INTRODUCTION

Genres of Cold War Theory

Postcolonial Studies and African Literary Criticism

"Evanston-Limuru-Yalta." This triad of locations, along with a date stamp, "October 1970–October 1975," appears at the end of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's novel *Petals of Blood*. Despite its conciseness, the note provides more than the biographical information needed to understand the genesis of this novel—places where the author completed substantial parts of the work.[1] The Kenyan writer positions his birthplace, Limuru, at the center of a geopolitical equation, flanked by institutions in the United States of America (Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois) and the Soviet Union (the Yalta residence of the Union of Soviet Writers). During a period when only the superpowers—the USA and the USSR—and their close allies had global visibility, Ngũgĩ draws attention to the determining role African culture played throughout the Cold War, while also acknowledging his cultural debts to Western literature and Eastern European writing traditions. In a process that he later called "moving the centre," this date and location stamp boldly places small-town Kenya on the cultural map of the Cold War world.[2]

This is an anecdote with synecdochic purpose. From the 1950s onward, the capitals of recently independent African nations aspired to become intellectual, educational, and political centers, cities where decolonization politics and prestige-conferring artistic programs would displace the hierarchical and oppressive cultural agendas of their former colonial overlords.[3] Whether at the first Conference of African Writers, held in 1962 at Makerere College in Kampala, Uganda; at the 1966 First World Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar, Senegal, and at its second iteration, Festac '77 in Lagos; or at their political

forebear, the 1955 Asian-African Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia, intellectuals from the Third World aimed to establish systems of cultural production and circulation that were not beholden to old imperial centers like Paris and London or to the new superpower hubs in Washington and Moscow.[4] If Pascale Casanova wrote the intellectual history of world literature with paths that weave in and out of Paris, how do we do justice to the stories of Ibadan, Kampala, Freetown, Dakar, and Johannesburg, as cities where writers forged alternative aesthetics and set up cultural solidarity networks with other marginalized artists' communities?[5] African and, generally speaking, postcolonial cultural production played an important aesthetic and political role for those fighting to shake off cultural imperialism and, conversely, for the superpowers aiming to hold sway over the continent. To borrow Ngũgĩ's phrase, the writing was done "at penpoint": storming the literary metropolises of empires old and new with writing implements instead of guns, authors underlined the urgency of the project to decolonize aesthetic canons.[6] From the West and the Eastern Bloc, the superpowers and their allies deployed overt cultural diplomacy and covert sponsorship programs to conquer and harness the intellectual energy in the former colonies. This clash of aims shows that, beyond the optimism and energy of the decolonization era, the story of cultural production during the second half of the twentieth century is also a Cold War story. It is a history that has largely been presented as two separate narratives—of decolonization and of Cold War–period tribulations—which this book aims to reunite.

Postcolonial studies and Cold War scholarship treat contemporaneous cultural phenomena, yet they have seldom crossed paths.[7] Taking African literatures as an example, this book aims to rewrite their main narratives to show how cultural production in what used to be called the Third World and now is described as the Global South shaped and was shaped in turn by the cultural policies of the superpowers.[8] Whether subscribing to the ideal of socially committed writing promoted by the Eastern Bloc, or to nonaligned intellectual efforts, or to a Western belief in the autonomy of cultural production, African writers had to navigate the divided political landscapes of the Cold War era. This book historicizes the emergence of African literary studies by placing this discipline in the context of the global Cold War in order to reveal the watermark left by the Iron Curtain in fiction, essays, and memoirs penned by intellectuals from the former colonies. Combining literary history with a thematic approach, it shows that the current shapes of postcolonial and Cold War studies—their goals, methodologies, and blind spots—arise from their genealogical twining and are revealed through the juxtaposition of these two cultural scenes.

Addressing these omissions and the reasons behind them goes beyond merely filling in a gap in an already rich corpus of scholarship treating the work of canonical African writers. It means speaking to one of the blind spots of postcolonial scholarship—the relation between cultural forms of resistance to imperialism and the Cold War. It allows us to understand the roots of a dissociative approach visible in postcolonial scholarship that perplexingly separated the politics of leftist writers from their aesthetics or divided the cautious position numerous intellectuals maintained toward Eastern Bloc and Western state institutions from the literary forms and genres crystallizing their wariness.[9] These omissions highlight the paradigm within which humanities and social sciences research operated before and immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The conceptual tools that we deploy to speak about African literatures—"resistance literature," "protest poetry," "prison memoir," "national allegory," "peripheral modernisms," and the superordinate categories of "Third World literature," "postcolonial literature," and today "world literature"—have all been shaped to a greater or lesser extent by the knowledge paradigms specific to the Cold War conflict and its aftermath. "The Third World is a residual category, a grab bag for whatever happens to be left over when the supposedly significant parts of the human universe, the First and Second Worlds, have been accounted for," observes Ayi Kwei Armah in an essay from the collection *Remembering the Dismembered Continent*.[10] Published right after the end of the Cold War, "The Third World Hoax," along with the other essays in the volume, is a reminder that in cultural as in political and economic matters the countries of the African continent had to formulate their position in terms oftentimes dictated by the superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union.

As with political concepts, so with literary theories: current understandings of the social function of the writer and modes of evaluation of literary worth are the settled shrapnel from the politico-aesthetic artillery across the Iron Curtain. Likewise, debates between African writers are the continent's scaled-down equivalent of impactful global literary transformations during the second half of the twentieth century. Therefore, attending to the superpowers' institutional, thematic, and stylistic influences substantially modifies received wisdom about African literature. Working from the continental to the global level, we can similarly rethink the genealogy of the conceptual instruments with which we work in literary studies today. Conversely, the African intellectuals' efforts to write the literature they wished to write, break aesthetic tutelages, and keep their individual voices at a time when the world became polarized between "us" and "them" show that the Cold War scholarly narrative cannot be solely concerned with the superpowers.

The study of African literature—as a discipline—was born in the crucible of the Cold War, not in the sense of a subservient form of ideological alignment, but mostly as a struggle to break free of Cold War dichotomies and to forge a participatory and determining role.[11] While rethinking the history of African literary production after World War II through a Cold War lens aims to reveal unrecognized connections and blind spots in academic scholarship, this book speaks to postcolonial cultures in other parts of the world as well. The Cold War was not only a political conflict that encompassed almost half a century but also a configuration that harnessed tremendous meaning-making machineries. It involved the production of academic and popular knowledge, a process to which literature was both participant and witness. It is with these considerations in mind that I propose a look at African cultural production as simultaneously a gauge of, material trace of, and contributor to the formation of Cold War narratives, both taking from and giving to this global discourse.

Competing Imperialisms during the (Not So) Cold War

Popular culture, such as the James Bond movie franchise, has persuaded us that the stakes of the Cold War were high for the competing superpowers. In different yet impactful ways, the stakes were similarly high for countries from the Third World, where the hot wars and low-intensity proxy disputes unfolded, even when the celluloid world gave them just a passing nod. Jamaica, from where the fictional Dr. No plotted to destroy the U.S. space program, became, like other Caribbean nations, the target of American hemispheric influence and containment policies.[12] The superpowers' interest in controlling the resource-rich African continent, alluded to in *Diamonds Are Forever*, led to numerous military coups and the installation of puppet regimes supported by the Soviet Union or the United States.[13] The historian Odd Arne Westad has decisively exposed the false perception that the Cold War concerned only the superpowers and their close allies in the Northern Hemisphere. As the title of his pioneering study *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (2005) indicates, the conflict encompassed Asia, Africa, and Latin America, where it intersected, oftentimes with violent effects, with the struggles for decolonization. Until a decade ago, most historians and political scientists understood the Cold War as a bipolar conflict that principally concerned the USA and the USSR.[14] In these studies the Third World would garner at most a footnote on the margin of events unfolding in the Northern Hemisphere. Postcolonial polities seldom featured as qualified participants, and even destructive conflicts like those that laid waste to Angola or the Horn of Africa

were treated as spin-offs of events taking place in the Northern Hemisphere or as the product of clashing local nationalisms.[15] Although marginalized in scholarship, the Third World—the nations that emerged from colonial domination after World War II—became the theater of hot conflicts, territories where absentee superpowers settled their claims to world domination. When nations with a colonial past have been mentioned in Cold War scholarship, Vietnam and Cuba are the usual candidates. Even then scholars tend to dissociatively treat either the legacy of colonial subordination to Western powers or the respective country's ideological alignment with the West or the Eastern Bloc.

While historians and political scientists have been warming up to the idea that states from the Southern Hemisphere should be integrated into the account of events, Cold War literary studies have continued to overlook the cultural output of postcolonial nations.[16] Yet creative and scholarly writing against colonialism developed concomitantly with the Cold War, when aspiring or newly independent nations were forging alliances with one of the two superpowers, or among themselves, deliberately attempting to rupture the bipolar world configurations, as in the example of the Bandung Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement. To follow Westad's formulation, writers and researchers were often enticed either by the social justice model pledged by the Eastern Bloc or by the freedom and democracy promised by Western powers.[17] Other intellectuals, whether labeling their own position as nonalignment or a "third way," attempted to either steer clear of the mainstream ideologies of capitalism and communism or create new models, such as African socialism. If previously their cultural output has been neglected in favor of a study of the Cold War in Western and Eastern Bloc literary traditions, this book is part of an emerging reorientation of the field that focuses on the contributions of countries from the Third World to the worldwide debate and the reflection of this long-lasting conflict in works from the Southern Hemisphere.

It is relatively easy to understand why the idea of the Cold War (a concept introduced by American politicians and diplomats to describe the relations between the West and the Eastern Bloc) has circumvented or marginalized the Third World. It is more difficult to grasp why the field of postcolonial studies, treating old and new types of imperialism, has not focused on the forms of domination that emerged after the collapse of the traditional colonial powers *within their obvious context*—the USA's and the USSR's scramble to augment their spheres of influence during the Cold War.[18] This second Scramble for Africa and for the rest of the Third World is not fully legible even in influential analyses of cultural imperialism. A telling example is that there are only six passing references to the Cold War in Edward Said's *Orientalism*, the book

usually credited with founding the field of postcolonial studies. Despite his argument that knowledge production can be properly understood only within the imperial power structures of today and yesteryear and despite references to Russian Orientalism during the reign of the czars, in the late 1970s Said addressed only one neocolonial power, the United States, overlooking the role played by its counterpart, the Soviet Union. It is perhaps fair to object that *Orientalism* focuses on forms of imperialism from the eighteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century. Yet *Culture and Imperialism*, published in 1993, while breaking new ground with its analysis of contemporary American forms of domination, shies away from naming the Soviet Union as an imperial power co-constituting the Cold War climate.[19] Finally, until quite recently postcolonial scholars have paid insufficient attention to the events and movements initiated by Third World nations that resisted the polarization of the globe, namely, the Bandung Conference (1955) and the Non-Aligned Movement (launched in 1961).[20] This is not to say that scholars of (neo)colonialism acted disingenuously, neglecting to take a clear position in their work. The Cold War exerted pressures, the ramifications of which could not be anticipated at the time.

This dissociative approach—with postcolonial and Cold War studies following separate, largely nonintersecting paths—becomes evident when we look back at the scholarship produced during the second half of the twentieth century. Scholars of postcolonialism have treated with insight and thoroughness topics such as Ngũgĩ's condemnation of the West's continued domination of Kenya, Ousmane Sembène's criticism of neocolonialism, Nadine Gordimer's relation with Western realism and modernism, and Frantz Fanon's groundbreaking essays on the psychological effects of European racism and colonization. This axis of engagement has prioritized relations of emulation or contestation between the Third World and the West. Yet little or no attention has been paid to Sembène's training in filmmaking in the Soviet Union; Alex La Guma's extensive travels through the Eastern Bloc, his prominent role in the Afro-Asian Writers Association (AAWA), and his relocation to Cuba; or Gordimer's insightful understanding of the fault lines produced by the Iron Curtain.[21] All these cultural aspects can be properly understood only when taking into consideration the Cold War background against which they unfolded, namely, the competition between Western and Eastern Bloc forms of imperialism. Even in studies where the Iron Curtain seems to be the almost self-evident background, such as literary research on Ngũgĩ's Marxism, the two scenes are not connected.[22] Events such as Ngũgĩ's sojourn in the USSR at the invitation of the Union of Soviet Writers are left unmentioned, and the role of the Cold War

unstated. In other words, essential pieces of the larger picture in postcolonial studies are still missing. It is only by restoring the Cold War as the background and shaping element of the decolonization struggles and the postindependence engagement with neocolonialism that we can grasp the full significance of the aesthetic and ideological choices made by African writers, their resistance or acquiescence to the polarization of the world, and their contributions to the global discourses informing the latter half of the twentieth century.[23]

Fragmentation, an unfortunate side effect of disciplinary boundaries, also impedes the formation of a unified picture. Political events in dialogue with each other are broken down by specialization, and so are intertextual ties. Sometimes we lose track even of overlapping and contemporaneous forms of colonialism and imperialism. For instance, there are few works of scholarship that address European colonization of distant lands side by side with the forms of imperialism developed in east-central Europe by the Russian, Ottoman, Habsburg, and Prussian Empires, or compare them to Japanese imperialism. Furthermore, the Soviet Union's imperial role has only relatively recently started to be explored in a nonpolemical manner.[24] Indirectly, the erasure or blurring of continuities and similarities between classical forms of colonialism and new forms of domination deployed by the two superpowers during the Cold War veils power interests. Making visible these connections is important for understanding the role of cultural production from the Third World in representing and challenging American and Soviet narratives.

Confusing nomenclature further complicates how the Iron Curtain cordoned off portions of writing from the former colonies. Does Rudyard Kipling's judgment that "East is East and West is West" refer only to the putative differences between Occidental and Oriental cultures, or does the East as antagonist point to the socialist bloc as well? To use Timothy Brennan's formulation, the "cuts of language" partition the East-West relation in different ways, as East can stand for the (formerly) colonized—both geographical East and Third World—as well as for the ideological enemies of the West, the countries that embraced communism.[25] As William Pietz argued, nineteenth century–style colonial rhetoric was retooled after World War II to judge Russians (and the other inhabitants of the Soviet Union) as the embodiment of irrational tendencies like despotism, which made them ontologically opposed to democratic values.[26] During the Cold War, cultural imperialism—with its marginalization of literary products that did not comfortably fit Western aesthetic principles—was sometimes directed at Third World nations, and other times at the Soviet Union and its satellites. As Russia had been the object of demi-Orientalization

since the eighteenth century, numerous intellectuals from the Third World saw it in a sympathetic light—an entity subjected to sometimes similar forms of discursive marginalization.[27]

If the First World looked down on cultural production from the Second and the Third Worlds, it is only natural that the Soviet Union tried to set up an alternative aesthetic system, which I discuss in more detail in chapter 2. The USSR aimed to attract intellectuals from the Third World who were disenchanted with the capitalist mode of cultural production and with the literary styles recognized by the Western publishing market. The Kremlin attempted to sway intellectuals from the former colonies, while writers' and filmmakers' unions in the USSR gave study scholarships to talented youth. Thus, some of the most important African filmmakers—such as Sembène and Abderrahmane Sissako—were trained in Moscow.[28]

Yet the aesthetic values preached in the "Fourth Rome," as Katerina Clark dubbed the earlier Moscow of the 1930s, with their emphasis on socialist realism and *partynost* (party spirit), were deliberately in conflict with those preached in Euro-American culture.[29] Aesthetic values evolved in different directions, and even whole sections of scholarship unfolded in parallel universes during the Cold War. Engaged leftist criticism did not see eye to eye with the depoliticized versions of poststructuralism that came to dominate the academic world in the West. The 1970s and 1980s consensus in the West that knowledge production should be apolitical, even when this requirement was contradicted by the more or less explicit ideological regimentation of academic knowledge, accounts for this methodological blind spot. These were not unprincipled or uneducated blind spots, but areas of penumbra generated by the extreme dichotomization of the political and cultural landscapes during the Cold War.

It is, of course, much easier to see large cultural patterns in retrospect. A few textual sites—the work of a handful of intellectuals like Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and C. L. R. James, to which I will return shortly—reveal the contours of the Cold War as a truly global conflict as early as the 1950s and 1960s.[30] However, by the 1980s and 1990s, their clearly formulated call to revolt against all forms of (neo)colonial domination had been dismissed in favor of poststructuralist approaches that focused on the complex intermeshing of power and knowledge production. In Neil Lazarus's words, the field of postcolonial studies that emerged in the 1980s was "predicated on a disavowal of liberationism, which it understands to have been rendered historically anachronistic" by the emergence of global capitalism and the collapse of the socialist regimes, yet at the same time opposed to Western mainstream antiliberationism and "the imperialist language of leading policy-makers."[31]

In scholarship written after the end of the Cold War, the work of the so-called anticolonial intellectuals—as opposed to their later counterparts, the postcolonial scholars—is often treated in a perfunctory manner, perceived as important pioneering work in the study of imperialism yet nonetheless burdened by unsubtle ideological commitments. Take, for instance, this assessment of anticolonialism in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (1998), a book that has shepherded numerous students and young scholars into the field:

> In the second half of the twentieth century, anti-colonialism was often articulated in terms of a radical, Marxist discourse of liberation, and in constructions that sought to reconcile the internationalist and anti-élitist demands of Marxism with the nationalist sentiments of the period (National Liberation Fronts), in the work and theory of early national liberationist thinkers such as C.L.R. James, Amílcar Cabral and Frantz Fanon.[32]

The implication that these intellectuals' work is ideologically regimented (they are "radical Marxists") and circumscribed to a specific national context ("early national liberationist thinkers") takes away from the important role they have played in the thorough and systematic analysis of forms of imperialism across the world. As chapter 3 shows in more detail, they could hardly be labeled "radical Marxists," unless by "radical" we understand a judicious adaptation of orthodox Marxism to local economic and political structures.

Despite such disparaging remarks, the works of Césaire, Fanon, and James reveal a keen awareness of the pitfalls of the new political configurations after World War II. One of the early essays that assesses the connections between colonial interests and the postwar Western capitalist culture is Césaire's "Discourse on Colonialism," published in its first form in 1950. The tremendous rhetorical energy that he arrays to critique the capitalist logic of profit and the disregard of human lives undergirding colonial rule (with the famous equation "colonization = thingification") leads to an equally important evaluation of the post–World War II political landscape. The essay concludes in Césaire's trademark aphoristic manner with a warning for those looking up to the United States of America as a champion of the oppressed: "American domination—the only domination from which one never recovers, I mean one never recovers unscarred."[33] Written a few years after the end of the war, the essay shows Césaire at a moment when he was beginning to discern the contours of a new global configuration of power, yet without having a full grasp of its pitfalls. His approving nod to the Soviet Union as a possible model for nations in the Caribbean and Africa is given at a time when he was still an active member of the French Communist Party.

However, by 1956, in his "Letter to Maurice Thorez," in which he renounces membership in the French Communist Party, Césaire shows a full grasp of the Cold War landscape and the imperial ambitions of both superpowers. Criticizing the French communists for their patronizing attitude toward leftists from the colonies, he also distances himself from the practices of the USSR, observing that Soviet fraternalism is a byword for new forms of paternalism and condescension toward people of color:

> Stalin is indeed the very one who reintroduced the notion of "advanced" and "backward" peoples into socialist thinking.
>
> And if he speaks of the duty of an advanced people (in this case, the Great Russians) to help peoples who are behind to catch up and overcome their delay, I do not know colonialist paternalism to proclaim any other intention.
>
> In the case of Stalin and those of his sect, it is perhaps not paternalism that is at stake. It is, however, definitely something that resembles it so closely as to be mistaken for it. Let us invent a word for it: "fraternalism." For we are indeed dealing with a brother, a big brother who, full of his own superiority and sure of his experience, takes you by the hand (alas, sometimes roughly) in order to lead you along the path to where he knows Reason and Progress can be found.[34]

Césaire's nimble argumentative strategy captures several problems with the USSR that, he points out, are not limited to the Stalinist abuses revealed and condemned by Nikita Khrushchev in his 1956 "Secret Speech."[35] The structure of the Soviet Union led to the creation of internal forms of colonialism that replicated the domination Russians had exercised over nations forcefully incorporated into the old empire. Equally significant is his critique of the Soviet Union's self-appointed paternalist role, the assumed leadership position that conceals forms of imperialism similar to those exercised by the West. By pointing out that the Soviet Union invoked the same Enlightenment principles ("Reason" and "Progress") that supported the Western colonial mentality, Césaire preceded by half a century the recent research outlining the forms of imperialism within the Soviet Union and inside the Eastern Bloc.[36]

If the neocolonial ambitions of the United States are well documented, new research on the USSR has pointed out that the help this superpower extended to countries emerging out of colonial rule was not disinterested. It was meant to augment or strengthen the Soviet sphere of influence. Starting in the 1920s, the Soviet Union, and later its Eastern European satellites, expressed interest in the fate of oppressed people of color and offered support for anticolonial revolu-

tions, especially when led by communist forces.[37] Couched in internationalist terms, this much-avowed communist solidarity with oppressed peoples ("the brotherhood of nations") often camouflaged racial typecasting as well as neo-Orientalist discourses that formulated yet another "civilizing mission." The Eastern Bloc countries cast themselves in the role of selfless guides for young African nations in need of tutelage and protection.[38]

While Césaire remained a committed Marxist and activist to the end of his life, he nonetheless outlined the connections between the French left and colonialism and blew the whistle on the uglier aspects of the support the USSR gave colonized nations. This difficult balancing act of staying true to Marxism yet criticizing its institutional forms is quite rare at a time when many leftists in the West and in the Southern Hemisphere continued to summarily dismiss any censure of the Soviet Union's imperial ambitions as mere ventriloquism of capitalist interests. Indeed, criticism of either major actor in the Cold War was understood as a form of ideological subservience to the other side. This forced polarization blunted more nuanced arguments and rarely allowed for unregimented positions. In the early 1980s, Nadine Gordimer decried the "Manichean poisons" produced by the Cold War.[39] In Gordimer's South Africa, where, on the one hand, the government was quick to accuse leftist activists of subservience to Kremlin interests and, on the other hand, the African National Congress and its ally, the South African Communist Party, kept a united ideological front by sidelining dissenters, it was even more difficult to express discerning criticism of either side.

The subtly or overtly partisan nature of public discourse on both sides of the Iron Curtain oftentimes prevented scholars from seeing larger patterns of domination and similarities between the two blocs. As Césaire pointed out, the Cold War was not a competition between a neocolonial power (the United States) and a rival with a benign internationalist agenda (the Soviet Union). Rather, it was the cultural and political configuration generated by the rivalry between two imperial powers, with sometimes similar and other times different modes of operation. It is only this context of competing imperialisms that can truly make legible the cultural choices of intellectuals from the Third World in all their complexity. This struggle between superpowers, together with postcolonial intellectuals' attempts to dismantle or eschew the dichotomization of the world, is the indispensable background against which we are to reread African (and generally postcolonial) literature. It left its watermark on the production, circulation, and reception of postcolonial writing. By rereading African literature in this way—a process that is the object of this book—the continent and, by extrapolation, other regions of the Third World appear as

not only battlefields and hot spots of a planetary conflict but also, more important, witnesses and contributors to the formation and development of a global Cold War culture.

Susan Buck-Morss has argued persuasively that, despite seemingly radical differences separating capitalist and communist polities during the Cold War, both sets of states wove mass-utopia narratives of progress and abundance rooted in a similar modernizing ethos.[40] The space race, the competition between the Soviet Union and the United States to launch the first satellites and put the first person on the moon, displayed both sides' confidence that human-made technology could outstrip the limitations of nature. As David Caute reminds us, while this contest at least on the surface seemed to focus on cultural competition, it "was possible only because both sides were agreed on cultural values to an extent that may seem astonishing, given the huge divide between a 'totalitarian' system and a pluralistic democracy."[41] Beyond a shared yet differently manifested belief in modernization, both the USSR and the USA acted as imperial powers, in a visible contradiction between their stated aims and their actual approaches. While both superpowers ostensibly supported decolonization struggles, "the methods they used in imposing their version of modernity on Third World countries were similar to those of the European empires that had gone before them."[42] The resistance to old and new forms of imperialism began at the Bandung Conference of 1955. Weaponizing the condescending term *Third World*, these African and Asian states asserted their need to level the playing field by creating a coalition of forces able to counterbalance the superpowers—a reminder that the process of decolonization took place against the background of the Cold War.[43]

Yet the forms of imperialism exercised by the USA and the USSR were not necessarily congruent, even if both sides supported coups and countercoups, propped up puppet regimes, and established economic treaties with their allies to expand their spheres of influence.[44] The discourses that cloaked each side's economic and political interests arose from different histories and would therefore take different forms. The United States claimed to support former colonies by playing up its own postrevolutionary development and promising to impart the democratic values and institutions it had achieved. Its commitment to support postcolonial states was also intended to address and dispel the dismal civil rights situation of the African American population during the 1950s and the early 1960s.[45] The USSR had incorporated Asian territories that had been part of the old Russian Empire, dominated the economies of its east-central European satellites, and strong-armed numerous communist parties around the world into toeing the ideological line. By playing up its internationalist creden-

tials, it also attempted to assuage concerns about the forms of coercion and lack of freedom imposed on both its internal and external satellites.

This project therefore requires a redefinition of postcolonial studies. The narrow, traditional understanding reduces it to a field concerned with forms of Western domination as they evolved in tandem with the capitalist system. In some formulations from the 1980s and the 1990s—those primarily placing emphasis on forms of cultural imperialism—even the second part of the definition is optional.[46] I argue that postcolonial studies should instead address diachronically overlapping and synchronically interweaving forms of (neo)colonial domination.[47] Setting this more capacious scope for the field allows us to see, for instance, east-central Europe as the target of successive waves of imperialism (Ottoman, Russian, Habsburg, Soviet, American), and Vietnam as the playing field of French, American, Russian, and Chinese domination. The African continent, after achieving nominal independence from its colonial overlords, became the target of American and Soviet imperialism, while after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Western neoliberal capitalism and the interests of emerging economic powers such as China and Russia have continued the history of forms of imperialism on the continent.

Knowledge Paradigms, Postcolonial Studies, and African Literary Criticism

Where does Africa stand in postcolonial studies? This question may seem redundant as postcolonial studies readily present themselves as the natural repository for research on African culture. However, the relation between the two research areas is more complicated. The field of postcolonial studies was founded with the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978—or so overviews of the discipline often let us know. This is the narrative we oftentimes teach our students in theory courses and specialized lectures on postcolonial literature. Yet the most cursory glance at the cultural criticism produced in the newly decolonized nations or countries awaiting independence from World War II to the 1970s shows us that the notions discussed by Said had been acerbically debated beforehand. Indeed, Neil Lazarus has observed that issues central to postcolonial studies, such as Said's injunction to "unthink Eurocentrism," were formulated a couple of decades earlier by African scholars and writers.[48] Similarly, we can point to the work of Aimé Césaire, who had already made visible the discursive incorporation of African peoples into European administrative, economic, political, and historical narratives, a process that he named "thingification."[49] Youssef El-Sebai, the Egyptian editor in chief of the journal *Lotus:*

Afro-Asian Writings, had likewise already outlined the high stakes of culture in the war against new forms of imperialism. Es'kia Mphahlele had formulated the task of decolonizing the scholarly perspective on African literature in the early 1960s, in the series of conferences he organized in 1962 (Kampala) and 1963 (Dakar and Freetown). The latter two conferences, dedicated to introducing African literature in the university curriculum, represented a concerted effort to undo the Eurocentric biases of higher education in Africa. Even the famous "Nairobi revolution," as Apollo Obonyo Amoko has named the call for the "abolition of the English Department," spearheaded by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Taban lo Liyong, and Henry Owuor-Anyumba's memorandum of October 1968, is oftentimes relegated to an intermediate position, between the efforts of anticolonial precursors and the plenitude of postcolonial analysis produced in the aftermath of the publication of *Orientalism*.[50]

How did this process of obscuring important research in African studies come to happen? What would it take to reset the narrative of postcolonial studies, and implicitly that of African literary scholarship? In an article from 1981, Wole Soyinka urged scholars to engage in a sociological analysis of literary critics, which would clarify the intellectual genealogies of the latter's scholarly concerns. "To my knowledge, very little has been attempted in studies of the critic as a socially-situated producer, and therefore as a creature of social conditioning, a conditioning which in fact offers no certitudes about the nature of his commitment to the subject which engages him, his motivations, or, indeed, about the very nature of his social existence."[51] His essay reminds us that during the Cold War the field of literary studies was besieged from both the right and the left. The right replicated the condescending fallacies of colonial discourse. The left imagined itself in the most radical terms and, according to Soyinka, altered the substance of the literary work for the sake of driving an argument home.[52] While starting from critics' statements about his work that he had found offensive and inaccurate, Soyinka's argument surpasses the level of personal discontent to show how either a pro-Western or a Marxist approach—both of which were inextricably tied to the context of the Cold War—can modify the dominant scholarly narratives in the field. His essay is a call to take a step back to contextualize and historicize the scholarly narratives about African literature and African writers.

If Said urged us to examine the forms of cultural imperialism and the knowledge production networks that manufactured the Orient as a discursive construct, we equally have to revisit the process of knowledge production during Cold War imperialism. Drawing on Said's approaches to cultural imperial-

ism, Andrew N. Rubin labeled Western cultural domination during the Cold War "a way of knowing, a style of thought through which power worked to create divisions, distinctions, and discriminations."[53] This does not apply only to American neocolonialism; it is even more important to see the interpenetrating forms of Cold War imperialism as producers of knowledge paradigms. Historicizing the position of literary critics and essayists engaged in defining the field of African literature, as Soyinka urged us, will explain why Western forms of imperialism had more visibility during the Cold War for some African intellectuals, while others closed their eyes to the forms of control emanating from the West in order to repel the long arm of Soviet domination. To make visible the role of African cultural production within the larger field of postcolonial writing, we have to acknowledge the succession and interpenetration of forms of cultural and political imperialisms beyond the visible forms of domination exercised by the West. As long as postcolonial studies remains a field narrowly concerned with studying the long-term effects of Western colonialism, as long as we neglect to discuss the interlocking and overlapping forms of imperialism during the Cold War, African cultural production will remain only partly visible to scholarship.

What applies to culture is even more valid for the relation between material and cultural aspects. This book proposes to revisit African texts through a Cold War lens to see how they directly or obliquely mark the presence of overlapping imperialisms. This focus, which structures the second part of the book, can reveal the roots and the material traces of the marginalization of African cultures. Take, for instance, the startling example Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o uses in *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) to explain the alienation induced by the imposition of a colonial language: "This [feeling of alienation] may in part explain why technology always appears to us as slightly external, *their* product and not *ours*. The word *missile* used to hold an alien far-away sound, until I recently learnt its equivalent in Gĩkũyũ, *ngurukuhĩ*, and it made me apprehend it differently."[54] The first missiles were used by Germany during World War II, yet the technology is associated with the Cold War and imposed itself on the consciousness of the world with the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, the event that threatened to turn the conflict into a nuclear conflagration. Thus, Ngũgĩ's comment draws attention to more than just the intertwined material and cultural imposition of Western (neo)colonialism; it illuminates the specific forms of imperialism arising from the Cold War competition between superpowers, which consigned Africans to a technological and linguistic penumbra. The Gĩkũyũ word Ngũgĩ selects as the equivalent of the term *missile* attempts to reintroduce a pastoralist

culture in a world driven by the ethos of technological modernity: a ngurukuhĩ is a short, pointed stick that is thrown at a wayward cow to bring the animal back to the herd.[55] This archaic pastoralist term, antiquated in the context of contemporary Kenyan experience, represents the writer's attempt to salvage, preserve, and legitimize the forms of knowledge originally displaced by British colonialism and later by Cold War imperialisms. The wood cutting, planted in the earth to sprout a new plant (the Gĩkũyũ word's secondary meaning), is to take root and germinate a cultural experience different from the totalizing narratives put forth by the Cold War superpowers.

More important, what Ngũgĩ experienced as the alienating effects of the word *missile*, which in his Marxist interpretation reflects "the language of real life"—the relations of production—elsewhere in the West, may have actually been shaped by the gap between the American term *missile* and the corresponding Russian word *raketa* (rocket), or similarly the distance yet overlap between the words *astronaut* and *cosmonaut*.[56] To put it differently, there might have been different words to refer to the same technology on either side of the Iron Curtain, yet technology from each side was involved in expanding the superpowers' spheres of influence. Ngũgĩ is a fierce critic of neocolonialism, which, at that time, he understood to be a product of Western capitalism. In this book I argue instead that forms of neocolonialism in Africa were the result of the interplay and competition between Western and Eastern Bloc forms of imperialism, as the development of missile technology actually indicates. It is only the Cold War lens that does away with the relative marginalization of Africa in postcolonial studies and presents a more comprehensive account of twentieth-century forms of imperialism.

By revisiting the history of African literature and postcolonial studies through a Cold War lens we come to realize that scholars like Césaire correctly diagnosed the political and cultural situation. The multidirectional forms of imperialism—with the USA and the USSR as the main imperial powers—shaped cultural production during the second half of the twentieth century. It is a diagnostic that for the majority of us becomes visible only now, when both the blind spots created by the Cold War and the triumphalist discourse of the West in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the socialist regimes no longer obstruct the view. To borrow and adapt an idea put forth by Jean and John Comaroff in *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America Is Evolving toward Africa*, looking at postcolonial theory from the vantage point of African cultural production during the Cold War reveals the contours of a competition of superpower imperialisms that had characterized the field and yet had been obstructed by the Euro-American methodologies on which the field rests.

African Writers in the Crossfire of Cold War Imperialisms

Accustomed from films and spy fiction to an urbane yet lethal secret agent who is usually a far cry from the bookish type, it might surprise readers to realize that the literary and scholarly world—in the West, the Soviet Bloc, and the Third World—has known its fair share of intrigue and espionage during the Cold War. A 1958 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) confidential report on the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference in Tashkent—the cultural event that inaugurated the AAWA—highlights the surprisingly high degree of interest Western and Eastern Bloc states showed in writers from parts of the world that did not appear to be in the direct line of fire during the Cold War. Why would an intergovernmental military organization be concerned with the discussions Asian and African writers held in the capital of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic? Compiling reports from the Ceylonese (Sri Lankan), Pakistani, and Indian delegations, as well as the account of a British Embassy official who encountered nine members of the Japanese delegation, the report focuses on the level of Soviet expenditure for the conference, English and French translations of international and local literature made available for the event, and the likelihood that the organizers managed to impress or even ideologically sway the participants. Written on behalf of the United Kingdom's delegation, the report displays a condescending attitude and repeats colonial clichés:

> From the point of view of serious literature the Writers' Conference had been practically worthless. Its only achievements had been to bring about some stimulating and interesting meetings between Asians and Africans, and to enable the Communist element to put out propaganda on the usual lines. . . . In this propaganda the emphasis had been mainly on the need to write on current themes (i.e. primarily anti-colonialism). This had had more effect on the Africans, who for the most part have no literary traditions, than on the Asians who have. Indeed, it was the Africans who, throughout the proceedings, played up more to the Soviet point of view, and spoke more violently.[57]

Two important points emerge from this document. First, the beginning of the Cold War and the concurrent period of decolonization did not do away with colonial discourse; it simply morphed into the new forms of imperialism wielded by the superpowers and their allies—the United States and Western Europe, on the one hand, and the Soviet Union with, and later against, China, on the other. Second, the ranking of Asian conference participants above their African counterparts based on the former's previous access to "literary tradi-

tions," which the latter putatively lacked, is not a mere rehearsal of the historically resilient and harmful representation of Africa as a continent devoid of historical consciousness, artistic accomplishments, and literary works. It demonstrates the importance accorded to cultural production in general, and literature in particular (at least literature in the forms recognized and validated by the two superpowers and their close allies), as a Cold War ideological instrument. As I discuss in more detail in chapter 1, culture became the proxy battlefield where the conflict unfolded. This faith in the power of literature explains why the USA and the USSR spent what, from this dismal moment of defunded humanities, appear like astounding figures for supporting the arts and cultural production at home and abroad.[58] Literary figures commanded authority. The election of two writers—Agostinho Neto and Léopold Sédar Senghor—as the first presidents of independent Angola and Senegal, respectively, reinforces the prestige of literary figures during those times of turmoil.

An interest in African literature was similarly expressed from the other side of the Iron Curtain. A few months after the landmark 1962 conference of African writers at Makerere College in Kampala, Uganda, *Voprosy Literatury*—one of the most influential scholarly publications on literary studies and philology in the Soviet Union—published a review of the event. As no Soviet representative had attended the conference, the reviewer relied on an account written by the event organizer, the South African writer Ezekiel (later Es'kia) Mphahlele. Much energy is dedicated to presenting African literature as a battlefield between progressive forces and regressive approaches—the former in keeping with other leftist literary developments, the latter directed by nefarious Western interests:

> Under the cover of "negritude" propaganda, some circles in the West try to prove the importance of retaining patriarchal order (tribalism), which impedes the political, social, and cultural progress of the countries of the "Black Continent." They push African literature toward idealization of the tribal past, and African writers toward the road of endless and harmful arguments getting in the way of their main task: the creation of a literature helping the peoples of Africa in the struggle against colonialism, a literature that would be the spokesman of the hopes and aspirations of the new African society. The Kampala conference showed that contemporary African literature successfully overcomes the "infantile disorders" of growth, sweeping away everything that gets in the way of her development.[59]

Mphahlele was a strong opponent of the Négritude movement, especially in the form promoted by the Senegalese president and poet Léopold Sédar

Senghor, and his criticism of its worldview likely had informed the Russian reviewer's response.[60] Yet beyond this understandable rejection of a romanticized view of the African past, there lies the weaponization of cultural theories to serve in the ideological battle between superpowers.

The congratulatory tone of the article is, moreover, undermined by occasional paternalistic formulations, as the author refers to African literary production as a literature overcoming its "'infantile disorders' of growth."[61] The syntagma placed within quotation marks references Vladimir Lenin's 1920 work *"Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, and therefore suggests inevitable problems that can be surpassed with proper discipline and commitment. Nevertheless, Lenin's phrase, transplanted to an evaluation of African literature, reflects an undercurrent of superciliousness. The mirrored condescension in the NATO report and the Soviet review are chilling reminders that forms of (cultural) imperialism structured the Cold War geopolitical configurations.

During this prolonged conflict, much of the animosity and tensions between the superpowers was transmuted into and expressed through seemingly benevolent cultural diplomacy programs. Greg Barnhisel argues that "American cultural diplomacy had been founded on the premise that private, nongovernmental groups were the ideal cultural ambassadors and that the government's role should be to foster their involvement as much as possible."[62] Without appearing to be directly inimical to the other side, cultural diplomacy could act as a conduit of programs aiming to augment the superpowers' spheres of influence. For instance, the information programs developed under the umbrella of the United States Information Agency were "tasked with the job of telling America's story to the world."[63] Conversely, after the death of Stalin, the Soviet Union invested a lot of energy in cultural diplomacy, both with the West and the United States and also with the so-called Third World. The 1957 establishment of the Union of Soviet Societies of Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, and of the State Committee for Cultural Ties, as well as the firm hand that the Central Committee of the Communist Party kept on them, demonstrates the vision, shared by the superpowers, that culture granted access to each other's populations and could sway "hearts and minds" abroad.[64] Through exhibitions, cultural festivals, and educational cooperation, "cultural influence also became one of the most important instruments in the post-Stalin opening to the Third World, where the Soviet Union began to actively solicit the support of nationalist—but noncommunist—regimes."[65]

Most of the Cold War battles were fought at penpoint, yet gunpoints were directed at Third World countries as well. As David Caute points out, the Cold War was unlike any other confrontation between imperial powers, as the USA

and the USSR did not dispatch armadas and troops in open combat; instead, they sent "their best ballerinas, violinists, poets, actors, playwrights, painters, composers, comedians and chess players into battle."[66] His assessment is only partly true: the war was cold only for the superpowers and their allies in the Northern Hemisphere, owing to the mutual-annihilation threat posed by a nuclear conflagration. Countries from the Third World, however, served as battlegrounds for hot conflicts, proxy wars, coups, and countercoups. The United States and the Soviet Union deflected their animosity through cultural efforts: they organized cultural events, promoted artists, offered scholarships, sent cultural ambassadors, and helped with the publication of ideologically aligned works in countries where they aimed to increase their visibility and solidify their grip. Indeed, the battle aimed to win both the hearts and minds of their own citizens and those of people across the world.[67] Quoting a 1949 statement by American philosopher Sidney Hook, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) website acknowledges that a cultural offensive oftentimes replaced military action during the Cold War: "Give me a hundred million dollars and a thousand dedicated people, and I will guarantee to generate such a wave of democratic unrest among the masses—yes, even among the soldiers—of Stalin's own empire, that all his problems for a long period of time to come will be internal. I can find the people."[68]

As chapter 1 shows in more detail, the superpowers targeted African intellectuals through publication programs and financial and logistical support for journals, literary events, and conferences. Some of the most important publications in the history of African literature received the financial backing of the two superpowers. For instance, journals and magazines that made significant contributions to the flourishing of the field of literary studies on the continent, *Black Orpheus* and *Transition*, on the one hand, and *Lotus: Afro-Asian Writings*, on the other, were supported by the United States and the Soviet Union, respectively. These investments in African culture were part of a larger global pattern. Recent research on UNESCO has revealed the ideological weaponization of culture and conceptions of literacy.[69]

During the first two decades of the Cold War, at the center of the United States' activities abroad was the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF). Established in 1950 as an anticommunist, antitotalitarian cultural organization, and headquartered in Paris to avoid suspicion of direct American involvement, it attracted both conservative and leftist intellectuals. In fact, leftist intellectuals were the target audience, in an attempt to rally them around Western values and distance them from political affiliation with the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc.[70] Frances Stonor Saunders has authored the most extensive and

innovative research on the CCF to date. *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* underscores the extent of the CCF operations; it "had offices in thirty-five countries, employed dozens of personnel, published over twenty prestige magazines, held art exhibitions, owned a news and feature service, organized high-profile international conferences and rewarded musicians and artists with prizes and public performances."[71]

The CCF supported an impressive roster of journals, with the flagship *Encounter* (based in London) acting as a venue where some of the most important ideas of postwar culture were debated, validated, and reinforced. Other journals included *Der Monat* (Germany), *Preuves* (France), *Cuadernos del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura* (published in France for distribution in Latin America), *Tempo Presente* (Italy), *Forum* (Austria), *Cadernos Brasileiros* (Brazil), *Quadrant* (Australia), *Quest* (India), *Hiwar* (Lebanon), and, on the African continent, *Transition* and *Black Orpheus*.[72] The money was channeled through the Farfield Foundation, to give an air of political disinterestedness. According to Andrew Rubin, the CCF operation was at the center not only of the ideological conflict between East and West but also of a paradigm of imperial transfer of authority from Europe to the United States during the period of decolonization: "All these energies and resources, it was revealed, were enlisted to legitimize and culturally sustain the transfer of imperial power from Europe to the United States in the aftermath of the Second World War and refashion and reinvent the idea of world literature."[73] His assessment reminds us that Cold War–era imperialisms were overlapping and multidirectional, making actual resistance to co-optation a difficult-to-almost-impossible balancing act. While a lot of Soviet support unfolded more openly, therefore making it easier to identify and bypass institutions that served their interests, the covert CCF operation was nearly impossible to detect. Therefore, the 1966–1967 successive revelations of the vast network of cultural venues financed by the CIA devastated most of the intellectuals affiliated with the CCF.[74] The sense of betrayal they expressed is revealing with respect to the embedded presuppositions about the role of culture and literature in society. After the lessons of authoritarianism and totalitarianism (Nazi Germany and the USSR) were processed in the wake of World War II, the West positioned culture as an independent realm, not beholden to politics, a view ironically breached with this extensive intelligence operation. While the CCF reformed as the International Association for Cultural Freedom and continued its operations until 1979 with much-reduced funding, it is anyone's guess what the declassifying of archives in the next couple of decades might reveal as American government conduits for shaping cultural production around the world.[75]

Rubin's statement that the CCF participated in the refashioning of the idea of "world literature" is an important point that would warrant much more extensive treatment than afforded by the limited space in this introduction. This concept, which has become fashionable in the new millennium, especially with the publication of David Damrosch's *What Is World Literature* (2003) and Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* (first published in French in 1999), has been vigorously challenged, especially from the left. The book *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (2015), by the Warwick Research Collective (WReC), is the most sustained engagement of this type. As the hyphen in "world-literature" announces, this group of intellectuals from the University of Warwick challenges the premise of the earlier definitions and instead presents the relation between literary forms and genres and their geographical distribution as directly impacted by the capitalist world-system. In chapter 2 I return to this debate and, taking the WReC as interlocutors, propose a more comprehensive understanding, through the prism of the Cold War. The aesthetic system generated by the capitalist world-system was countered from the other side of the Iron Curtain, as the Soviet Union's investment in different modes of writing and a differently conceived social function of the writer attests. Indeed, as Maria Khotimsky argued, the Soviet Union had developed its own idea of world literature by the end of World War I. As Maxim Gorky founded Vsemirnaia Literatura (World Literature) Press, a long tradition of Soviet investment in culture and its political importance was concomitantly established.[76]

The institution on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain that forms the focus of much of part I of this volume is the Afro-Asian Writers Association (AAWA). Paradoxically, considering its later development, the AAWA's origins lie in the anti-imperial energies unleashed by the 1955 Bandung Conference of Asian and African nations. The groundwork was laid the following year in Delhi, where Mulk Raj Anand and other progressive Indian writers organized the first Asian writers' conference. There they formulated the desirability of a cross-continental alliance of writers from Asia and Africa. In 1958 the AAWA debuted with its first conference in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, one of the republics comprising the Soviet Union.

The newly constituted AAWA became one of the hot spots around which Cold War tensions manifested. True to the cloak-and-dagger atmosphere of the period, it entailed both physical and character assassinations. The AAWA was initially headquartered in Sri Lanka, and although the NATO confidential report mentioned earlier surmised that "in practice the thing would have to be run by the Soviet Embassy in Colombo," in 1965 pro-Soviet writers determined

that the AAWA's Permanent Bureau would be moved to Cairo and placed under the leadership of Egyptian writer and future minister of culture Youssef El-Sebai, who was elected secretary-general.[77] Through El-Sebai the Permanent Bureau also acted as the cultural wing of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization (AAPSO). The change of location highlights the tensions brewing beneath the surface of what half a decade earlier might have appeared as a united anti-imperial and nonaligned front in the Third World. China had attended the Bandung Conference, despite numerous participants' apprehension that its leaders would act as mouthpieces for Soviet-style communism; yet the Sino-Soviet split soon placed the two states at odds. This fracture was reflected within the AAWA in the different ideological alignments of writers: pro-USSR versus pro-China intellectuals pulled the organization in different directions and, by 1966, split it.[78] The headquarters of the former were set up in Cairo; those of the latter in Beijing. More perplexing, the two factions continued to coexist in parallel, laying claim to the same name and history, with each side demanding to be recognized as the rightful inheritor.[79]

In 1968 the Cairo-based AAWA—which forms the object of this study—published the first issue of its journal *Lotus: Afro-Asian Writings*.[80] The same year, the pro-Chinese faction published a booklet entitled *The Struggle between the Two Lines in the Afro-Asian Writers' Movement*. The extravagant language of praise for Mao Zedong, with quotations printed in bold font, is matched only by the acrimonious tone directed at the Soviet Union: "Now it has become crystal clear that without acute uncompromising struggle against the Soviet revisionists, accomplices of U.S. imperialism, no success could be scored against U.S.-led imperialism, old and new colonialism and other reactionary forces."[81] While the Chinese approach is deeply problematic—for instance, the publication boasts that they have "purified" the ranks of the AAWA "by getting rid of Soviet renegades"—this parallel history points out that intellectuals from the Third World laid claim to an anti-imperialist vocabulary that criticized both American and Soviet forms of domination.[82]

The AAWA continued to be submerged in a Cold War espionage atmosphere for the next two decades. In 1978 an extremist Palestinian group gunned down El-Sebai while he was taking part in an AAPSO conference in Nicosia, Cyprus. In the ensuing attempt to find the murderers, who had taken thirty hostages in order to secure their own departure from Cyprus, an Egyptian military commando sent without the host country's permission clashed with Cypriot forces and almost created a diplomatic incident. El-Sebai had been killed for having accompanied Egypt's leader Anwar Sadat to Israel, for talks that the splinter Palestinian group had seen as a betrayal of its cause. It was a devastating turn,

as El-Sebai had consistently used the space of *Lotus* as well as the AAWA and AAPSO events as platforms for supporting the Palestinian cause. This Cold War history, with its unexpected twists and turns, is scattered across continents and different languages and cultures, and is therefore impossible for a single researcher to piece together.[83]

Yet the story of *Lotus* and the AAWA does not stop in Cairo. It continues in Beirut, where the Permanent Bureau moved in the late 1970s, with the Pakistani poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz in charge, and later in Tunis, where it was headquartered in the early 1980s. Much of the history of the association, its administrative notes, and even some of the issues of the journal were lost or destroyed during the civil war in Lebanon. Of the *Lotus* issues published simultaneously in English, French, and Arabic, most of the surviving material from the 1980s is in Arabic. Yet, concomitantly, the activity of other members of the Permanent Bureau, such as the South African writer and secretary-general of AAWA from 1979 to 1985, Alex La Guma, wove connections between Havana, where he was headquartered, and the rest of the world. The Cold War was the background against which much of these intellectuals' literary careers unfolded and, more importantly, was the shaping force of their political and literary stance. This conspicuously absent angle in the evaluation of their work speaks to the blind spots created by the ideological fault lines of the latter half of the twentieth century in the development of the field of African postcolonial literature.

Mapping the Cold War in African Literary History

To study the movement of ideas, the formation of literary networks, and notions of literary value on both sides of the Iron Curtain and within nonaligned spaces, I draw on both archival and textual evidence. Most of the documents and writings I consulted are in English; however, a number of journal articles, novels, and conference papers originally appeared in French, Portuguese, or Afrikaans. For the sake of accessibility and homogeneity, I used published translations in English, unless otherwise indicated. In geographical terms, most of the works draw on authors from or events that took place in West Africa (especially Ghana, Senegal, and Nigeria), East Africa (Kenya and Uganda, in particular), and southern Africa (Angola and South Africa). The emerging literary capitals Kampala, Dakar, Luanda, Accra, Johannesburg, Nairobi, and so on existed sometimes in an uneasy alliance with and at other times in open rebellion against literary metropolises such as London, Paris, Moscow, and New York. To map the networks and fault lines uniting and separating these locations, *At Penpoint: African Literatures, Postcolonial Studies, and the Cold War* takes

a two-pronged methodological approach. The first part of the book comprises a historiographical assessment of the development of African literary studies, with a focus on the tenets of debates and literary venues. The latter half constitutes a thematic approach to representations of the Cold War in works from the continent.

Part I, "African Literary History and the Cold War," revisits some of the most important literary debates and the venues where they took place at the time when African literature was emerging as a scholarly field. I explore the direct impact of the Cold War on the production, circulation, and reception of African literature, with a focus on the late 1950s to the late 1980s. Chapter 1, "Pens and Guns: Literary Autonomy, Artistic Commitment, and Secret Sponsorships," proceeds from debates regarding the function of the writer in society during the second half of the twentieth century, asking, in Lewis Nkosi's words, whether writers should "separate the problem of gun-running from the problem of wielding the pen."[84] Are writers autonomous intellectuals, dissident figures who maintain their distance from the powers that be, concerned only with their craft? Or are they committed citizens who, by wielding pens and guns with equal adroitness, participate directly in decolonization struggles and the development of new societies? Cultural diplomacy programs financed by the superpowers, and writers' attempts to bypass such influences, shaped the divergent positions on the role of the writer in society. Looking at how the USA and the USSR attempted to sway African writers to their side, I discuss both the subtle and the direct forms of pressure the superpowers exercised. I draw my evidence by attending to essays, journalism, and archival material pertaining to the CCF with its sponsored literary venues in Africa (*Black Orpheus* and *Transition*); to the originally independent and gradually Soviet-influenced AAWA and its journal *Lotus: Afro-Asian Writings*; and to the Pan-Africanist and avowedly nonaligned journal *Présence Africaine*. The chapter demonstrates the impact of the Cold War: these publication and discussion venues promoted specific writers, author functions, and modes of writing, thus contributing to the formation of literary canons. It also draws attention to the history of committed art in the Third World.

Like chapter 1, which started from a debate on the role of the writer in society and thus is relevant to literary scholarship at large, chapter 2 reprises and redirects a debate that has galvanized scholars over the past two decades. "Aesthetic World-Systems: Mythologies of Modernism and Realism" takes up and problematizes an apparent dichotomy emerging between the supporters of modernism, largely identified with Euro-American aesthetic principles, and the backers of socialist realism, oftentimes perceived as an anachronistic artistic

mode promoted within the Eastern Bloc. Instead of setting them up as yet another Cold War Manichean relation, I focus on the mythologies of realism and modernism as they were sedimented into literary consciousness owing to the aesthetic world-systems set up by the superpowers during the Cold War. The argument builds from essays by Ayi Kwei Armah, Es'kia Mphahlele, Micere Mugo, Lewis Nkosi, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and from proceedings and archival material pertaining to conferences in Cairo (1961), Kampala (1962), Dakar (1963), Freetown (1963), and Alma-Ata (1973). This abundance of materials reveals that theories of (world) literature were being formulated on the African continent at a time when the forces of aesthetic decolonization were intersecting with those produced by the global Cold War. The chapter ends with a quick survey of aesthetic shifts in Ngũgĩ's works, indicating that the cultural Cold War turned the antinomy between modernism and realism into two aesthetic world-systems that still affect the way we perceive literature today, by making invisible or illegible entire corpuses of texts.

Part II, "Reading through a Cold War Lens," proposes that we reread important works of African literature to identify the watermark left by this conflict. This type of reading expands established approaches to African literary history by suggesting new ways of articulating texts, of setting them in dialogue, while also allowing for a better understanding of the Cold War as a global conflict.

Chapter 3, "Creating Futures, Producing Theory: Strike, Revolution, and the Morning After," is concerned with literary renderings of imagined futures and the genealogy of ideas of revolution. The decolonization struggles of the 1950s–1960s, extending to the end of the Cold War in the case of southern Africa, drew on varied modes of action that energized the masses, from the strike represented in Ousmane Sembène's *God's Bits of Wood* (1960) to the armed struggle in Mongane Wally Serote's *To Every Birth Its Blood* (1981). The writers I look at think of revolution in leftist terms, yet their conception of transformative futures goes beyond the classics of Marxism-Leninism to engage with theorists of revolution in Africa—Frantz Fanon, Amílcar Cabral, and Steve Biko. The chapter starts from these writers' representations of the temporality of revolution and ends with interpretations of its aftermath. I read Ayi Kwei Armah's canonical novel *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) as depicting not only the stagnation of neocolonialism (as most critics have done) but also the dead ends of African socialism. As with African perspectives on the function of literature and representational modes, the theories of revolution that emerge from the three authors discussed here contribute to enriching postcolonial studies.

Chapter 4, “The Hot Cold War: Rethinking the Global Conflict through Southern Africa,” turns to another important theme that gives the lie to the very concept of cold war. It focuses on the changes in the literary representation of one of the hot spots of this global conflict: the war in Angola.[85] I look at a comprehensive regional panel of texts, from accounts written at the time of the conflict to retrospective narratives that commemorate this protracted proxy conflict. However, their visibility has varied, owing to the different overarching categories under which these works have been placed: South African memoirs and fiction of the Border War, lusophone literature of decolonization, African war fiction, and postmodern or magical realist writings. What do the shifts from literature based on the experience of conscripts, in Anthony Akerman’s *Somewhere on the Border* (1986) and Mark Behr’s *The Smell of Apples* (1993); to the realist or modernist novels of the decolonization period in southern Africa, such as Pepetela’s *Mayombe* (1980), Nadine Gordimer’s *July’s People* (1981), and Sousa Jamba’s *Patriots* (1990); to the contemporary magical realist fiction of Ondjaki’s *Granma Nineteen and the Soviet’s Secret* (2008) and Niq Mhlongo’s *Way Back Home* (2013), tell us about the limits and strengths of specific genres in representing this conflict? I consider the trajectory of this body of works in formal terms, by contextualizing them in relation to global literary shifts in genre and by historicizing them in relation to the Cold War and its aftermath.

Southern Africa is a productive nexus of languages, literary genealogies, and cultural conflicts, yet only a continental and *longue durée* approach can give us a comprehensive perspective. In my preceding monograph, *South African Literature beyond the Cold War* (2010), I examined the previously overlooked impact of Eastern Europe in the postapartheid South African cultural imaginary. Yet, as I completed it, I discovered that the connections went deeper in time than the similarities between the 1990s transitions in the two regions, to their Cold War roots. The scope also has to be wider: both continental and global, tracing African intellectuals’ axes of engagement with the United States and the Soviet Union as well as within Pan-African and Non-Aligned Movement networks.

What I hope I have unearthed in this book are both little-explored archives and new methodologies for reading texts in order to underscore the rich ways in which the Third World has contributed to the creation of global cultures *and* to theorizing them. Whether focusing on novels, essays, or conference ephemera, I show how we can reread African culture of the second half of the twentieth century through a Cold War lens. The stakes of such an exercise go well beyond completing the body of scholarship on writers’ oeuvres with a perspective heretofore absent from this corpus. Like a chemical treatment or heat applied to invisible ink, the Cold War perspective acts as a developing substance that

illuminates the political and ideological forces at work in postcolonial literatures, the aesthetic choices facing African writers, the specific forms taken by their critical reception, and even the blind spots in postcolonial scholarship. It reveals African intellectuals' contributions to various branches of cultural theory. I return to this point in the conclusion, which addresses again the impact of the Cold War on the disciplinary narratives in postcolonial studies and the developing field of world literature.