

From Internationalism to Postcolonialism

Literature and Cinema between
the Second and the Third Worlds

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McGill-Queen's University Press
Montreal & Kingston • London • Chicago

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ISBN 978-0-2280-0109-6 (cloth)

ISBN 978-0-2280-0110-2 (paper)

ISBN 978-0-2280-0201-7 (ePDF)

ISBN 978-0-2280-0202-4 (ePUB)

Legal deposit first quarter 2020

Bibliothèque nationale du Québec

Printed in Canada on acid-free paper that is 100% ancient forest free
(100% post-consumer recycled), processed chlorine free

This book has been published with the help of a grant from the American Comparative Literature Association through the Helen Tatar First Book Subvention. Funding was also received from the Jordan Center for the Advanced Study of Russia, New York University.

Funded by the
Government
of Canada

Financé par le
gouvernement
du Canada

Canada



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des arts
du Canada

We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts.

Nous remercions le Conseil des arts du Canada de son soutien.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: From internationalism to postcolonialism : literature and cinema between the
Second and the Third Worlds / Rossen Djagalov.

Names: Djagalov, Rossen, 1979- author.

Description: Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20190215976 | Canadiana (ebook) 20190216093 |

ISBN 9780228001096 (cloth) | ISBN 9780228001102 (paper) |

ISBN 9780228002017 (ePDF) | ISBN 9780228002024 (ePUB)

Subjects: LCSH: Developing countries--Foreign relations--Soviet Union. | LCSH: Soviet
Union--Foreign relations--Developing countries. | LCSH: Developing countries--
Literatures--Soviet influences. | LCSH: Motion pictures--Developing countries--Soviet
influences. | LCSH: Soviet Union--Foreign relations--1945--1991.

Classification: LCC D888.S65 D53 2020 | DDC 327.470172/4--dc23

This book was designed and typeset by Peggy & Co. Design in 10.5/14 Minion 3.

Introduction

“The Third World was not a place. It was a project.”

Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations* (2008)

The first question I was asked upon finishing a talk on Second-to-Third-World literary engagements at the Moscow-based Institute of Oriental Studies was a very polite, but equally sincere “But who needs this?” (*A komu eto nuzhno?*). After all, “this” (the engagements) was a product of a twentieth-century political and cultural configuration that is no more. Never quick on my feet, I mumbled away an explanation, but the question has stayed with me ever since. Indeed, who needs “this”? Why study the cultural byproducts of a failed political alliance, which may once have been a source of inspiration and cultural capital but is no more? Certainly, “its” cause has not been helped by the collapse of the Soviet state and its imperial ambition to map the whole world through a powerful area studies apparatus of which post-Soviet Russia’s institutes of Africa, Asia, and Latin America are but pale shadows. An amnesia has descended over this topic. Except in certain leftist quarters, academic establishments in most African, Asian, and Latin American countries seem similarly uninterested in reconstructing the story of their cultures’ multiple engagements with international communism and the Second World. Ironically, but perhaps tellingly, it is postcolonial scholars and historians of Soviet internationalism based in the Western academy who have shown the greatest interest in “it.” Yet even there, reconstructing Second-to-Third-World cultural networks entails overcoming not only the area studies division of labour, which has erected professional, intellectual, and linguistic barriers between the two worlds, but also the embarrassment before real or imagined cold-warriors ready to expose the Soviet trace.

Why, for example, compromise the illustrious reputations of canonical postcolonial writers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Faiz Ahmad Faiz or Third-Cinema filmmakers such as Sembène Ousmane and Mrinal Sen with an unsavoury association with the Soviet state? Indeed, it has been one of postcolonial studies' foundational moves to rescue the study of the contemporary cultures of Africa, Asia, and Latin America from narrow Cold War dichotomies and assert their independence. Today, however, this move obscures more than it reveals, serving as a decontextualizing force that needs to be explicitly challenged. Not only does it account for our inability to explain individual actions and preferences of Third-Worldist cultural producers and their audiences but it also keeps us blind to the larger ways in which the Second and the Third World have been mutually constitutive, up to their near-simultaneous disappearance ca 1990.

From Internationalism to Postcolonialism addresses this disconnect by demonstrating the extent to which Third-Worldist literary and cinematic platforms and networks shared the same field of political and cultural struggle with Soviet ones. The Soviet perspective provides a novel vantage point to write the history of African, Asian, and Latin American cultures, which have been almost exclusively studied on their own terms or in their relation to Western modernity. Moscow and Tashkent, Soviet society and culture, too, become less familiar places when seen through the eyes of a visiting Senegalese writer as do Cuban and Syrian cinema when viewed from the perspective of their engagement with the USSR. This book also reconfigures the relationship between Soviet and postcolonial studies: rather than using postcolonial theory to study the Russo-Soviet peripheries (East European, Caucasian, and Central Asian), it documents the multiple ways in which the Soviet experience has affected this theory and its attendant literary and cinematic production.

Drawing on the archives of the Soviet Writers and Filmmakers Unions, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), and other cultural agencies of the Soviet state, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism* focuses on the main organizing platforms of post-Stalin-era Soviet engagement with the literature and cinema of the Third World: the Afro-Asian Writers Association (1958–91, Chapter 2) and the biennial Tashkent Festival of Asian, African, and Latin American Film (1968–88, Chapter 4). The Cold War, which saw the peak of those engagements, is bracketed by an interwar era during which African, Asian, and Latin American writers first entered the Soviet Republic of Letters (Chapter 1)

and the post-Soviet era, when that Republic and its cinematic equivalent had fallen apart, but not without leaving influential legacies (Epilogue). This excavation of cultural networks and interfaces sets the context for structural readings of dozens of postcolonial novels and films, specifically interrogating how they imagined international solidarity (Chapters 3 and 5, respectively). This resulting textual analysis uncovers both typological affinities and genetic contacts that underlay the similarities in the transnational imaginaries of Soviet and canonical Third-Worldist novels and films.¹

Protagonists

Before we proceed, a word may be needed about the protagonists of these engagements: Third-Worldist cultural producers and audiences and their Soviet counterparts. Coined by Alfred Sauvy in 1952 to refer to the countries not aligned with the Communist USSR or the capitalist NATO bloc, the term “Third World” has since gone in multiple different directions.² In today’s popular usage, which is the one that I will avoid, it has devolved into a pejorative synonym for “underdeveloped” (as in “a Third-World country”). Another sense in which the term “Third World” is commonly used, which I will also avoid, is as a more neutral designator of the cultural and human geographies of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, without any necessary assumption of common politics.

Drawing on Vijay Prashad’s opening sentences of his magisterial *Darker Nations* (2007), “The Third World was not a place. It was a project,” I will use the term in its third meaning: not a figure of backwardness, nor even a more neutral designator of a geography comprising dominated or (formerly) colonial territories of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, but rather, an emancipatory supranational movement on these continents seeking not only national independence but also the formation of socially just societies. Used in this narrower sense, Third-World (or Third-Worldist, as I will call them to avoid confusion) literatures and cinemas are those associated with that project rather than the cumulative sum of all the possible literatures and cinemas coming from three continents. Although partially institutionalized through organizations such as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Cairo-based Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organization (AAPSO), the Havana-based Organization of Solidarity with the People of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (OSPAAAL), and others, Third-Worldism was an immensely heterogeneous phenomenon. Ideologically, it ranged widely,

from progressive nationalisms and regionalisms, Nehruism, Sukarnoism, Peronism, pan-Arabism, and pan-Africanism to radical Guevarism and Maoism, in each case with their attendant cultures, and in each case opposed to Western domination of their societies. Third-Worldist formations could be genuinely non-aligned and exclude Soviet representatives, as was the case of the NAM or the numerous non-state initiatives, such as the Third-World Filmmakers Committee, or they could include Soviet participation (AAPSO, OSPAAAL, and the literary and cinematic organizations studied in this book). Like these larger Third-Worldist formations and institutions, many of the artists and audiences were attracted to the Soviet Union for four complexly intertwined reasons: commitment to Soviet-centred communism and its culture; interest in the Soviet model of industrial development and its cultural achievements without the adoption of communist ideology or geopolitical alignment; the material and symbolic resources the Soviet state could provide to their particular struggles; and as an ally in the struggle against Western (cultural) domination. While a common front against the West remained a relatively constant factor behind this alliance, over the course of the Soviet Union's seven decades, ideological affinities for it increasingly gave way to a more pragmatic appreciation for its resources. For all the rich motivations driving the cultural traffic between the Second and the Third World, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism* seeks to demonstrate the degree of connectedness between the Soviet bloc and the Third-World project, thus putting the latter's non-alignment in question.

Neither the Soviet state nor the Soviet-aligned cultural formations examined in this book used the term "Third World." The term was expressly proscribed in the mid-1970s by the head of the International Department of CPSU's Central Committee, Boris Ponomarev (a former Comintern cadre, he rejected the possibility of a third position between capitalism and socialism), but in its place, alternative designations proliferated ("young countries," "formerly colonial and capitalist countries," "developing countries," "countries of socialist orientation," "countries of non-capitalist orientation," "countries of revolutionary democracy," and so on), signifying both the ideological uncertainty within Soviet-area studies and foreign policy but also the active debates taking place there.³ Bandung's more neutral Afro-Asian formula (later extended to Latin America) offered a way of papering over these distinctions and was adopted by the Soviet-aligned cultural formations examined in this book, sometimes with the implicit assumption of the militant, anti-colonialist, Third-Worldist orientation

of the three continents, in Vijay Prashad's "project" sense, at other times seeking the most inclusive possible formula, as in the purely geographical meaning of "Third World." Though often contested, this strategic ambiguity allowed the organizers of these cultural formations greater latitude in issuing invitations or articulating positions. The continental designators came with their own problems. In the early life of this three-continent formula, Latin America stood somewhat apart from the other two continents, owing both to its distinct history and to political considerations: the regimes ruling most of it during the Cold War were dependent on the United States and hostile to communism while many of the continent's guerrilla movements had long rejected Moscow as an ideological authority.⁴ The continental designation came with certain incompatibilities: because of the Arab and Chinese vetoes, Israel and Taiwan could not be represented at such gatherings either. By contrast, Japan had to be invited to any "Afro-Asian" event despite its recent imperial history and status as a recognized economic, literary, and cinematic powerhouse, which distinguished it from most other participants. Pushing the Afro-Asian formula even further, African-Americans were sometimes invited, usually in observer status.⁵

The "Second World" is a less debatable term as its source and project nature is clearer. In comparison to "the Third World," it appears a more centralized entity with authority firmly embedded in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.⁶ In this sense, dissident or exilic authors, even though located in these countries or writing in their languages, could not be part of the Second World. Moreover, the limited autonomy in which Second-World official writers, filmmakers, and intellectuals operated between the 1930s and 1980s meant that the engagement with the cultural Third World was spearheaded by the Soviet cultural bureaucracies – a broad category that extended from the Central Committee of the Communist Party (CP) through the leaderships of the writers and filmmakers unions to the individual writers and filmmakers themselves who were employees of those unions. As contemporary scholarship on the Second World and its foreign cultural engagements has shown, however, we reduce it to "the Kremlin" at our peril. Different Soviet institutions – from the Ministry of Foreign Trade interested in foreign currency, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which privileged the extension of foreign power abroad, to the ideologically-minded Central Committee's International Department – each inflected Soviet-Third-World cultural engagements with their own preoccupations, often acting at odds with each other. More importantly, it

was actual Soviet writers and filmmakers who talked and walked with their Third-Worldist peers and real Soviet viewers and readers who consumed the latter's books and films. While meticulously choreographed, these encounters produced friendships, attachments, and sometimes conflicts that no one could have ever scripted. Moreover, any generalization about "Soviet internationalism" runs into the extreme variability of the Soviet(-bloc) state and society: how can 1937 or 1942 be compared to 1979 or 1986?

While their engagement with the non-Western world was cumulatively massive, this book does not do justice to the wider Second-World societies beyond the USSR: Warsaw Pact East European countries and Yugoslavia, Cuba, and China before the Sino-Soviet split. China, of course, is its own separate and big story, belonging at different points to both the Second and the Third World, and in fact contesting Soviet and NAM's claims to lead each. Seen through Soviet eyes, Maoism's revolutionary appeal, which at its peak stretched from Paris to Tanzania, from San Francisco-based Black Panthers to Naxalite rebels in India, made it at times an even more dangerous rival than the West.⁷ Over the course of the 1960s, it split not only the Afro-Asian Writers movement and the first, itinerant, version of the Afro-Asian Film Festival but also dozens of Third-Worldist initiatives and communist parties worldwide into pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese versions.⁸ Similarly flying high its own revolutionary flag and emphasizing anti-imperialist, global racial justice, which had been deprioritized within Soviet discourse and foreign policy, Cuba's Third-Worldist cultural outreach, institutionalized through OSPAAAL, posed a much friendlier and more loyal challenge.⁹ By the end of the long 1960s, however, the Cultural Revolution had brought Chinese foreign policy to a state of solipsism and such initiatives to a halt while Cuba had entered its "grey years" of Sovietization.¹⁰ As a whole, despite the gradual waning of its symbolic appeal, the Soviet model of cultural internationalism remained the most durable and best-resourced.

Yugoslavia, a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement, pursued its own high-profile engagements in Africa and Asia.¹¹ Another early "defector" from the Soviet bloc, Albania, picked up the global Maoist flag, where China had dropped it in the mid-1970s, and under the banner of its own anti-revisionist Marxism, Hoxhism, commanded the loyalties of small communities of Asian and Latin American communists. Warsaw Pact states were another matter. Acting within the broader parameters set by the USSR and yet with a surprising degree of autonomy, they followed its lead in accepting non-Western students, sending experts, and conducting

construction and development projects, both on a commercial basis and as a form of socialist solidarity.¹² For complicated reasons that had to do with West Germany's Hallstein doctrine, East Germany maintained a particularly active (cultural) diplomacy with the non-Western world, for example becoming the main publisher of the African National Congress.¹³ Thus, a number of works of politically engaged African writers such as Alex La Guma had their first publication worldwide in East Berlin, thanks to the English-language Seven Seas Publishers. Czechoslovakia was also active on that front, much more so than Romania or even Poland, opening a whole university in Prague (University of 17 November) dedicated to the education of African and Asian students. As a whole, however, the institutional forms East European countries and China developed in their outreach to the non-Western world predictably followed a Soviet grammar: writers and cinematographers unions entrusted with monitoring contemporary foreign literatures and cinemas, sending their members abroad and receiving foreign ones, individually or at literary conferences, film festivals, or coordinating meetings; literary magazines and presses charged with translating Afro-Asian literatures in the local language and vice versa; and a network of friendship societies facilitating non-commercial distribution of film and literature.

Finally, one last group will be included, if somewhat uneasily, in the Second World: mid-twentieth-century Western leftist cultural producers who served as key mediators between Soviet and non-Western cultures. While only one of them – the Dutch documentarian Joris Ivens – will feature prominently in this book, their role in passing interwar leftist cultural developments, including the Soviet avant-garde of the 1920s, to Third-Worldist cultural producers cannot be understated. Others, such as the French Communist poet Louis Aragon, helped introduce francophone Arab and African writers to Soviet cultural bureaucracies at a time when the latter lacked such direct connections.¹⁴

Thus defined, the available resources, structures, and internal coherence of the two parties in Second-to-Third-World cultural engagements appear highly asymmetrical. At the level of cultural producers, the Soviet side – organized into Unions of Writers and Cinematographers subordinate to the Cultural Section of the Party's Central Committee – encountered Third-World peers of a vast range of politics, styles, and political situations. It would be an error, however, to take the Soviet cultural bureaucracies' ambitions of control and leadership over the latter, codified in their archives, for

an actuality. As we see again and again, the terrain of interactions allowed African, Asian, and Latin American writers and filmmakers to treat Soviet texts and initiatives as resources to be drawn from selectively, interpreted in peculiar ways, and radically repurposed for the needs of their different contexts.

The same is true to an even greater extent of cultural consumers, as *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism*'s occasional peeks into Soviet audiences illustrate. The Third-World optic complicates significantly the two categories in which scholarship has (implicitly) divided Soviet audiences – critical intelligentsia or *inakomyshliashchie* (other-thinking) ones and conformists happy to read whatever the state provided for them, by focusing on the Western-centrism of the former and the latter's interest in melodrama, which Soviet film distributors satisfied with non-Western films. There was also a third type of audience – the people of Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus – who had a much closer engagement with (post)colonial cultures. As for audiences from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, this book will limit itself to the most important ones – the writers and filmmakers themselves, who made statements about Soviet literature and film, highlighting their creative appropriations of Russian and Soviet culture and thus the sheer agency they exercised in their readings. Studying both audiences, and in particular their interest (or lack thereof) in each other's culture, offers an empirical way to examine the power and evolution of the internationalisms that linked them.

Soviet–Third World Cultural Entanglements in the Short Twentieth Century

In reconstructing the history of these engagements, this book will implicitly challenge the two dominant approaches to the history of twentieth-century colonial and postcolonial culture: on the one hand, archive-free heroic narratives focused on texts and manifestoes, which exhibit little interest in the materiality and extent of textual circulation; on the other, usually more historically grounded studies originating from the Soviet archives that treat African, Asian, and Latin American cultural producers as objects of a Soviet Cold War policy. While much more sympathetic to the former narrative and arguing against frameworks that reduce their agencies to the realpolitik of the main geopolitical confrontation of the day, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism* challenges it by demonstrating the

extent to which Third-Worldist cultural producers were imbricated in the Cold War context, and in particular, their search for Soviet recognition, audiences, and platforms. The cultural Cold War, as Monica Popescu has convincingly shown, arguing against its erasure in postcolonial scholarship, was the common field within which postcolonial cultural producers operated.¹⁵ Moreover, that one of the superpowers happened to be the USSR injected into that field a peculiar literature- and culture-centrism. Down to its very bureaucracy, the Soviet state, as an heir to the nineteenth-century Russian intelligentsia, believed in the power of literature and culture to change hearts and minds, heavily invested in this belief, and projected it onto societies, including postcolonial ones, structured very differently from its own. By the logic of the Cold War, Soviet literary investments had to be at least reciprocated and even better – exceeded. It is impossible to imagine otherwise how such agencies as the CIA and the State Department, which had never before the Cold War (or after) shown much interest in foreign literary journals, would expend so many resources on them. The main beneficiary of this competition for “the hearts and minds” were writers, who faced significantly expanded publication possibilities, and audiences throughout the three worlds, who were given greater access to those writers.

While historians have gone much further than their literary and film studies peers in studying Soviet–Third World engagements, it is primarily *political* histories of the Comintern and the Cold War that have sought to keep Africa, Asia, and Latin America simultaneously within their purview.¹⁶ The vast majority of culturally-attuned histories of the USSR and the Global South deal with the interactions of the former with one particular non-Western country, region, or continent, usually over a limited period of time.¹⁷ Building upon them, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism* offers a more composite account of the cultural relationship between the USSR and the Third World, which roughly falls into three discontinuous phases:

The Comintern phase, situated between the Second, anti-colonial, Congress of the Comintern in 1919 and the late 1930s, was a time when the formidable body of pre-1917 Marxist thought on imperialism and the colonial question began to serve as the basis for the new Soviet state’s policies. These went into two very different directions: nation-building in the Caucasus and Central Asia (“the inner East” in Masha Kirasirova’s words), directed by the Commissariat of the Nationalities, and support for anti-colonial struggles in the “outer East” (initially, the Asian and North African territories geographically proximate to the USSR; subsequently,

as the anti-colonial and communist movements expanded, the whole of Asia, Africa, and Latin America) under the Comintern's jurisdiction.¹⁸ "The East," of course, referred to the oppressed. For all the problems and limitations of Soviet anti-colonialism, which only grew under Stalinism, it is worth remembering that the interwar Bolshevik state was the one (major power) state that not only fought racism and imperialism at home but also took this fight internationally, a fact appreciated by anti-colonial and racial justice activists worldwide. By mapping out the cultural connectivities between these two Easts, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism* sets into dialogue the two branches of historiography devoted to Soviet nationalities policies on one hand, and histories of the Soviet engagements with the (semi-)colonial world on the other. The connection between the two Easts, bridged in the early years of Bolshevik rule by a hoped-for but unrealized "revolution in Asia," was gradually disarticulated over the course of the 1930s, as was the larger Soviet investment in anti-colonial struggles, sacrificed to the realpolitik of the Popular Front (a de facto anti-German coalition between the Soviet Union and the major imperial powers of the United Kingdom and France) and the primacy of the European theatre in the run-up to the Second World War.

Moscow's realpolitik, however, did not straightforwardly translate into the imaginaries of leftist cultural producers and their texts. Quite a few progressive intellectuals from the (semi-)colonial world did indeed join their local communist parties, following the Comintern through its occasionally vertiginous zig-zags. Yet the vast majority of such intellectuals took the October Revolution and the Soviet cultural production it inflected and turned them into gigantic canvases onto which to project their own aspirations.¹⁹ The distances separating them from Moscow allowed them greater leeway, politically and aesthetically. Not even in this Comintern period – when Soviet monopoly over world communism was at its height – should we mistake instructions and resolutions that Soviet cultural bureaucracies directed at Third-World cultural producers for actual outcomes.

While the colonial world ceased to be a Soviet geopolitical priority in the twenty-year hiatus between the mid-1930s and mid-1950s, it re-emerged powerfully in the years after Bandung, inaugurating the second phase of the Soviet–Third World engagements, their Cold War peak (mid-1950s to the 1980s). That period saw not only devastating proxy wars in the Global South but also a remarkably favourable environment for the flourishing of Third-World culture.²⁰ *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism* shows

how the struggle for cultural influence between the two superpowers vastly increased the symbolic and material resources available to Third-World cultural producers: royalties, invitations, and audiences. The cultural Cold War also structurally expanded the room for manoeuvre available to them as the superpowers were forced to outbid each other for their attention. Synthesizing these interactions through a focus on the common Soviet(-aligned) networks and institutions specifically designed for non-Western cultures, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism* demonstrates the centrality of Central Asian and Caucasian spaces and mediators in the Soviet courtship of Third-World writers, filmmakers, and audiences.

While the post-Stalin-era Soviet state continued to command the loyalties of millions in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the sheer volume of engagements and resources it devoted to the decolonizing world steadily grew, it had lost much of the appeal it had in the interwar era. The rigidity of the Soviet version of Marxism meant that the USSR often ended up denying agency to newly assertive Third-Worldist forces, insisting on guiding, teaching, and leading them a little too much. The pursuit of a superpower status for the Soviet state (as opposed to promotion of international communism), the attendant “Soviet superiority complex,” and the bureaucratization of its internationalist cadre, which reached deadening proportions under Brezhnev’s stagnation too, could alienate Third-Worldist thinkers and activists.²¹ Lacking the idealism, creativity, and vigorous debates that characterized the early Bolshevik years, late-Soviet Marxism all too often discouraged socialist revolutions in non-Western societies because the conditions were not “ripe,” because the proletariat was not strong or numerous enough, thus denying to others the revision that Lenin had introduced in Marxism for the specific case of Russia (you do not have to wait until the conditions are “ripe”).²² At the same time, the emergence of the Non-Aligned Movement, the various region-based anti-colonial forces, and the iconic revolutions of China and Cuba all meant the loss of the earlier global monopoly the Soviet state held on state support for anti-colonialism and anti-racism. Additionally, as the small number of female names that appear in this book shows, post-Second World War Soviet internationalism was, if not a male-only affair, then at least largely unconcerned with gender equality. It was also a race-blind affair, a fact the prominence of Soviet Central Asian participants was meant to obfuscate. Soviet cultural bureaucracies of the post-Stalin era found the whole discourse of race – a subject most Third-Worldist formations were

highly sensitive to – deeply worrying and perceived it as a potential threat to themselves, as a mostly white people and a former empire. As the book shows, in the eyes of Third-World artists and audiences, the red star of the October Revolution steadily dimmed over the course of the Cold War's last quarter century, only partly compensated by the increasing resources the Soviet state was investing in these engagements.

Their final, post-Soviet phase – the age of amnesia and ruins – saw not only the disappearance of the Soviet state but also the related winding-down of the Third World project and the cultural institutions that once fuelled it. What is left are fragments: memories of Indian melodramas that Soviet viewers flocked to see, Moscow-based research institutes – of Africa and Asia, of Latin America, of Oriental studies – which have clearly seen better days, and a large volume of translations from the literature of these continents, which remain stored and practically unread in Russian libraries. By the same token, in some African, Asian, and Latin American countries, one finds second-hand bookstores and libraries – private and public – with numerous volumes of Russian or Soviet literature published by the Moscow-based Progress Publishers or its local, left-wing partners and generations of readers with vivid memories of them. Numerous filmmakers from these continents were educated in Moscow's All-Soviet Institute of Cinematography between the late 1950s and 1990s. But what is past is not necessarily finished. *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism* demonstrates the continuities between canonically postcolonial literature and film and Soviet and Western leftist narrative models of the 1920s and '30s as well as between today's postcolonial theory itself and the discourses generated within Soviet-aligned Third-World cultural platforms or pre-Second World War earlier Soviet experience. Such a *longue-durée* perspective allows us to question the foreshortened, post-1978 (the year Edward Said's *Orientalism* was published) history that mainstream postcolonial studies has constructed for itself, showing the latter to be only the latest stage of a much longer tradition of critical thought on colonialism, as Marxist postcolonialists of the "Warwick School" have repeatedly argued in the debates with their poststructuralist colleagues.²³

By juxtaposing the Second and the Third World – two geographies typically viewed either on their own terms or through their relationship to the West – *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism* offers a new perspective on both. Seen from a Third-Worldist point of view, Soviet history looks very different from the standard Western-centric or domestic narratives.

In this perspective, the main outcome of the October Revolution was not a working-class victory over the forces of capitalism, as seen by West European leftists, but the resounding call for national emancipation the Bolsheviks issued, the emergence of a model for such emancipation and development, and the only state in the world willing and able to support anti-colonial causes abroad against Western imperialism. To many non-white observers such as W.E.B. Du Bois, visiting the early Soviet Union from racially segregated societies, the interwar-era Soviet state's unique commitment to racial justice and equality trumped Stalinist authoritarianism.²⁴ The rise of the Third-World project deprived the Cold War-era Soviet state of this monopoly.

A Third-Worldist perspective also revises the current historiography of the USSR, shifting not only the set of crucial sites (no longer Weimer Germany but Guomindang China, no longer Czechoslovakia but Vietnam) but also the very events foundational to that historiography. Thus, for example, African(-American) activists found the sectarian Third Period that the world communist movement entered in the late 1920s and early '30s more congenial to their demands than the broad anti-fascist Popular Front phase declared by the Comintern in 1934, which enlivened communist parties in Western Europe and North America.²⁵ To communists in the Middle East, the 1947 Soviet vote at the United Nations in favour of partitioning Palestine, which discredited them in the eyes of Arab nationalists for decades to come, was more consequential than the contemporary repressions or anti-cosmopolitan campaigns inside the USSR, about which they knew very little. While the revelations of Khrushchev's Secret Speech in 1956 shook the faith of millions of Western communists, that same year their Arab comrades basked in the Soviet support for Nasser's Egypt, which faced a combined Anglo-French-Israeli assault over Suez. Soviet economic aid abroad trumped the persecution of its dissidents at home. Viewed from this perspective, Khrushchev's and Brezhnev's "peaceful co-existence" no longer seems a successful, or at least reasonable, strategy to avert a third world war, but rather a betrayal of anti-imperialist struggles, which the USSR was increasingly willing to sacrifice in the name of the *détente*. The consequent Soviet objection to guerrilla movements and other instances of what they termed "adventurism" was the main factor distancing many Third-Worldist radicals from Soviet politics and culture. Such a line of thought could also explain Fidel Castro's and Che Guevara's anger and disappointment when Khrushchev announced the removal of

nuclear weapons from Cuba: rather than preventing a nuclear catastrophe, this action made them feel that they had been used as a pawn in the Global Cold War. Rather than democratizing Soviet society, perestroika and its culmination, the dissolution of the USSR, too, meant a betrayal, as they involved reneging on Soviet assurances and support to many countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

A similar reinterpretation of Soviet literature, film, and culture from a Third-World point of view radically revises the all-too-familiar narrative of an immensely fertile avant-garde of the 1920s, followed by a stifling socialist realism and cultural isolation during the Stalin era, followed by a Thaw-era relaxation and opening to the West, struggles between neo-Stalinists and reformers, emergence of samizdat and tamizdat, and Western-Europe or US-based émigré culture, etc.²⁶ At the most basic level, the chronology of Soviet engagement with African, Asian, and Latin American culture differed from that of Soviet rapprochement with Western literary or cinematic leftists. Moreover, few readers and viewers in Africa, Asia, and Latin America were able to see Soviet culture in this sequential development, with these meanings; far more common was a decontextualized arrival of Russian and Soviet texts and films, which were then filled with completely different meanings by their audiences. Through this Third-World lens, even nineteenth-century Russian literature, interpreted through the teleology of the Bolshevik Revolution, was often read as revolutionary literature. Soviet novels or films, too, were creatively misinterpreted to fit emancipatory struggles in African, Asian, and Latin American societies.

As recent scholarship is discovering, the Soviet perspective can similarly enrich our account of African, Asian, and Latin American histories, which, too, have been viewed either on their own terms or through the prism of Western (neo-)colonialism or at least, economic and cultural domination. The scholarly reduction of the three continents' global connectivities to their tense relationship with the hegemonic West obscures the richness of global imaginaries, the powerful East–East connections, and the textual and material flows during the short twentieth century. Omitting the Second World from our studies, we might struggle to understand why so many African states called themselves “socialist,” why a large number of East Europeans spent time in Mongolia, China, Vietnam, and Cuba, why throughout Africa and the Middle East we find so many Soviet, Polish, or GDR-built projects, not to mention the vast number of Soviet-bloc university graduates in the non-Western world.²⁷

Contact Zones and Intermediaries

While many of the cultural encounters between the Second and the Third World happened during the act of reading, viewing, and imagining, others took place at very real and material contact zones. This concept, developed by Mary Louise Pratt to refer to the social spaces where cultures “meet, and clash, and grapple” in the highly hierarchical context of Spanish colonization of the Americas, has been applied to many other contexts, historically or in the present.²⁸ Its application to the relations between the Soviet cultural bureaucracies and African, Asian, and Latin American cultural producers demands its partial reworking: while highly asymmetric, restricted within the parameters of Soviet foreign policy, and heavily choreographed, these engagements lacked the obvious violence that marked the object of Pratt’s original formulation.

The urban spaces and human geographies of Central Asia, and to a lesser extent the Caucasus, provided the main settings for these encounters. Having historically served as crossroads of different Asian peoples, they also exemplified the Soviet state’s efforts at modernizing its peripheries. As Soviet Central Asia’s biggest population centre, Tashkent was the main hub of these activities from very early on. Hosting the Central Asian Bureau of the Comintern as early as September 1920, the city became the founding site of the Indian Communist Party a few months later and the location for an Indian military school (an unsuccessful project spearheaded by the Indian Communist M.N. Roy to train a national liberation army). As hopes of anti-imperialist uprisings in Asia dimmed over the course of the early 1920s, the showcasing of economic, social, and cultural achievements of interwar-era Soviet Central Asia became primarily addressed at domestic audiences.²⁹

It was only during the post-Stalin era, when the USSR began to actively court newly decolonized states, that it launched a massive campaign to communicate its achievements in developing Central Asia worldwide. While Tashkent became the main Soviet showcase city for the Third World, Alma-Ata, Samarkand and Bukhara, Tbilisi and Baku, would also serve as common destinations for countless delegations from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Historians of the Soviet periphery have shown the degree to which the Soviet state used this earlier experience of Sovietizing Central Asia in its outreach to Afro-Asian audiences.³⁰ Visiting Afro-Asian writers and filmmakers often made note of these spaces, of their combination of

ancient Central Asian culture and Soviet modernity, of the harmonious ethnic diversity of these cities, of the proverbially welcoming and boisterous Uzbek audiences, who flocked to see them. In sum, their perspective allows us to see Soviet Central Asia as a cosmopolitan contact zone vis-à-vis the non-Western world rather than the culturally backward (if exotic) Soviet province that the Western-centric Moscow intelligentsia saw.

Central Asia and the Caucasus were not only the main setting of these encounters but also the source of Soviet cultural intermediaries to the Afro-Asian world. The names of Sharaf Rashidov, Mirzo Tursun-Zade, Chinghiz Aitmatov, Anuar Alimzhanov, Rasul Gamzatov, Zul'fia, Kamil Yarmatov, Malik Kaiumov, and Tolomush Okeev loom large in the lists of Soviet delegations at Afro-Asian Writers' Congresses and film festivals. They were no mere puppets. They were of course acting in line with Soviet cultural policies, and their non-white bodies were meant to represent an ethnically and racially diverse Soviet Union and dispel the lingering suspicion of many African, Asian, and Latin American cultural producers that the USSR was just another white empire. What is more important, however, is that such engagements with the Third World provided Soviet Central Asian political and cultural leaders with an internationalism of their own, focused on non-Western cultures and societies. This position as key Soviet mediators allowed them to make claims on the Moscow centre. Cultural producers were the main beneficiaries of these global relations but ordinary people, too, were heavily involved as viewers, readers, and hosts of non-Western films, texts, and visitors.

There was another type of intermediary sustaining Soviet–Third World cultural engagements. Especially in the case of post–Second World War literature, these were leftist, usually communist, figures from Asia and Latin America (there were fewer Africans on the list), who had either spent time in the USSR or entered the Soviet orbit before the war: Jorge Amado in Brazil, Pablo Neruda in Chile, Nicolás Guillén in Cuba, Nâzım Hikmet in Turkey, Mulk Raj Anand in India, Faiz Ahmad Faiz in Pakistan, Mao Dun, Guo Moruo, and Emi Siao in China, and Paul Robeson in the US. Their acknowledgement as major literary figures sympathetic to the USSR during the late-Stalin period, when Soviet foreign cultural outreach was at its most constrained, meant not only that in the eyes of the Soviet public they almost single-handedly represented their respective contemporary national literatures and culture but also that they mediated those cultures with Soviet cultural bureaucracies, promoted writers (both

Soviet ones and their compatriots), forged reputations, and composed invitee lists.³¹ The gradual expansion of Soviet engagements with the Third World in the post-Stalin period significantly diluted their monopoly on representation without entirely changing the logic. Some of them, such as Amado, left the Communist Party following the shocking revelations of Khrushchev's Secret Speech of 1956; others, such as Hikmet, remained faithful to the Soviet cause even if critical of its degradation; and still others, such as the Chinese writers, lost their role after the Sino-Soviet split of the 1960s.³² New intermediaries, such as Sembène Ousmane or Alex la Guma, came to fill their shoes in the post-Stalin era although they never achieved the monopoly of representation enjoyed by their predecessors or the close connections with the Soviet cultural apparatus.

There was a third type of intermediary, especially relevant in the field of film: leftist Western European cultural producers who remained faithful to the ideals of early Soviet revolutionary art and avant-garde and developed them further at a time when that option was unavailable to official Soviet writers and filmmakers. These intermediaries account for the presence of "a Soviet trace" in non-Western cultural geographies where Soviet literary texts, films, and theories could not have possibly reached.³³ *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism*, for example, interprets the Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens's significance for Third Cinema of the 1960s and '70s in a similar key.

The Soviet Place in Postcolonial Studies, World Literature, and World Cinema

In addition to the cultural history of Soviet–Third-World engagements, this book makes specific interventions into postcolonial studies, world literature, and world cinema, which over the last three decades have emerged as the major frameworks for reconceptualizing transnational geographies, textual dissemination, and reception in literary and film studies. A scholar interested in Russian and Soviet culture's connectivity with the rest of the world is quickly forced to discover that the spatial frameworks developed by postcolonial theorists, exclusively concerned with the relationship between "the West" and "the East," leave little space for her. To be sure, some of the more exciting scholarship in Russian, East European, and Eurasian studies in the last two decades has been a result of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian scholars adapting that theory to their specific regions and

periods, though often with different methods and results.³⁴ Inspired by David Chioni Moore's call, Slavic scholars have also started illuminating the post-Soviet condition by deploying a postcolonial optic.³⁵

However, the reverse side of the (post)colonial-(post)socialist relationship – a systematic attempt to understand the implications of the October Revolution, of Russian and Soviet culture, for postcolonial thought and culture – has been decidedly missing. Among the very few postcolonial theorists who have shown interest in that relationship are Robert Young and Timothy Brennan. Young devotes several chapters of his *Postcolonialism: A Historical Introduction* (2001) to reconstructing the pre-1917 Marxist lineage of postcolonial thought, which the Soviet state then took up.³⁶ His account also covers Lenin's, Bukharin's, and Stalin's interventions into the colonial question in the 1910s as well as various practical initiatives undertaken by the Bolsheviks, such as the 1920 Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East and the 1927 Brussels Congress of the (Comintern-initiated) League against Imperialism. In a rather more polemical spirit, Timothy Brennan challenges certain poststructuralist claims about Marxism's Eurocentrism by demonstrating how thinkers from the (former) colonial world creatively absorbed and reinterpreted this political philosophy and its practitioners. By labelling the Bolshevik Revolution "an anti-colonial revolution par excellence," Brennan issues a call to postcolonial scholarship to re-evaluate the Russian Revolution's legacy for the non-Western world.³⁷ Such a re-evaluation is beginning to take place among historians of the Comintern and the global left in general, but it has yet to find resonance among mainstream postcolonial scholars.

My two-fold argument for the relationship between the USSR and postcolonial studies both draws on these observations and departs from them. In the first place, while Young and Brennan show the reception of Marxist thought and powerful impact of the Bolshevik revolution on inter-war colonial thinkers, their studies are less concerned with literature and cultural production per se, and end before the mid-twentieth century, when Soviet cultural engagement with the Third World intensified. Secondly, postcolonialism appears on the scene precisely at the moment when (Soviet-aligned) Third-Worldist cultural formations such as the Afro-Asian Writers Association and the Tashkent Film Festival entered into decline. Spearheaded by a different cultural formation of diasporic scholars based in Anglo-American universities, postcolonial studies performed some of the same intellectual labour as the Festival and the Association had done

earlier – decried colonialism and celebrated non-Western cultures – introducing, of course, French poststructuralist theory and otherwise making it acceptable in the academy. Mirroring some of the earlier anti-colonial thinkers' conflict with Soviet Marxism, postcolonial theorists have insisted on a culture-specific approach that places the question of race and difference at the heart of their enterprise in a way that sits uneasily with Marxist universalism and materialism, and especially its Soviet version, the rigidity of which did much to alienate earlier anti-colonial thinkers. For all their immense differences, the shared histories between Soviet-aligned networks and postcolonial studies become evident when we follow the transition of figures such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Sembène Ousmane from these earlier, Soviet-aligned networks to postcolonial syllabi.

One would have thought that this blind spot in postcolonial studies would be resolved in the wealth of scholarship currently being produced under the headings “world literature” and “world cinema,” which is well on its way to supplanting postcolonial studies as the main approaches to transnationalism in literature and film. While still in flux, the contours of this paradigm shift have already become clear: in addition to a reconciliation with a Western-centric perspective and abandonment of postcolonialism's political commitments, the world literature paradigm has sidelined French poststructuralism central to postcolonial theory and greater openness to new geographical scenarios. (Postcolonialism has historically been most comfortable with studies of Middle Eastern, Indian, and African cultures and a critique of their Western perspectives.) Of particular relevance to *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism* are the more critical and materialist models for world literary circulation that Franco Moretti and Pascale Casanova developed by adapting Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory to literary scholarship. However, just as world-systems theory had struggled to find a place for the Second World, so has Moretti's and Casanova's impressive but woefully Eurocentric work. It is telling that out of the fifty chapters comprising the authoritative *Routledge Companion to World Literature* (2012), many of them devoted to the geographical dimensions of world literature, Russia and the Soviet Union are decidedly absent, despite the former's paradigmatic example of moving from the literary periphery to the literary core or the latter's ambitious projects for world literature.³⁸ The issue at stake here is not so much another blank spot on the geographical and historical map of world literature – there are plenty of these and it is uncharitable to hold any book or its author(s) responsible

for failing to provide comprehensive coverage of the whole world – but the alternative logics of textual circulation that become sidelined in the process. For example, had Moretti and Casanova considered the reception of the proletarian novel in the early twentieth century (or even of Tolstoy's and Dostoevsky's works), they would have been forced to acknowledge, respectively, that modern literary models can travel in multiple directions, not only West to East, and that competition among national literatures and individual writers is hardly the sole force that keeps the World Republic of Letters running. In this sense, this book contributes to Galin Tihanov's project of excavating twentieth-century Russian and Eastern European conceptualizations of the world literary spaces as alternatives to the liberal, Anglo-American version of world literature in fashion today.³⁹

Arguably, the most significant phenomenon to emerge out of this territory was the Soviet project for world literature, perhaps the most concerted and best-resourced effort in history to transform the workings of literary production, circulation, and consumption worldwide. The first generation of works to examine its impact on the world literary system is in the process of reaching its readers. Mirroring the divide between scholarship on Comintern and on Soviet nationalities policy, these studies have gone in two distinct directions. On the one hand, Katerina Clark, the members of the Moscow-based Interlit group, and other scholars have set about reconstructing the legacy of Maxim Gorky's World Literature project, the *International Literature* magazine, and the contours of the interwar Writers International as a whole.⁴⁰ On the other hand, numerous Soviet literary historians, such as Harsha Ram, Evgeny Dobrenko, and Susanne Frank, have focused on the formation of a multilingual Soviet literature, especially as it concerned the literatures of the Caucasus and Central Asia, seeing in it a world-literature project.⁴¹ With few exceptions, both have yet to cross the post-Second World War divide. Relying on Soviet institutional archives as well as multiple canonical postcolonial texts, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism* brings the story up to the end of the Soviet Union. It also evaluates the aesthetics of the texts circulating through the Soviet Republic of Letters. Though "realism" ultimately remained the common screen onto which different writers projected their individual styles, the Soviet Republic of Letters was aesthetically a much broader church than Soviet literature, offering space to various species of modernism, Third-Worldism, folkloric epics, national sentimentalism, and so on.

World cinema is an even newer theoretical body, inspired in part by the booming scholarship in world literature, in part by the need to theorize commercial branding practices, and in part by the historical precedent of Third Cinema, the broad, manifesto-rich movement for political cinema in the 1960s and '70s that sought to challenge the cinematic and aesthetic dominance of Hollywood or Europe.⁴² Because Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov, Mikhail Kalatozov, Andrei Tarkovsky, Alexander Sokurov, and other Soviet auteurs have firmly entered the Western cinematic canon, the place of Soviet film in non-Western, world cinema frameworks, and more particularly, its relationship with Third-Worldist cinematic formations, remains largely unexplored. Masha Salazkina's pioneering scholarship has been the main source of conceptualizing Soviet cinematic connectivities to the non-Western world.⁴³ Together with other recent work on Soviet cinematic internationalism, it has delineated various possibilities for direct (or Western-mediated) engagements, based on the movement of film canisters, theories, or filmmakers.⁴⁴ Following this small but growing body of work and drawing on the archives of the Soviet Union of Cinematographers, Goskino, Sovexportfilm, and the Moscow-based All-Soviet Institute for Cinematography (VGIK), where a number of non-Western filmmakers were trained, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism* reconstructs the main contact zone between Soviet and non-Western film, the Tashkent Film Festival (1968–88), as well as the long journey of the solidarity documentary film from early Soviet cinema to Latin American Third Cinema.

Over the last several years, the traces of magma left by Soviet cultural internationalism have generated a growing interest among literary and film scholars specializing in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.⁴⁵ *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism* offers itself as a platform for this conversation between scholars of the Second and the Third World, across the dividing lines of area studies.

Though these Soviet-aligned projects for Third-World literature and cinema left a lasting impact on many national cultures, they neither vanquished nor escaped from Western hegemony. These projects – probably the most significant concerted attempt at intervention into world literature and world cinema in history – are best thought of as a challenge to the kind of world systems that Pascale Casanova and, following her, Dudley Andrew construct for their fields. Given the Wallersteinian origins of these conceptualizations, the forces moving literature and cinema in these accounts

mirror the logic of global capital accumulation and circulation. In translating them into the language of literary and cinema studies, we arrive at market competition (between literary and cinematic nations or individual writers and filmmakers), diffusion of narrative and genre models from the West to the East, and provincial cultural producers' desire to come closer to the Greenwich Meridian of Literature/Cinema and its ultimate aesthetic prize (modernism). Not unlike the Soviet-bloc economy, which sought to leave – or, in practice, acquire a measure of independence from – the capitalist world-system, the Soviet projects for (Third-)World literature and cinema sought to reduce non-Western cultures' dependence on the West (the literary Paris and London or the cinematic Hollywood and Cannes) for cultural imports or the very production of value by both inserting the Soviet bloc as an alternative source of such imports and fostering direct South-to-South exchanges. These projects thus aimed to replace some key operational principles of Casanova's world literature and Andrew's world cinema with their own vision of cultural circulation: Western domination with a much less hierarchical world, global markets with international institutions, competition with bureaucratic administering, and West-to-East circulation of literary and cinematic models with East-to-East (with the USSR itself as the main, but not only, source).

Imagining International Solidarity in Literature and Film

The consumption of the same literary and cinematic texts circulating within these Soviet-aligned projects was not the only source of commonality among leftist publics internationally. It very much matters what these texts were. It is by now a cliché in literary studies to say that the acts of writing and reading fiction are akin to world-making.⁴⁶ *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism* takes this cliché with a certain geographical literalness. Today literature and film can hardly compete with the news cycle in creating mental maps of the world, but we must not forget that round-the-clock, multimedia coverage in the short twentieth century, especially in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, did not yet exist. Indeed, one of David Damrosch's central claims about world literature is that – in addition to literary masterpieces – it comprises texts that offer readers windows on cultures and societies located in very different times and geographies.⁴⁷ Dudley Andrew has articulated a similar argument for world cinema.⁴⁸ The world-making we are interested in was of a more politically engaged kind than Damrosch's

and Andrew's. After all, worlding was one of the Bolsheviks' operative terms: world proletariat, world revolution, world literature. Over the course of time, the power of the Bolshevik revolutionary worlding would erode, compromised by its instrumentalization in Stalinist foreign policy, by the new forces of official Soviet patriotism, and by postwar Russian nationalism. Of course, it could not simply disappear. It remained in the Trotskyist movement, which clung to international revolution as its banner, and later in transnational revolutionary movements such as Maoism, Guevarism, and even in revolutionary nationalisms of the decolonizing era, which sought to make common cause against imperialism. It remained in the USSR as well, in the form of the official and increasingly unconvincing rhetoric of Soviet internationalism. Cultural production made these worlds emotionally powerful and broad in a way that would have been impossible for political programs. But how exactly did they figure in literary and cinematic texts?

Benedict Anderson has offered probably the most convincing method of working through that question. In addition to examining the circulation of common texts and the state institutions (from school curricula to maps and censuses) that helped create national subjects, he famously analyzes the plot devices and tropes via which those national subjects were inscribed into novels, thus forcing readers to identify with the nation and experience solidarities with the millions of their countrymen they had never seen and would never see.⁴⁹ The tropes and narratives of transnational solidarity are different, often premised on distance and difference than on contiguity and similarity. International solidarity filmmakers, for example, had to show that action taken in the United States by honourable Americans could help Chinese people in their struggle against the Japanese invasion of the late 1930s. Solidarity tropes were needed for freedom fighters who had lost faith in ever winning to believe that victory and the creation of another, better world was possible, as the Chinese or Russian example showed. Films and novels also taught Third-Worldist audiences that their local struggles were a link in a gigantic chain, stretching not only across different continents but through time as well, part of the same emancipatory movement that brought out the Russian working class in 1917 and led the worldwide struggle against fascism. Solidarity could be of a negative kind, as enmity toward the often-abstract forces of capitalism and imperialism. Third-Worldist writers had to establish relationships between decisions taken in Chicago corporate boardrooms and life (and death) in Central

American banana plantations as does Miguel Asturias in his banana trilogy. *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism* examines the inscription of these transnational solidarities through tropes and narratives in a number of signature texts of postcolonial literature and Third Cinema.

While it is usually premised on overcoming a spatial separation, solidarity sometimes has a strong and often-ignored temporal dimension. For example, the attraction that Russo-Soviet culture held for non-Western audiences exhibited a major temporal lag. That is to say, all too often, the latter were interested not so much in contemporary Soviet culture as they were in that of earlier eras. Thus, despite the Soviet state's efforts to popularize post-1930 socialist-realist literature, the texts most admired by African, Asian, and Latin American writers were from nineteenth-century Russian realism as well as the works of Vladimir Mayakovsky and Maxim Gorky, which to this day constitute an obligatory element of any self-respecting leftist library in many a non-Western country. Similarly, for all the efforts to propagandize contemporary Soviet film, it was Eisenstein and Dovzhenko, Pudovkin, and Dziga Vertov whose early films and theories accounted for the lasting attraction of Third-World filmmakers to Soviet culture. This is not to say that Cold War-era Soviet culture was uninteresting to non-Western audiences: Yevgeny Yevtushenko's poetry and Chinghiz Aitmatov's prose received an enthusiastic reception in certain non-Western cultures as, occasionally, did post-Second World War Soviet films such as Grigory Kozintsev's Thaw-era *Hamlet* (1964). With the progression of the twentieth century, however, the most iconic, politically powerful cinematic images such as those of Sergei Eisenstein's films were growing older and older, giving them a somewhat nostalgic quality. The sense that inspirational nineteenth-century Russian and early Soviet literatures belonged to the past was becoming ever more palpable over the course of late socialism. The erosion of Soviet culture's affective power in the Cold War period, however, was inversely proportional to the growth of Soviet material investment in its connections with non-Western cultures.

My choice to devote comparable parts of the book to literature (Chapters 1 to 3) and film (Chapters 4 and 5) reflects the Soviet cultural bureaucracies' singling out of these two media (initially literature, subsequently film) as the main forms of cultural outreach to the societies of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This juxtaposition allows us to study important differences and historical dynamics in the workings of world literary and world cinematic systems, which are typically studied on their own rather

than comparatively. Those differences also reflect each medium's specific capacity to "cross" physical and cultural borders and "carry" politics.

On balance, such a juxtaposition reveals that literature was arguably a more familiar and comfortable terrain for Soviet cultural bureaucracies than cinema. While the value of Soviet literature was always contested by foreign critics, the combination of its predecessor – nineteenth-century Russian literature – and the resources of a superpower continued to lend the Soviet Republic of Letters indisputable cultural authority. By the Second World War, Soviet cultural bureaucracies had conceptualized alternatives to the contemporary world literary system and had even begun implementing them through international writers' congresses, visits, multilingual journals such as *International Literature*, publishing houses such as Progress, and an elaborate industry for translating foreign texts into Russian (and even into other foreign languages). This experience guided post-Stalin-era Soviet engagement with African, Asian, and Latin American cultural producers and publics.

The capital-intensive nature of film production, distribution, and exhibition and the more modest achievements and means of Soviet cinema (as opposed to Russian and Soviet literature) account for the belated and ultimately more limited character of the project for a Soviet-aligned Third-World cinema. In fact, I have purposefully avoided evoking a "Soviet Republic of Film" for the simple reason that one never quite emerged. Outside of a brief moment in the Soviet 1920s, which filmmakers worldwide have looked upon as the birth of political cinema, the Soviet state could not claim the same global cinematic pre-eminence, and in fact, distributionally and aesthetically, shared the subordinate status of African, Asian, and Latin American countries vis-à-vis Hollywood and even the Western European cinema industry. Moreover, judging by the archives they left us, Soviet cultural bureaucracies viewed cinema – unlike literature – as a profit-making industry in which Soviet films, in addition to conveying a political message to African, Asian, and Latin American audiences, were charged with earning precious foreign currency. Non-Western films – in addition to being ideologically acceptable – had to fill Soviet cinemas and thus generate revenue at the domestic box office. As a result, melodrama films that thematically had little to do with emancipatory politics reached Soviet screens and enjoyed a far greater popularity with Soviet viewers than their political counterparts, which Soviet cultural bureaucracies rhetorically championed. By contrast, most of the major Third-Worldist films and the

radical (Marxist) philosophy behind them, such as Frantz Fanon's writings, were largely denied to Soviet audiences.⁵⁰

With all these considerations in mind, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism* proceeds through this story in chronological order. Chapter 1, "Entering the Soviet Literary Orbit, Early 1920s–Mid-1950s," offers an account of how Asian and Latin American writers entered into contact with Soviet literature in the first place. The affinities from afar, based on such writers' reading of Russo-Soviet translations and feeling a kinship with Russian writers, were harnessed by the Soviet cultural bureaucracies of the 1920 and 30s into actual engagements. The chapter examines how Comintern-affiliated institutions such as the Communist University for Toilers of the East (KUTV), the International Union of Revolutionary Writers (MORP), and its successors brought into the Soviet orbit such major writers as Nâzım Hikmet, Emi Siao, Mulk Raj Anand, and Pablo Neruda. And while the revolutionary phase of Soviet culture lasted just over a decade, soon to be replaced by a statist socialist realism, in the eyes of foreign audiences that decade lasted much longer. Radical writers and intellectuals from these societies were hardly in the business of faithfully reproducing Soviet culture; whether through creative misunderstanding or through a willful selectiveness and repurposing, they took from it what they needed for their domestic struggles.

Interrupted by the Great Terror, the devastations of the Second World War, and the earliest and sharpest phase of the Cold War with its attendant McCarthyisms and late Stalinism, Soviet literary outreach would resume only in the mid-1950s, as decolonization in Africa and Asia was gaining momentum. Chapter 2, "The Afro-Asian Writers Association (1958–1991) and Its Literary Field," follows the development of the earlier interwar-era encounters into the much more extensive and systematic Second-to-Third-World literary networks of the post-Stalin era. It offers the first historical reconstruction of the epicentre of these engagements, the Afro-Asian Writers Association, its numerous international writers congresses, the multilingual magazine *Lotus*, and literary prizes and translation initiatives, which aimed to establish direct South-to-South literary relations that would bypass the (neo-)colonial metropolises of Paris, London, or New York. Many of the writers associated with it – Sembène Ousmane, Mulk Raj Anand, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Mahmoud Darwish, Pramoedya Toer, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Alex La Guma – are now seen as canonical postcolonial figures and their participation in such earlier, Soviet-aligned networks has been forgotten.

Founded in 1958 in Tashkent, the Association aimed to be the literary equivalent of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Third World's main political project, except that it was very much aligned: thanks to the Central Asian writers, Soviet cultural bureaucracies were able to claim a place at the Afro-Asian table. Their efforts, however, were not supported by Soviet readers, especially the elite Western-centric intelligentsia, who showed little interest in the vast range of Russian translations of Afro-Asian literatures those bureaucracies made available to them.

If Chapter 2 concerns the geopolitics of culture and the attempt to establish (with Soviet participation) counter-hegemonic fields for the Global South, Chapter 3, "The Links That Bind Us: Solidarity Narratives in Third-Worldist Fiction," examines the aesthetic consequences of those engagements in the realm of literature. Here, the focus is on three literary devices which the novelists of the Afro-Asian Writers Association and their Latin American peers used to textually situate their nations within a wider world. The most common device novelists resorted to in synthesizing these contradictions is the foreign-utopia topos, the novelistic evocation of foreign revolutions as an inspiration for emancipatory struggles at home. Chain narratives linking fields, mines, and factories in mid-twentieth-century Latin American novels to corporate boardrooms in Chicago or New York offer an omniscient reconstruction of a system of exploitation few readers could witness in its entirety. More limited to the realm of the nation, railway narratives in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand or Sembène Ousmane connect distant villages to provincial centres to capitals, constructing the imagined community of the new postcolonial nation and turning a technology for colonial control (the railway) into a site for emancipatory struggle. All three literary devices serve to align the emancipatory national struggles with the broader internationalism that held the political Third-World project together.

The gradual realization that film could reach even greater audiences in the non-Western world led Soviet cultural bureaucracies to invest in a similar effort in the realm of cinema. That is the subject of Chapter 4, "The Tashkent Film Festival (1968–1988) as a Contact Zone." Soviet cinema's interwar networks to the non-Western world had been much thinner and more one-sided than Soviet literature's, largely limited to the small number of Soviet films screened in a few big cities or the even smaller number of Soviet filmmakers, who shot their *kulturfilm* abroad. Inaugurated in 1968, the Tashkent Festival was meant to centralize and offer a single platform to

the various institutional channels that had come to connect Soviet cultural bureaucracies and the emerging cinemas of Africa, Asia, and Latin America: Sovexportfilm's (SEF) growing network branches in the three continents, students educated at the All-Soviet Institute of Cinematography (VGIK), as well as individual filmmakers from the three continents, who professed political sympathies and cinematic debts to the USSR. The lasting legacy of the festival was that it made it possible for non-Western filmmakers to get to know each other, see each other's films, articulate a common set of grievances against the Western-dominated system of world cinema and agree on positive steps to confront it. As far as Soviet cultural bureaucracies were concerned, it also functioned as the main Soviet lens on the cinemas of the three continents, the main market where the Soviet film industry could buy films from there and sell its own, and as an opportunity to showcase its contributions to the cinemas of the three continents such as the VGIK students and graduates. Once again, the Soviet state was represented by films and filmmakers, studios and cultural bureaucrats, urban landscapes and audiences from Central Asia. However, unlike the striking success of Mexican, Egyptian, and especially Indian melodramas, political film from the three continents was either simply not purchased by Sovexportfilm or enjoyed little attention by Soviet viewers, again exposing the limits of Soviet internationalism.

Whereas Chapter 4 tells the story of the Soviet-aligned efforts to create a cinematic field for Africa, Asia, and Latin America independent of the West's, Chapter 5, "‘Brothers!’: Solidarity Documentary Film," seeks to establish a certain "Soviet trace" in Latin American Third Cinema of the 1960s and '70s. Following the intertwined trajectories of the Soviet Roman Karmen, the Dutch communist Joris Ivens, who developed the genre of solidarity documentary film in the battlefields of the Spanish Civil War and the Sino-Japanese War of the late 1930s, and then over the independence struggles of Indonesia, Vietnam, Cuba, and Chile, where they were joined by a younger Chris Marker, this chapter establishes a common narrative linking the Soviet and European leftist cinematic avant-garde of the 1920s and the later Third Cinema. It was in Latin America that Soviet and Western solidarity film entered into dialogue with and became a source of the cinematic practices of Santiago Álvarez, Octavio Getino, Fernando Solanas, Patricio Guzmán, and other leading representatives of the documentary Third Cinema tradition.

From Internationalism to Postcolonialism offers two conclusions. The first – more interview-based and historical – examines the place of non-Western literature and cinema in today's Russia. Contra the dominant discourses of world literature and world cinema, which focus on the emergences of novel cultural formations, the successes of transnational circulation, and the creativity of reception, it shows that, seen from the point of view of contemporary post-Soviet audiences, world literature and world cinema, which do not exist in the abstract, but are always located within a certain geographically based perspective, have dramatically shrunk over the last quarter of a century. The second conclusion – an exercise in intellectual history – addresses the largely unacknowledged ways Soviet thought and experience contributed to contemporary Anglo-American postcolonial theory. Indeed, this book ends by reversing the commonplace assertion that the post-Soviet space is postcolonial by showing the extent to which postcolonial studies is itself a post-Soviet phenomenon.

This has been a difficult book to write because of the incredible diversity of literatures, cinemas, and national traditions that fall within its purview. A single author – this one included – cannot be familiar with all of the African, Latin American, Middle Eastern, South or East Asian cultural producers who participated in these Soviet-aligned networks. The latter's institutionally structured character, on the Soviet side at least, offers a focus and coherence to this project but also makes it a somewhat one-sided one. Because the main sources of evidence have come from the Soviet archives, the cultural field reconstructed in this book risks appearing as Soviet cultural bureaucracies saw it, with all their limitations, such as growing race-blindness, lack of concern for women's representation, and a stageist understanding of historical development. These alienated a growing number of Third-Worldist cultural producers and audiences, as did those bureaucracies' efforts to control their interlocutors. As much as possible, I have sought to temper their perspective limitations using non-Soviet sources, books and films, interviews, and (auto)biographies by Third-Worldist writers and filmmakers, but it is important to acknowledge them before we begin.

Notes

Introduction

- 1 See the Slovak comparatist Dionýz Ďurišin's basic classification of relationships into typological affinities and genetic contacts. *Theory of Literary Comparatistics*, 108.
- 2 Sauvy, "Trois Mondes, Une Planète," 14.
- 3 Gordon, interview. For some of those debates, see Casula, "Two Soviet Responses to Franz Fanon."
- 4 Let us not forget that the conference held in Bandung in April 1955 was still called Afro-Asian and one of the first organizations to emerge from it was the Cairo-based Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization. It was only with the Cuban Revolution in 1959 that the Non-Aligned Movement gained a foothold in the Americas.
- 5 There is a growing body of literature about the inclusion of African-American writers in the Soviet Republic of Letters. Moore, "Local Color, 'Global Color'"; Moore, "Colored Dispatches from the Uzbek Border"; Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line*; Steven Lee, *The Ethnic Avant-Garde*; Clark, "The Representation of the African American as Colonial Oppressed"; Mukherji, "Like Another Planet to the Darker Americans."
- 6 Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland*; Babiracki and Jersild, *Socialist Internationalism in the Cold War*; Applebaum, *Empire of Friends*.
- 7 For the appeal of Maoism in the US, see Kelley and Esche, "Black Like Mao." Specifically literary Maoism and its role in the Afro-Asian Writers movement is the subject of Yoon, "Cold War Africa and China."

- 8 For a detailed study of the process, see Friedman, *Shadow Cold War*.
- 9 Mahler, *From the Tricontinental to the Global South*.
- 10 For an account of how the Cultural Revolution cannibalized Chinese citizens located at the interface with other cultures and how its gradual reversal over the course of the 1970s diminished Maoism's foreign appeal (in a sense, repeating the Soviet scenario of the late 1930s), see McGuire, *Red at Heart*, 342–65. For a timeline of Cuba's years of Sovietization, see Loss, *Caviar with Rum*, 18–21.
- 11 Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito's Yugoslavia*.
- 12 There is a growing scholarship on the cultural dimensions of the engagement between different East European countries and Third-World spaces. See Lovejoy, "The World Union of Documentary"; Zubeł, "Toward a Second World Third World Cinema"; Stejskalova, ed., *Filmmakers of the World, Unite!*; Reilly, "Remains of Red Letters."
- 13 Under the Hallstein Doctrine (1955–69), West German governments refused to recognize any nation (aside from the USSR) that recognized their eastern counterpart. Diplomatically cut off from many western states, the GDR thus scrambled to establish relations with Asia and Africa before West Germany did. See Engerman, "The Second World's Third World," 197.
- 14 RGALI f. 5, op. 36, ex. 92, l. 76.
- 15 Popescu, *South African Literature beyond the Cold War*; Popescu, *African Literatures, Postcolonial Cultures and the Cold War*.
- 16 For Comintern scholarship, consult Pons and Smith, *The Cambridge History of Communism*, Vol. 1; Petersson, "We Are Neither Visionaries nor Utopian Dreamers"; Brasken, *The International Workers' Relief*. For "Global Cold War" scholarship, see Westad, *Global Cold War*; Friedman, *Shadow Cold War* and other works from the Westad-edited New Cold War series at the University of North Carolina Press. Prashad's *Red Star over the Third World*, Hilger's edited volume *Die Sowjetunion und die Dritte Welt*, and Roth-Ey's forthcoming manuscript on Cold War communication are among the few culturally sensitive histories of Soviet engagements with the whole of the Third World.
- 17 On nation or region, or continent-based studies of Soviet–Third-World engagements, see Matusevich, *No Easy Row for Russian Hoe*; Matusevich, *Africa in Russia, Russia in Africa*; Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin*; McGuire, *Red at Heart*; Engerman, *The Price of Aid*. The series of workshops Margaret Litvin has organized on Soviet-Arab exchanges and the forthcoming sourcebook on that subject that she, Masha Kirasirova, and Eileen Kane have edited make the Soviet-Arab cultural engagements a particularly well-studied phenomenon. However, other such initiatives are emerging, often in the form of

- workshops: one, organized by Steven Lee, Leftist Aesthetics in North East Asia (Berkeley, January 2017) and another by Elizabeth Banks, Africa and the Soviet Union: Technology, Ideology, and Culture (New York University, October 2017).
- 18 Kirasirova, “The Eastern International.”
- 19 These aspirations are captured in their raw and lyrical power in Prashad’s *Red Star over the Third World*.
- 20 Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*.
- 21 For the rise of the “Soviet superiority complex” over the course of the 1930s, see David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment*, 285–311.
- 22 Friedman, *The Shadow Cold War*, 1–24.
- 23 For a study of the somewhat turbulent relationship between the two, see the special issue of *Critical Sociology* entitled “Marxism and Postcolonial Theory?” and Sinha and Varma’s introduction, “What’s Left of the Debate.” See also Lazarus and Varma, “Marxism and Postcolonial Studies.”
- 24 See Raspberry, “The Right to Fail.”
- 25 See Hakim, *Pan-Africanism and Communism*, 401–16.
- 26 Recent work on Soviet mass culture has also challenged this traditional Soviet cultural history timeline. See Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time*; Evans, *Between Truth and Time*.
- 27 Fortunately, some of questions are already being addressed. For non-Western students’ education in the USSR, see Katsakioris, “Burden or Allies?” For Soviet development aid, see Mēhilli, *From Stalin to Mao*; Engerman, *The Price of Aid*. For the emergence of regional varieties of socialism insistent on keeping a certain distance from the Soviet model, see Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania*.
- 28 Pratt, “The Arts of the Contact Zone.”
- 29 Despite this demotion of Central Asia’s role, it still featured prominently in African-American itineraries to the USSR in the early 1930s, whether by high-profile visitors such as Langston Hughes or by lesser-known but longer-term visitors such as the colony of African-American collective farm workers Hughes encountered during his travels through Uzbekistan. See Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander*, 191.
- 30 Khalid, “Introduction: Locating the Postcolonial in Soviet History”; Kirasirova, “Sons of Muslims in Moscow”; Kalinovsky, *Laboratory of Socialist Development*.
- 31 Djagalov, “Literary Monopolists.”
- 32 The latter’s tragic fate is the subject of Part V of McGuire’s *Red at Heart*.
- 33 The major scholar of this phenomenon, Masha Salazkina, examines how a particular interpretation of Soviet film theory of the 1920s reached Cuban

- filmmakers of the 1950s and '60s via Italian Marxists. See her "Moscow-Rome-Havana."
- 34 See Wolff's work on Western European images of Eastern Europe in *Inventing Eastern Europe*; Susan Layton's on nineteenth-century Russian literary Orientalism in the Caucasus in *Russian Literature and Empire*; Maria Todorova's on Balkanism as a counterpart to Orientalism in *Imagining the Balkans*; David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye on late-imperial Russian Oriental studies in *Russian Orientalism*; Harsha Ram on Russian poetry between the 1730s and 1840s and its relationship to empire in *The Imperial Sublime*; Alexander Etkind on nineteenth-century Russian peasantry in *Internal Colonization*.
- 35 Moore, "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Postsoviet?"; Smola and Uffelmann, eds., *Postcolonial Slavic Literatures after Communism*; Chernetsky, *Mapping Postcommunist Cultures*; Tlostanova, *Postcolonialism and Postsocialism in Fiction and Art*; Tlostanova, *What Does It Mean to Be Post-Soviet?*; Condee, *The Imperial Trace on Recent Russian Cinema*; Platt, "Occupation versus Colonization"; Platt, ed., *Global Russian Cultures*; Platt, *Near Abroad: Russian Culture in Latvia*; Oushakine, "How to Grow out of Nothing."
- 36 Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*.
- 37 Brennan, "Postcolonial Studies Between the European Wars."
- 38 D'Haen, Damrosch, and Kadir, eds., *The Routledge Companion to World Literature*.
- 39 Tihanov, "The Location of World Literature"; *The Birth and Death of Literary Theory*, 175–85; "Ferrying a Thinker"; "Foreword."
- 40 Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome*; Sherry, *Discourses of Regulation and Resistance*; Khotimsky, "World Literature, Soviet Style"; Ostrovskaya and Zemskova, "Between the Battlefield and the Marketplace"; Zemskova, "Istoria zhurnala Internatsional'naya literatura"; Ostrovskaya, "'Na puti k "'Writers' International"; David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment*.
- 41 Dobrenko, "Naideno v perevode"; Frank, "The Impact of Multinational Soviet Literature on Post-Soviet Literary Develoments"; Ram, "City, Nation, Empire"; Kudaibergenova, *Rewriting the Nation in Modern Kzakh Literature*; Schild, "Between Moscow and Baku"; Yountchi, "Between Russia and Iran"; Erley, "Reclaiming Native Soil"; Feldman, *On the Threshold of Eurasia*; Caffee, "Between First, Second, and Third Worlds."
- 42 Andrew, "An Atlas of World Cinema"; Gabriel, *Third Cinema in the Third World*.
- 43 Salazkina, *In Excess*; Salazkina, "Soviet-Indian Co-Productions."
- 44 Malitsky, *Post-Revolution Non-Fiction Film*; Rajagopalan, *Indian Films in Soviet Cinemas*; Fedorova, "Formirovanie shkoly montazhnoi vyrazitel'nosti."

- 45 Litvin, *Hamlet's Arab Journey*; Litvin, "Fellow Travelers?"; Ertürk, "Marxism, Communism, and Translation"; Cho, *Translations Forgotten History*; Loss, *Dreaming in Russian*; Lee, *The Ethnic Avant-Garde*; Volland, *Socialist Cosmopolitanism*; Chan, *Chinese Revolutionary Cinema*; Qian, *Visionary Realities*; Humphreys, *Fidel between the Lines*; Dickinson, *Arab Cinema Travels*; Kouoh and Salti, *Saving Bruce Lee*.
- 46 Cheah, *What Is a World?*.
- 47 Damrosch, *How to Read World Literature*, 46–65.
- 48 Andrew, "An Atlas of World Cinema."
- 49 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
- 50 Few of the main theoreticians of Third-World socialism were even translated in the USSR. Michel Aflaq, Samir Amin, Aime Cesaire, Paolo Freire, C.L.R. James, George Padmore, Walter Rodney, and M.N. Roy still await their Russian publications. Relatively luckier were Third-World thinkers heading a government: Amilcar Cabral, Jomo Kenyatta, Ho Chi Minh, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Senghor, Sekou Toure, and Mao Zedong (before 1960) were all published as a matter of diplomacy, in carefully curated selections. In general, Soviet Marxism did not like competitors, whether Western or Eastern.

Chapter One

- 1 "On pesenku etu/ Tverdil naizust' .../ Otkuda u khloptsa/ ispanskaia grust'?" translated by Margaret Wettlin.
- 2 Compare the celebratory tone with which Marx and Engels discuss the spread of capitalist technologies outside of Europe in their *Communist Manifesto* (1848) with Marx's condemnation of colonialism in his "The Future Results of the British Rule in India" in *Collected Works*, 217. For the most detailed treatment of Marx's position on the colonial question, see Anderson, *Marx on the Margins*.
- 3 Guettel, "The Myth of the Pro-Colonialist SPD."
- 4 Young, *Postcolonialism*.
- 5 Eby, "Global Tashkent."
- 6 See Kirasirova, "Soviet Central Asian Mediators to the Foreign East, 1955–1962"; Kalinovsky, *Laboratory of Socialist Development*; Clark, "Eurasia without Borders?"
- 7 Riddle, *To See the Dawn*.
- 8 See Riddle's Introduction and the Call to the Baku Congress in *To See the Dawn*, 11–48.