strike is portrayed to be ineffectual until the women of Thiès march to Dakar to protest the inhuman conditions they face. Arguing that resistance is a fundamental element that allows women to act in their interest, Karen Sacks suggests:

> Just as the railroad pulled African male workers together against the French, the strike pulled women together, first with the men, then among themselves, and finally against the French. But the strike was also a process by which women and men act and thereby forge social relations based on their pragmatic, immediate needs to sustain the strike and to feed their families. In this process, women become conscious of their independent relationship to capitalism as well as their particular kin ties and interdependence with male proletarians. Sembène, showing that consciousness is as much consequence as the cause of action, lays out the dialectical relationship between them. (Sacks 365)

According to this perspective, what starts as a male-centric strike ends up being the transformative component in the reconfiguration of gender roles to such a degree that women's actions, regarded as accessories in the beginning, are now indispensable in the success of resistance. According to Popescu, when the colonial administration has "weaponized a drought into an instrument of punishment and submission," the men come to a realization that in order to survive, they have to help women obtain food and water—a task that is deemed humiliating: "Alioune has succeeded in persuading a considerable number of the men that their old feudal customs had no place in a situation like [this]," and instead men had to forage for water, wood for cooking fires, and food (Popescu 113-4; Sembène 305). Both Sacks and Popescu read the

novel as a point of departure, a site where the ensemble cast transforms their consciousness as new circumstances force upon them new challenges.

The novel, as I suggested, can also be read beyond its immediate concerns with class and gender in order to study the anatomy of a resistance movement and its testimony to the Cold War's Manichean ideology. In 1947-48, when the West African workers' strike took place, the U.S. and the Soviet Union had limited visibility in the African continent. Published in the year of Senegal's independence, the novel celebrates a triumphal moment that has more to do with the early 1960s than the hesitating beginning of decolonization in the late 1940s. Although the formation of a working-class consciousness provides the arc that connects the events surrounding the strike to the time of independence, the frustration of this trajectory due to a "divided Cold War landscape" is an important element (Popescu 121). In the same way that the colonial regime had dismissed Africans as unsophisticated and unmodern, French authorities viewed worker organizations through a Cold War prism that shrugged them off as either rooted in obsolete traditions or outcomes of communist propaganda. This view is consistent with the colonial agendas as expressed in this quotation from a 1938 school entrance examination for students:

> The [African] populations whom destiny placed under our control were not real people capable of directing themselves. They were victims of geography or history who found themselves left behind by the modern world, at the mercy of covetous neighbors, crushed by the tyranny of native dynasties or adventurers, and their very existence threatened by all sorts of weaknesses and miseries. In reality, despite some inevitable errors, French colonization saved them and remained dedicated to increasing their human value. (qtd. in Jones 125)

If French administrators appear to be condescending in the colonial archives, they become conservative and anti-communist in *God's Bits of Wood*, thanks in large part to Sembène's exposures to Marxist-Leninist writings. This anti-communist rhetoric is expressed through the view of religious authorities, who publicly advocate on behalf of the French administration and consistently urge the workers to return to work. The accusation by the "Imam" of Senegal that "Communists" are behind the strike echoes evidence in the archives—it demonstrates how the authorities purposely cultivated animosity toward communism (Sembène 196).

Thus read, Sembène's novel functions as an indictment: it is an instance of aestheticized story-telling in the absence of full knowledge and reliable testimony. The events of 1947-48 are brought to scrutiny by illustrating how the atrocities of the past continue to haunt the present in the ongoing demands for justice and equality. In his work on the relationship between human rights and literature in the context of an "engagement with the African condition beyond the gaze of the West," Chielozona Eze observes that the "ways in which a new appreciation of human dignity, justice, fairness, empathy, and caring for others" are important and how their "calculated promotion could enhance human well-being" (Eze 1). Examining fiction by Nigerian writers such as Gabriel Okara, Tanure Ojaide, Ogaga Ifowodo, Nnimmo Bassey, and Helon Habila, Eze shows how narrative fiction provides "a model for bridging the gap between the universality of human rights aspirations and the correctness of ordinary virtues" (Eze 8). In this regard, my focus in *God's Bits of Wood* is, again, the contour of resistance movements and what they reveal about the intersection of decolonization and the Cold War. According to Eze's account regarding the accomplishments of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which he describes as "restorative justice that is closer to the African reality," narratives underline people's "interdependence on one another" and "universal moral frameworks" (Eze 1, 8).

Relatedly, I argue that at least part of the resistance aesthetics in Sembène's fiction is re-dignifying and re-deeming those who had suffered from not only the violence of colonialism but also the stigma of radicalism that was attached to workers' movements. Although the strike was not fomented by the Soviets, the colonial regime's view that any civil unrest was potentially communist stems from a long history of racism and elitism that sanctioned bigotry and pre-emptive violence. It is no wonder that, in a sort of poetic pastiche to Sembène, Ngũgĩ introduces Marxist-Leninist ideas and seeks to pull the canon of African literature to the left.

Over the last couple of decades, critics have returned to Ngũgĩ and his attempt at "decolonizing the mind" by means of rejecting the shackles created by (neo)colonialism. As Popescu mentions in her study, Ngũgĩ's life is a trajectory from early modernist experiments (*A Grain of Wheat*) to midcareer socialist realism (*Petals of Blood*, *Devil on the Cross*) and later magical fables (*Wizard of the Crow*). While most scholarships on Ngũgĩ identify *Petals of Blood* as being divided along ideological lines, between modes of interpretation, and disparate perspectives on the direction in which the author's Marxist-Leninist politics were pushing him in the 1970s, I interpret the novel as a resistance text. As Simon Gikandi acknowledges in his monograph on the topic: "To understand this [genre] problem, we need to foreground three contexts for [this fiction]: Ngũgĩ's radical and sustained intervention in a political debate that was raging throughout East Africa, a debate on the nature of the postcolonial state and the political economy of underdevelopment; his sense of disenchantment with various forms of bourgeois fiction, whose mastery he had exhibited in *A Grain of Wheat*, and his desire to write a novel that would overcome the crisis of representation generated by arrested development. A closer examination of all three contexts will enable us to understand both the form and content of *Petals of Blood* as a critique of colonial and postcolonial modernity" (Gikandi 135).

The tensions between the Western and Eastern Blocs were particularly relevant for the inception and gestation of the novel. As Popescu emphasizes in a rare scrutiny into Ngũgĩ's connection with the Cold War, substantial parts of *Petals of Blood* were completed in the United States (Evanston, Illinois), his birthplace (Limuru, Kenya) and the Soviet Union (the Yalta residence of the Union of Soviet Writers) (Popescu 1). During a period of global dominance by the U.S. and the Soviet Union, Ngũgĩ drew attention to the determining role that local African culture played in his creativity while also acknowledging his debts to Western literary and Soviet traditions. In the same way that critics and scholars have spoken of the formative role that Western literature is believed to play in Ngũgĩ's career, I underline here the part that Eastern Europe (especially Russia) has performed in his cultural imagination. In their insightful article, M. Keith Booker and Dubravka Juraga identify "some of the many parallels between Soviet socialist realism and African postcolonial literature" (275-6). In both circumstances, they argue, the texts are "inherently political" and the authors "recognize the specifically political nature of their attempt to contribute to the construction of new cultural identities in their respective societies" (276). In this regard, the emphasis on socialist realism can be interpreted as African writers' intentional departure from Western traditions and deliberate dialogue with narrative techniques enshrined in the Eastern Bloc, which they come to see as more compatible with a localized African context.

Ngũgĩ's work establishes from the outset its location in a rural village, with the material condition marking the transition between colonialism and decolonization, between indigenous culture and Euro-American modernity. By addressing the imbalances between development and underdevelopment, the novel gives prominence to Mau Mau's resistance against colonialism while concomitantly chronicling the post-independent disillusionment with a new class of elites.

Revolving around a murder mystery, the plot features four suspects: the teacher Munira, the barmaid Wanja, the salesman Abdulla, and the unionist Karega. Driven by different circumstances in arriving at Ilmorog, the characters take it upon themselves to "develop" the village by educating the people, providing the townsfolks with basic goods, reviving their spirits with alcohol, and organizing a long march to the capital to tilt the country's attention toward the drought-stricken precarity of their existence. The consequences of the newfound "development," however, are miles apart from what they imagine; the village is not only taken over by wealthy entrepreneurs, but these entrepreneurs are the abusers who have wronged the protagonists in the past. Thus, the detective assigned to the case, Inspector Godfrey, struggles to make sense of what happened by listening to the suspects' testimonies, interpreting their stories' motifs, and weaving a web of relationships between development, modernization, and homicide.

In *Detective Fiction and the African Scene*, Linus Asong notes that *Petals of Blood* "exhibits certain characteristics which are usually associated with detective fiction" (Asong 22). While it is clear that Ngũgĩ is well-versed in the intrigues of espionage plots, having studied and immersed himself in nineteenth-century classics such as Charles Dicken and Arthur Conan Doyle, the question remains is what he intends to do with it, knowing full well that such a genre is deeply entrenched in the Western tradition. Hypothesizing that Ngũgĩ employs the whodunit to tackle social issues characteristic of a society underdeveloped by capitalist forces, Asong suggests that Ngũgĩ's novel answers the question "whydunit?" rather than "whodunit?" Ngũgĩ employs formal elements to refute the aesthetics sanctioned by the West. He employs the detective genre in order to expose its flaws—that is, to emphasize how a formal investigation fails to grasp the historical forces pushing innocent people toward the edge of destitution. The investigation proves that Munira is the arsonist who kills the entrepreneurs, yet Wanja already

killed Kimeria, the man who seduced her and then abandoned her. Meanwhile, Abdulla concocted a scheme to avenge Mzigo, the man who was responsible for his brother's death. From this vantage, the fire-raising is less of a one-man show and more of an accumulation of emerging forces resisting the "development" of Ilmorog into a society stratified by capitalist forces of bourgeoisie and proletariat.

Countering the Western worldview embodied by the detective genre, Ngũgĩ introduces elements of socialist realism. As Gikandi explains, the novel gestures "toward familiar patterns of realism popularized by European novelists in the nineteenth century, but it also wanted to go beyond what Ngũgĩ considered to be the limits of this kind of 'critical realism,' namely the inability of the bourgeois novel to transcend the social and cultural situation it represented and to function as an aesthetic agent of radical change" (128). For this reason, this chapter posits that *Petals* of *Blood* exposes a limit of critical realism by critiquing the developmental discourse in the sense that such an understanding problematizes poverty in the Third World, leading to the need for modernization and industrialization, which entails further innovations in technology and science. Through the characters of Wanja, Karega, and Abdulla, Ngũgĩ illustrates the complexities of modernization, where the capital—and the transformations it affords—are not only a recognition of the lack on the part of the "underdeveloped" countries but also a sign of dehumanization, dispossession, and alienation that the "underdeveloped" people experience. By dissecting these characters specifically through their imagination of a "world" and the ways in which different angles of viewing the "world" are contingent upon various definitions of a "world," Ngũgĩ examines materialism from varying viewpoints.

Ngũgĩ explores the pragmatic side of materialism through the character of Wanja. The world in which she grows up teaches her the value of money and how she can employ her

sexuality to acquire power. Forced to fend for herself at an early age, Wanja works as a barmaid-cum-prostitute to survive. Having learned this lesson the hard way, she applies it in Ilmorog where the social fabric and local customs have been transformed by comprador capitalism in cahoots with foreign investments. When the enclosure of indigenous lands deprives the people of their rights of access, Wanja opens a brothel with the intention of saving the village women from unemployment. She pours out her heart to Karega:

> This world…this Kenya…this Africa knows only one law. You eat somebody, or you are eaten. You sit on somebody, or somebody sits on you. Like you, I have wandered. I don't know in search of what: but I looked for two things in vain: I have desperately looked for a child…a child of my own…Do you know how it feels for a woman not to have a child?... I was once pregnant, and I did have a child…that the world had suddenly loomed so large and menacing…for a girl who had just left school and had run away from home. (Ngũgĩ 345-6)

Ironically, Wanja learns the lesson of capitalism well. If the world has forced her to run from home and prostitute herself, she now prostitutes other women with the newfound empathy that her life experiences have brought. She employs entrepreneurship to create employment for herself and other women. Since she furthers the cause of women in the only way imaginable and feasible in the circumstances, she embodies the practical side of materialism as contrasted to Karega, who represents idealism.

In *Petals of Blood*, Marxist idealism achieves full elaboration. Through Karega, a political activist who selflessly throws himself into defending the rights of the poor and the working class, the novel unites, albeit speculatively, socialism and a vision of a just and more equal Africa. Karega, however, rejects Wanja when she discloses to him that she killed her

newborn child. He also objects to her establishment of the house of prostitution, seeing it as her "trading on the bodies of other girls" and becoming just another exploiter like the entrepreneurs (Ngũgĩ 383). For Karega, the world is anchored by the promises of tomorrow:

> Tomorrow it would be the workers and the peasants leading the struggle and seizing power to overturn the system and all its prying bloodthirsty gods and gnomic angels, bringing to an end the reign of the few over the many and the era of drinking blood and feasting on human flesh. Then, only then, would the kingdom of man and woman really begin; they [are] joying and loving in creative labor. (Ngũgĩ 409)

From this vantage, the novel appears to endorse Karega's politics, which largely coincides with Ngũgĩ's leftist worldview. Nevertheless, Karega is blind to the double exploitation to which Wanja is subjected and regards her act of self-preservation as a betrayal of the cause of the workers' movement. When the two come to a realization that the "magic string between them was finally broken," they break off amicably with Wanja turning toward Abdulla and realizing her dream when she becomes pregnant (Ngũgĩ 387).

Petals of Blood borrows from Soviet literary traditions, such as Maxim Gorky's and Mikhail Sholokhov's writings, which endorse the march of peasantries and the working class toward victory (Popescu 101). However, by introducing Abdulla, Ngũgĩ distances himself from Karega, who, because he harbors too rigidly an understanding of class conflict and labor rights, lacks the courage and charisma necessary for a successful leader. Instead of focusing on the leftist views of historical change and proletarian revolution, Abdulla emphasizes issues such as housing affordability and tax rates that affect small traders and the unemployed who constitute the majority. Furthermore, the relationship between Abdulla and Wanja is a pragmatic romance arising out of need, understanding, and trust. Wanja is a business partner who invests in the

success of Abdulla's shop and a maternal figure in the life of Joseph, Abdulla's adopted son, whose education she encourages. For him, Wanja is a "source of joy in the wilderness of his bitterness, of his consciousness of his broken promises, of wider betrayal of the collective blood of Kenyan fighters for land and freedom" (Ngũgĩ 369). Abdulla refers to the post-independent betrayal of the Mau Mau when hypocrites and opportunists begin to take control of the country's resources. Being able to redeem himself through a relationship with Wanja, Abdulla shows pride and contentment despite the fact that his leg was amputated during decolonization, which is a mark of his commitment to the people's resistance.

Before moving further with the analysis, let me again recall Jameson's reading of postcolonial characters as allegorical representations of the fate and condition of Third-Worldist nations. For Jameson, national allegory, as an organizing principle, is deployed in a particular fashion in postcolonial literature to register the more collective self than the individualistic identity that is often found in Western literature. As mentioned, Jameson's theory has been criticized by Aijaz Ahmed because of what he sees as Jameson's overarching essentialism. From Ngũgĩ's perspective, I would find fault with Jameson's theory further in the sense that a novel like *Petals of Blood* contains multiple characters with varied tethers to the nation. If national allegory is a template, who among Karega, Wanja, Abdulla, and Munira is an accurate metaphor for Kenya? Within an individual text, attempts to allegorize the nation are made through different characters whose kaleidoscopic perspectives point to a multiplicity of the possibilities of a postcolonial trajectory. While all the main characters in *Petals of Blood* are possible allegories, I argue that it is Munira (the fourth character) whose characteristics most closely resemble the fate of a beleaguered nation. Read through the lens of resistance, the novel's ending, which sees Munira burn down Wanja's house along with the entrepreneurs Kimeria,

Chui, and Mzigo, can be interpreted as a cleansing ritual aiming to get rid of the capitalist forces causing the nation's demise. Relatedly, Cheah argues that both Marxism and postcolonial literature should be understood as a temporal "normative force" as opposed to a spatial category such as the nation (Cheah 8). Taking stock of the "persistence of time" that potentially introduces alternatives to capitalism, Cheah underlines the transformative prospect of world literature in its postcolonial avatar—in its ability to revolutionize rather than merely reflect the world system (Cheah 9). I argue that this gesture toward anti-capitalist alternatives is precisely the aim of *Petals of Blood*. Through Munira, Ngũgĩ reclaims resistance's revolutionary potential via the generative flames of an incomplete but resonant transformation—decolonization's rupture of the Cold War's Manichean ideology and colonialism's Orientalist structure.

In the remaining pages, I take up the question of vengeance when race becomes part of the equation. Invoking thematic characteristics that were previously addressed in this chapter, I analyze resistant tactics in *Time of the Butcherbird* as the fiction's ways of countering racial segregation and land dispossession in South Africa. The acts of justice-seeking and honor-restoring at the heart of this narrative reveal yet more complicated critiques of the three-world model. Born and raised in Cape Town, La Guma remains one of South Africa's best-known authors. During his lifetime, he received the Lotus Prize for Literature, the Soviet Order of Friendship, and was made a Chevalier des Arts et Lettres by the French government (Lee, "Anti-Imperial Eyes" 2). Through his writing, La Guman presents a socialist realism that depicts "the lives of laborers, activists, prisoners, and impoverished working-class families," who constitute the principal subjects of his politics (Lee 3). As a member of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the African National Congress (ANC), La Guma belongs to the "heralded political generation" that includes figures such as Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and Oliver Tambo (Lee

3). His novel, *Time of the Butcherbird*, reflects this activism, although it embodies a more nuanced approach when compared to his more recognized oeuvre such as *A Walk in the Night* (1962) or *In the Fog of the Season's End* (1972). Given its genre of pastoral, revenge tragedy, and mystery fiction, *Time of the Butcherbird* is an aberration within La Guma's repertoire and has been more neglected as a result. It nonetheless conforms to the resistance themes of his writings. Following Barbara Hallow's definition of the term, the novel provides "a radical rewriting of the historiographical version of the past which gives prominence of place to a Western calendar of events" while concurrently "reworking in these narratives and the formal experimentation which characterizes them, the manipulation of structures of plot, character, and setting, resonate within the social structures of the resistance movements themselves and the collective and popular needs to which they respond" (Harlow 86).

According to Coetzee, South Africa in general and South African literature in particular touch a nerve in the West because they offer an "inexhaustibly fertile field for writers and journalists interrogating the colonizer-colonized relationship" (Coetzee 74). Now that Apartheid is a thing of the past, Rita Barnard argues that the country becomes "even more important" in the interrogation of this relationship, especially given that it suggests "new possibilities of transcending the Manichean opposition of colonizer and colonized and of moving toward a new culturally hybrid democracy" (Barnard 5). In his fiction, La Guma seeks not only to collapse such a binary but also to examine the legacy of institutionalized segregation and racialized discrimination more critically. To such an end, he applies the standards of socialist realism, standards which, for him, convey the accuracy of life in South Africa. His concern is with the opportunity for social and political activism that draws energy from the participation of South Africa's marginalized communities and, ultimately, the possibility of going beyond such an

opportunity. In his attempt to rupture the wall of racial segregation, La Guma shows how deeply entrenched the foundation of that wall lies, blocking the ability of black and white South Africans to interact and connect in a meaningful way.

Time of the Butcherbird, then, is symptomatic of a shift toward emancipatory politics of "the dispossessed," to whom La Guma dedicates his book. The narrative begins with Edgar Stopes, an Anglophone salesman, who arrives at a rural Afrikaner town to sell his merchandise. Shilling Murile, an African, returns from prison to avenge the death of his brother at the hands of his employer, Hannes Meulen, who is now a politician representing the district. Drought causes the Afrikaners to congregate to pray for rain, while a forced removal of the local Africans brings Meulen to the township where Stopes temporarily adjourns to wait for his truck to be repaired. In the city, his wife, Maisie, finds herself crossing paths with a confrontation between black demonstrators and the police. This confrontation occurs at the same time when Murile assassinates Meulen and Stopes in a hotel passageway and when the villagers begin to storm the lorries in protest against being forcibly removed from their land. The villagers, in turn, are led by Mma-Tau, a former nurse who returns from the city and usurps the authority of her brother, Hlangeni, the village head. Within the plot, the boundaries of multiple communities coincide with the boundaries of larger organized resistance movements. Significant actions emerge from the crisscrossing of characters' lives and the spatial intersecting of key places, including the inner city, the squatter settlement, the white suburb, and the black township.

G. D. Killam highlights that the shift from an urban to a rural setting in *Time of the Butcherbird* presents the "means through which resistance against Apartheid can be successful and the kind of temperament required to effect those means" (158). According to Killam, La Guma takes the title of his novel from South African folklore: the butcherbird performs a

cleansing function by catching insects and impaling them on thorns, branches, or spikes of barbed-wire fences. Allegorically, such a practice can be understood as Mma-Tau's effort to purify the community of "parasites that threaten to bleed it dry" (Killam 159). By assuming the role of her brother, organizing the village folks, and sending a message to the government that her community "shall not go from this land," Mma-Tau becomes a principal character of the plot. The protest she stages is successful, given that the people unite behind her and mount a concerted attack on the Afrikaners who encroach on their land. For La Guma, what is important is not only the efficiency of such resistance but also the kind of organized tactics required to shield the community from the regime's discriminatory policies. Expecting retaliation from the government, Mma-Tau and her people retreat to the hills. They are optimistic and determined to continue their resistance against Apartheid.

Parallel to Mma-Tau's narrative is the story of Murile's vendetta. In contrast to the bond between the land and Mma-Tau, Murile reveals no attachment to the place of his birth and seeks only vengeance for the death of his brother, Timi. As punishment for opening a sheep pen and allowing the sheep to wander off, Timi is tied to a fence post overnight. The perpetrators, Jaap Opperman and Meulen, are descendants of three generations of Afrikaner farmers and thus, the upper echelon and elites of the land. Their privileges are made evident by the fact that the judge presiding over the case is reluctant to "render a severe reprimand and a stiff fine," whereas Murile, whose brother is killed, is "charged with the attempted murder of Opperman, found guilty, and sentenced to ten years of hard labor" (La Guma 77). This judgment echoes the regime's feelings: they consider Meulen's act of killing a (black) person "a small matter and nobody around here thinks about it" (La Guma 29). In this regard, the characters signify much more than their identities and the sum of their actions: they reflect a social system that elevates

white Afrikaners at the expense of black Africans. Consequently, Murile becomes a rebel and dissenter; he resorts to violence because he sees his destiny as the persecution of Apartheid and its sympathizers, whose prejudices result in the loss of life and the obstruction of true justice.

If Murile is a straightforward example whose political consciousness has been awakened to resistance through a personal loss, Stopes is a complex vignette whose factional affiliation is complicitous or complicated. On the one hand, he is indifferent to and condescending toward the Africans who are to him no more than mere servants. On the other hand, he is particularly antagonistic toward the Afrikaners who dominate his social milieu. This animosity stems not only from the Afrikaners' sense of their superiority but also from Stopes' sense of his inferiority in their environment. He is a stranger who is defamiliarized, discomfited, and alienated. Where he appears gregarious to the town's inhabitants on the surface, inwardly he internalizes contempt for them, deeming them "bloody farm boys" and "backward Dutchmen as dumb as the sheep they raise" (La Guma 24). When Meulen speaks of the importance of contact between the English-speaking community and the Afrikaners "in dangerous times," given that they should unite against the specter of rising Africans, Stopes expresses at best skepticism and at worst derision, mocking him as "a pompous ass" who suggests unity but does not even bother "to speak a bit of English" (La Guma 29). In hindsight, the irony of what befalls these two men when they face the barrel of Muriel's gun is not lost. Like Murile, Stopes is a misfit and an outsider; but unlike Murile, he is complicit in the divisive issues that beset South Africa rather than actively resisting them and what they stand for. Consequently, he is imagined to be a disposable character whose function is more of a foil in the narrative to differentiate the qualities of Murile who—along with Mma-Tau—is the butcherbird of the title.

Yet this chapter's focus is the presence—or more accurately, the absence—of communism and what it reveals about South Africa during this specific moment. In his work on the relationship between human rights and truth commissions in the context of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Paul Gready provides useful insights into how justice in South Africa functions as "a creature of compromise" that both "facilitates and places constraints upon" the changes associated with the post-Apartheid transition (1). Beyond its criminal persecution, TRC is guided by four principles of truth—"factual or forensic truth, personal and narrative truth, social or 'dialogue' truth, and healing and restorative truth" (Gready 2). According to Gready, the components of TRC are based on an "inadequate understanding" of "truth, justice, reconciliation," and unless there are clearer objectives, the roles and impacts of TRC are most likely "exaggerated, misidentified or even negative" (2). Although *Time of the Butcherbird* has no connection to TRC, I suggest that the novel can be fruitfully read through the lens of "personal and narrative truth" (the second category), which Gready defines as "subjective, experiential story-telling to restore dignity" (36). I argue that at least part of the aesthetics of resistance in this fiction is to re-humanize and recuperate those who were suspected to be communists and wrongly convicted because of the stigma attached to communism at the time. Recall that in the novel, while Murile is convicted of attempted murder, the District Court "render[s] a severe reprimand" to Meulen because: "Nowadays everybody was very conscious of the necessity to show the white people in a good light in relation to the black population, and Meneer Meulen's actions did not help. Inside the country, certain liberalistic elements and Communist would capitalize on such mishaps as this, and overseas, the enemies of the country like the Communists there as well as the OAU [Organization of African Unity] and the United Nations would also take advantage of such events for their attacks" (La Guma 77). Whereas the

murdering of a (black) person is regarded as trivial, the judge's rebuke that Communists would "capitalize" on such an event betrays South Africa's deep anxieties about the Cold War's global reach. The fact that Murile or any Africans are actual communists or simply vulnerable to leftist collaboration is insignificant; anti-Apartheid or any resistance movements are suspected of colluding with the Soviets even when actual communism is absent.

The bifurcated Cold War logic that persists in the novels above reveals complications and ramifications within the periodization of both the Cold War and post-Cold War. If the legal language of human rights promises a smooth path toward the era of truth, justice, and reconciliation, the fictional idiom of Third-Worldist literature suggests divergence, disruption, and departure. That is, the transition to liberal democracies from colonial regimes of the past is obfuscated by decades of anti-communist violence which cemented Western democracies' defeat of socialist governments. Whereas Hardt and Negri argue that "the first question of political philosophy today is not if or even why there will be resistance and rebellion, but rather how to determine the enemy against which to rebel," the anti-leftist violence in the fiction of Sembène, Ngũgĩ, and La Guma suggests that communism has always been the "enemy" of the Free World (Hardt and Negri 210-1). Even if *God's Bits of Wood*, *Petals of Blood*, and *Time of the Butcherbird* are texts originating from the non-aligned bloc, they nonetheless point to its unacknowledged "hot" conflicts, whereby activists, protestors, and suspected communists are at risk of scapegoating for liberalism's illiberal tenets. The oblique allusion to communism in these texts not only evinces the richness and heterogeneity of resistance and solidarity; it also underlines and makes evident the contradictions and complicity of the First World in today's neoliberal victory.

CONCLUSION: WORLD LITERATURE (DE)CONSTRUCTED

What, after all, is "world literature"? This thesis begins with Damrosch's theory and returns to this theory. Damrosch reaches the conclusion that world literature is "not an immense body of material that must somehow, impossibly, be mastered" (299); rather, it is "a mode of reading that can be experienced *intensively* with a few works just as effectively as it can be explored *extensively* with a large number" (299). Heeding Marx and Engel's exhortation that "national one-sidedness and narrowmindedness become more and more impossible," Damrosch emphasizes a "fusion of horizons" that allows a distance from the "home tradition" and an appreciation of the ways "in which a literary work reaches out and away from its point of origin" (Damrosch 300). Reading *The Great Sphinx at Giza* by means of celebrating a "figure that is African, and feminine in appearance, and far more ancient than the antiquity of Greece," Damrosch underlines the "value" of the 1798 French campaign in Egypt which results in the discovery of the Rosetta Stone and the decipherment of its hieroglyphs, a development that laid the foundation for the recovery of the language, history, and literature of ancient Egypt. He further emphasizes that these discoveries "inspired" the decipherment of the cuneiform inscriptions and led to the recovery of *Gilgamesh* and the literature of other ancient Near Eastern cultures. In short, the story of Napoleon's expedition produced far more positive than negative outcomes.

Andrew Rubin, however, dissents from Damrosch's conclusion. Observing that the Egyptian people had never invited so many scientists and scholars to come from abroad in order to record, analyze, and study the literature, culture, and geography of ancient Egypt, Rubin takes stock of the *Description de l'Égypte*, a twenty-three-volume tome written between 1808 and 1828 and, according to him, a "terrain of operation" employed to "justify and legitimize the

exercise of power in advance, to establish order, and to provide a logic that transforms the human subject into a 'terrain' to be colonized, reworked, and occupied" (Rubin 6). A student of Said, Rubin adapts and reformulates the arguments in *Orientalism*, which posits that Western European culture produces and manages "the Orient" by "making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it" (Said 3). Likewise, Bhabha underlines how colonialist authorities maintain power vis-à-vis colonized peoples through "the English book," a source of knowledge and power in its transparency and clarity, producing, in turn, subject formations that are dehumanized and discriminatory. This colonizing enterprise works in two ways: "The English book…as an insignia of colonial authority and a signifier of colonial desire and discipline (Bhabha 146). Furthermore, writing in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (2008), Dipesh Chakrabarty evinces how knowledge in the Third World is produced with "Europe" as a "silent referent," demonstrating the necessity—but impossibility—of "provincializing Europe," decentralizing and deconstructing the knowledge hierarchy that suffuses all other conditions of learning and being as an outcome of colonialism.

Said's, Bhabha's, and Chakrabarty's concern about knowledge "production" leads to the notion that "world literature" is "made, not found" and that postcolonial texts can resist such manufacturing of culture. The relationship between world literature and empire is a complicated one, best elucidated by both an investigation into the role of agents, publishers, and institutions that have shaped the canon as well as the postcolonial texts written from a Third-Worldist perspective seeking to resist such an epistemological framework from a non-hierarchical, counter-hegemonic position. The first chapter of this thesis considers a range of different perspectives on the extent to which "world literature"—its production, circulation, and

recognition—is shaped by and contingent upon the activities of CCF. Briefly touching on the modernism-versus-realism debate, the chapter points out that how literary texts are read and evaluated depends upon a Cold War-inflected system that privileges one mode of aesthetics over the other. Likewise, the second chapter examines a variety of cultural brokers and mediators who were members of the Afro-Asian Writers' Association and administrators of the Lotus Prize for Afro-Asian Literature. Crossing the Iron Curtain in order to inspect canon formation from a Second-Worldist perspective, this chapter canvases a broad range of players featured in the management of the Lotus Prize, with their involvements minutely dissected and their participations comprehensively observed by a judging committee's transcript found in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art.

The third chapter takes a detour in order to study the aesthetics of resistance rooted in the fiction of Sembène, Ngũgĩ, and La Guma—who were Lotus Prize winners. Writing in an essay titled "The Subject and Power," Foucault tethers the formation of subjects to the possibility of emancipation by investigating the forms of resistance. Highlighting examples of "social struggles" from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century and "nowadays," Foucault underlines the intersectionality between the mundane and the kind of power these "struggles" resist:

> [P]ower applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize, and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word "subject": subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to. (Foucault 781)

From this vantage, Foucault sees power as intrinsically embedded in the formation of knowledge—the subject is identified not by any abstract mechanism but by being subject to a form of knowledge devoid of any freedom to change the ways of knowing and being. Naming such a phenomenon as the "government of individualization," Foucault underlines how resistance movements challenge the "privilege of knowledge," meaning that resistant tactics stand in opposition to knowledge paradigms upholding a set of ideas and beliefs imposed by force, not by trial and error (Foucault 781). This subtle connection between knowledge and power functions harmoniously to create the formation of subjects: it engenders a force that conquers subjects while simultaneously constructing a space deemed appropriate for those subjugated subjects.

Through analyses of resistant tactics evinced by characters as well as the connection between those tactics and the larger geopolitical contexts in *God's Bits of Wood*, *Petals of Blood*, and *Time of the Butcherbird*, this thesis demonstrates how the three-world model is both a force and a space. It creates the figure of the "Third World" and constructs a frame around that character. At the contextual level, this force is facilitated by the activities of CCF and its counterpart, the Cominform; the canon of world literature is both determined by the force that seeks to "bring" freedom to the "freedom-less" people and the organization that seeks to counter such attempts by offering solidarity and camaraderie. Framed by this three-world model, the Third-Worldist African subjects are perpetually persecuted by it. Neither modern nor ever democratic enough, the Third-Worldist societies in the African continent, with their seemingly interchangeable leaders and an always struggling economy, are cast as backward, belated, and inferior—the junior tutees in an evolutionary narrative who can be said to be "close to," "far away from," or "catching up" with the West in terms of development. At the thematic level, the

texts narrate resistance movements—unions, marches, protests—and how such trials and tribulations register a conflicted postcolonial consciousness that is aware of its own limitations but also the possibility of overcoming such restrictions. This consciousness comprehends its own embeddedness in the three-world model—its situatedness at the crossroads of the Cold War and between the First World and the Second World—so it strives to resist a hierarchical paradigm imposed by Western modernity. To make evident such ends, I dwell on different types of Third-Worldist subjects and their active and lively imaginations to demonstrate how the "underdeveloped" person is understood as "lacking," yet in truth resourceful and creative. Although the harbinger of a better future is at hand, the individual characters' resistant efforts, as seen through protests, demonstrations, and premeditated violence, are ineffectual and ambivalent. This disjuncture between the Third-Worldist subjects and the so-called promise of modernity is disorienting enough to warrant a revisit of the substance and meaning of the world literary paradigm.

An examination of merits and demerits aside, I present here three models that undergird the multifaceted ascent of world literature, namely, Mao's "Three-Way Division of the World," Tikhonov's "Solar System," and Ngũgĩ's "Globalectics." A remarkable corollary to the three-world model, the "Three-Way Division of the World" interposes between the capitalist and socialist blocs a so-called "intermediate zone" encompassing all colonial and postcolonial countries, including China. This "intermediate zone" concept presupposes that the imperialist West would not wage a direct war with the communist East unless the colonial and postcolonial countries had first been conquered. According to Jian Chen, the crux of the American-Soviet competition "lay in the competition over the intermediate zone" (213). Given that China "occupied a crucial position in the intermediate zone, the development of the Chinese revolution

would play a central role in defining the path or even determining the result of the global Cold War" (Chen 213). Because this model has a direct impact on the visibility and availability of cultural products, the writer and editor-in-chief of the Chinese magazine *Yiwen* (Translated Literature), Mao Dun, divides the world into three sectors: The Soviet Union and people's democracies (socialist literature), the United States and capitalist countries (capitalist literature), and former or current colonies (postcolonial literature). By singling out works from China and positioning works from the other two sectors under a rubric of either imperialism or communism, Mao's theory sets out a hierarchical system with a distinctly Chinese centrality.

A more elaborate model constructed from a Russophile's perspective, Nikolai Tikhonov's "Solar System" places Soviet literature at the center and literary outputs from other parts of the world orbiting around it in five concentric circles. From the center to the periphery, these circles are the literature of the people's democracies in Eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, etc.), the literature of the people's democracies in Asia (China, Mongolia, Vietnam, etc.), the literature of non-socialist states in Asia (India, Turkey, Iran, etc.), the literature of capitalist states (Canada, Italy, Denmark, etc.), and the literature of Latin America (Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, etc.) (Jia 382). As the vice-chairman of the Union of Soviet Writers, Tikhonov seeks to construe world literature as a counter-capitalist force with the Soviets leading the charge and other progressive nations hemming the side. In this particular non-Western mode of imagining and molding literature, different constellations of Eastern European and Asian writers stand in solidarity to challenge, overcome, and upend the Western-centric system posited by Casanova and Moretti. While the Soviet Union extends its patronage over a network of conferences and publications to express a commitment to Asian and Latin American literature,

this well-intentioned gesture is culturally imperialist. It betrays Soviet paternalism vis-à-vis non-white peoples given that it insists on a Soviet-centric rather than a plural-centric model.

This shift toward a multipolar future is in tune with Ngũgĩ's plea for a globalectical way of reading and understanding literature. According to Ngũgĩ, "globalectics" combines "the global and the dialectical to describe a mutually affecting dialogue, or multilogue, in the phenomena of nature and nurture in a global space that is rapidly transcending that of the artificially bounded, as nation and region" (Ngũgĩ 8). Deriving from the globe, a globalectical way of conceiving literature treats each point on the Earth's circumference as a center and allows it to share its cultural material with others. If Tikhonov's "Solar System" embraces a Soviet-centric universe, Ngũgĩ's "globalectics" denotes a multicentric utopia in the footsteps of Marx, Césaire, and Fanon. At the crux of this theory is a rejection of linguistic hierarchy: the notion that some languages and cultures are of a higher status than others. In such a paradigm, a few European languages—English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish—are "the aristocracy, and those from Asia, Africa, Latin America, indigenous America, and the rest are ranged in a descending order of power and prestige" (Ngũgĩ 61). Part of this hierarchy rests on the European assumption that writing is superior to oral methods of transmitting knowledge. This belief produces a narrow understanding of what literature is—reducing it to a formal and stylistic exercise shaped according to European written categories whereas orature is a social practice nourished by rhythm, music, and dance. Ngũgĩ espouses the abolition of this hierarchy so as to view the relationship between languages, cultures, and literature in terms of a network, akin but not identical to that of a rhizome with no center: "All are points balanced and related to one another by the principle of giving and receiving" (Ngũgĩ 61). Thus conceived, world literature becomes a level playing field—a global consciousness of one and equal.

Last but not least, technological advancements demand that scholars reconcile with how the digital revolution casts doubt on even the notion of a free, democratic Global North and an undeveloped, autocratic South. Digitality, broadly defined, promises to intensify the dissemination of culture and literature thanks in large part to online magazines, e-book markets, transnational prizes, and virtual-reality networks. Although the literary publishing scene experiences radical changes, the questions remain: Has the Cold War ended? Is there a disjuncture between the paradigm that came about due to the Cold War peddling in the realm of literature and the sphere of digital publishing today? How does the digital revolution tip the balance between the West and the reception of literature from Africa, Asia, and the non-West? What are the impacts of the digital on the circuits of commercial publishing and the academic culture more generally? Has the digital sphere made far-reaching impacts on existing gatekeeping practices, canon formation, and meaning-making, or has it been co-opted and transformed in ways that reiterate and aggravate the competing ideologies that were the Cold War's precepts?

By analyzing how social discourses sanitize technological advancements, scholars can trace a direct lineage from the Cold War era to contemporary understandings of digitality and the Internet. Taking stock of traditional gatekeeping practices that privilege white over black authors, Richard So explains that through every phase of literary dissemination, from production (publishing) to reception (book reviews) to distinction (book prizes) and canonization (scholarship), "cultural redlining"—the practice of arbitrarily refusing or limiting services to minorities—continue to prevail over efforts by scholars and critics to diversify the cultural sphere such as the Black Arts Movement in the 1960s, the Combined Asian American Resources Project in the 1970s, and the "rise" of multiculturalism in the 1980s (So 4). According to him,

there has been a complete failure in attempting to reconcile with the socio-political factors that structured the Cold War decades and the perpetuation of its politics in the contemporary era. In this regard, the author points fingers at conglomerates and industries that employ technologies to manipulate information and intensify racial discrimination by articulating peoples of color as fixed, stereotypical types which reinforce existing inequality. Although not in any way, shape, or form that substantially undermines the techno-digital prospect, news of the National Security Agency (NSA), the controversies surrounding the Five Eyes, and the scandals about WikiLeaks are some of the examples that bring forth the ineffectual, superficial change that underlines the Cold War and its legacies.

While critiques of digitality's reification of racial inequality have emerged, there are few discussions on how world literature and culture are impacted. Minority authors and writers of color who have successfully secured a book deal must now navigate the monopoly of powerful search engines such as Google, Amazon, and Wikipedia. In the digital age, these engines have insinuated themselves into every dimension of cultural life in the Global North and, increasingly, the wider world. Not only are they now the gatekeepers of a path to successful careers independent of traditional presses, but they also act as taste-makers who regulate how e-published materials are disseminated. The searchability of any author is determined based on whether or not they have been mentioned by well-known and prestigious outlets such as the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker,* and the *Washington Post*. Google, in particular, has created Search Engine Optimization (SEO) that maximizes both the quality and quantity of traffic to a particular website that affords visibility to only certain publications. Although SEO is marketed as neutral and apolitical regarding the actual visibility of authors, it is determined by algorithms that allow only certain words and images to come to the top. Because book marketing can pay Google to

boost the popularity of their products, the higher the budget for managing content, the more likely some authors will appear in the search, creating a fabricated aura of legitimacy and a surface impression of prestige around their works. "Prestige" is the key word here, for this ability to "manufacture" legitimacy is an outcome of the Global North's anti-authoritarian campaign. Although independent publishers scramble to have their works published and achieve the critical reception they deserve, "prestigious" and "influential" outlets continue to set the rules of the game and rehearse the politics of visibility.

In 1991, Kwame Anthony Appiah asked: "Is the Post- in Postmodern the Post- in Postcolonial?" (336). One decade later, David Chiori Moore responded: "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet?" (111). Over the past decades, critics and scholars have offered a plethora of answers; they adopted and adapted a comparativist method in order to fathom the complex dynamics between a Muscovite metropole and its satellite states.[24] Katerina Clark, Rossen Djagalov, and Galin Tihanov have fruitfully unpacked a lineage of world literature on the Soviet side, which started with the establishment of Vsemirnaia Literatura (World Literature) Publishing House in 1918 and ended with the publication of hundreds of volumes of literary canons from ancient poetry to prose fiction by Biblioteka Vsemirnoi Literatury (Library of World Literature) from 1967 to 1977. Ironically, this scholarly concern only represents the latest development in terms of postcolonial critiques' preoccupations with redeeming the studies of literature in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. As this thesis shows, this concern obscures more than instructs and needs to be explicitly challenged and historicized. Not only does it put in place

[24] See, for example, Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941* (Harvard University Press, 2011); Galin Tihanov and E. A. Dobrenko, editors, *A History of Russian Literary Theory and Criticism: The Soviet Age and Beyond* (The University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011); Rossen Djagalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism: Literature and Cinema between the Second and the Third Worlds* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020).

a Soviet-centric instead of a Eurocentric system, but it also conceals the larger orbits around which the Second and Third Worlds revolve and thanks to which the socialist and decolonizing countries can forge alliances. Through historical research on the ties that bind these two worlds, this thesis builds a bridge between postcolonial critiques and post-socialist studies. A more comprehensive study at the intersection of these two fields certainly involves Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. It will also involve many more artists, writers, poets, media, genres, prizes, journals, publishers, and institutions. “The Making of World Literature: The Afro-Asian Nexus, the Aesthetics of Resistance, and the Cold War” is the beginning.

Appendix A

Publications of the Congress for Cultural Freedom

(dates in brackets denote a later revival of the same journal)

Title	Language	Publishing Location	Years of Publication
Der Monat	German	Berlin/Munich	1948–1971 (1978–1986)
Preuves	French	Paris	1951–1975
Freedom First	English	Mumbai	1952–present
Encounter	English	London	1953–1990
Science & Freedom	English	Manchester	1954–1961
Forum	German	Vienna	1954–1965
Quest	English	Mumbai	1955–1976
Soviet Survey	English	London	1955–1989
Cuadernos	Spanish	Paris	1956–1965
Tempo Presente	Italian	Rome	1956–1968
Quadrant	English	Sydney	1956–present
Black Orpheus	English	Ibadan/Accra	1957–1976 (1981–1993)
Cadernos Brasileiros	Portuguese	Rio de Janeiro	1959–1970
Jiyu	Japanese	Tokyo	1959–2009
China Quarterly	English	London	1960–present
Transition	English	Kampala/Accra	1961–1968 (1971–1976)
Minerva	English	London/Chicago	1961–present
Ḥiwār	Arabic	Beirut	1962–1967
New African	English	London/Cape Town	1962–present

Censorship	English	London	1964–1967
Mundo Nuevo	Spanish	Montevideo	1966–1971
Solidarity	English	Manila	1966–1996
Horizon	Bahasa Indonesian	Jakarta	1966–present

Appendix B

Lotus Prize Winners, 1969 – 1988

1969	Alex La Guma (South Africa), Mahmoud Darwish (Palestine), Tô Hoài (Vietnam)
1970	Agostinho Neto (Angola), Zul'fia (Uzbek SSR), Harivansh Rai Bachchan (India)
1971	Sonomyn Udval (Mongolia), Ousmane Sembène (Senegal), Taha Hussein (Egypt)
1972	Hiroshi Noma (Japan), Mikhail Naimy (Lebanon), Marcelino dos Santos (Mozambique)
1973	Kateb Yacine (Algeria), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (Kenya), Thu Bồn (Vietnam)
1974	Aziz Nesin (Turkey), Yusuf al-Sibai (Egypt), Anatoly Sofronov (Russia), Kamal Nasser (Palestine), Ghassan Kanafani (Palestine)
1975	Chinua Achebe (Nigeria), Faiz Ahmad Faiz (Pakistan), Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri (Iraq), Kim Chi-ha (South Korea)
1976	Subhas Mukherjee (India), Tawfiq al-Hakim (Egypt), Mikhail Sholokhov (Russia)
1977-78	Meja Mwangi (Kenya), Nguyễn Ngọc (Vietnam), Yoshie Hotta (Japan); Kamil Yashen (Uzbek SSR), Abu Salma (Palestine), Sami al-Droubi (Syria)
1978-80	Muin Bseiso (Palestine), Antonio Jacinto (Angola), Bhisham Sahni (India), Husayn Muruwwa (Lebanon), Gunasena Vithana (Sri Lanka), Atukwei Okai (Ghana), Choizhilyn Chimid (Mongolia)
1981-82	Georgi Markov (Russia), Assefa Gebremariam (Ethiopia), Sulaiman al-Issa (Syria), Ataol Behramoğlu (Turkey)
1983	Sarvar Azimov (Uzbek SSR), Nguyễn Đình Thi (Vietnam), Jose Craveirinha (Mozambique), Kaifi Azmi (India), Mustapha Fersi (Tunisia)
1984	Sulaiman Layeq (Afghanistan), Jeane-Fernand Brierre (Haiti/Senegal), Azraj Omar

	(Algeria), H. Karunatilake (Sri Lanka)
1985	Abdulaziz al-Maqaleh (Yemen), Rasul Gamzatov (Russia), Chon Se Bong (North Korea)
1986	Tahsin Saraç (Turkey)
1987	Makoto Oda (Japan)
1988	Chinghiz Aitmatov (Kyrgyz SSR)

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