

African Literature in the Post-Global Age: Provocations on Field Commonsense

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An exploration of African literary studies and what might be its most salient and informed tools of self-constitution and self-understanding in the contemporary moment. More than half a century after formal literary studies emerged in Africa, much of the field is still fixated with a deep suspicion of the true provenance of its own production. The paper theoretically distills some of the expressed or implied evaluative canons of belonging, explores their methods of application, and critically assesses their contemporary relevance—or even resonance. The goal is to arrive at what might be a most enabling conception of African letters for an age I conceive as “post-global.”

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“If conditions in an earlier era made for exhaustive and categorical definitions of ‘Africa’ and ‘literature,’ ” Kwaku Korang wrote, “it would seem that our late modern conditions make possible—perhaps even mandate—expansive and transitive definitions of the two.” And then he added a qualifying question in parenthesis: “(Or do they really?).”¹ Yes, of course, is my answer. We indeed need expansive definitions of what constitutes “Africa” and “literature” today.

Though the problematic we are dealing with here is old and familiar in African literary studies, it never ceases to be newly provocative whenever it is raised. More than half a century after formal academic literary criticism and theory began in Africa, the anxiety over its provenance is now abating—and it is high time. For long and for some—declared or undeclared nativists—the label “theory” was itself Western, and that condemned anything done under its name as un-African. For others, any abstract meta-level thought, whether labeled as “theory” or not, was theory in mask and therefore typically European. And yet others argued that even if “theory” was not

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1 This is a revised version of a paper first presented at the African Literature Association in Bayreuth, Germany, in June 2015. My gratitude to Kwaku Korang, ALA Executive Council member, for organizing this panel on behalf of the ALA. His brief charge written to the panelists was weighty and thought-provoking. A note on “post-global” with a hyphen. I employ this to polemically call attention to chronological supersession, with its potential to engender energetic debate. I have, however, in my elaborations strongly privileged a historico-conceptual understanding now more conventionally represented without a hyphen.

necessarily un-African, much of what typically passed off itself as such was really not African at all. And part of what legitimated the debates for long was the continental locational coherence that African literature and its study had till the 1990s: most of the writers and leading scholars, for the most part, lived and worked in Africa, and the supervisory ambience of that context generated a remarkable level of shared concerns in relation to the world. There is nothing unusual about this from the point of view of the sociology of intellectual work and knowledge production. Since the 1990s, the context of the production and dissemination of African literature and literary discourse has become more dispersed than ever, with many active writers and scholars in the field living whole or in part outside the continent, or more decisively impacted by global—as opposed to primarily regional—intellectual trends than before. The imaginative landscape of both the literature and the criticism transformed expansively.²

The specific entrance point to my exploration here is Korang's side provocation: "Are 'post,' 'trans,' and globalist/neo-universalist propositions now (more than ever) definitionally viable for African literature?" I answer in the affirmative. I consider this answer less speculative musing than an empirical fact. This is not so much to preclude debate—though I really do not think the "post" issue is worth debating much anymore—as to shift the debate into different and more constructive directions. If the conceptual idea of the "post" seems to have won the battle and even become normalized into some easy cliché today, it is because of its original power and ability to creatively gesture to historical complexities simultaneously explained and confounded by chronology. It was an incendiary prefix that never perfectly fitted the dynamic and stimulating cross-disciplinary knowledge it called forth in its best manifestations. But, perhaps, the problem was not or is not so much with the word or concept itself as with our overly simplistic and transparent expectations of language. After all, what the logic of historical sociology tells us is that our historical reality out there is already beyond our linguistic capability to render adequately, outside of a good mix of the useful discursive tools of evasions, equivocations, illusions, and truths backed up in large part by the persuasiveness of the utterance. The "post" has been one such tool—no more, no less. In addition to the problem of language, I have always suspected that many of us, Africans and non-Africans alike, have always had overly simplistic and transparent expectations of Africa, even if we many times hide them well. In this circumstance, there is probably still no more sharply prodding conceptual irritant out there than "post." So, let us use it.³

2 I have historicized aspects of the problematic and the transformation in an essay, "African Cultural Studies: Of Travels, Accents, and Epistemologies," *Rethinking African Cultural Production*, eds. Ken Harrow and Frieda Ekotto (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 94–108. See also my presidential address at the African Literature Association annual meeting at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, "African Literature Is Doing Well, Thank You. But Is African Literary Studies?" *African Literature Association Newsletter* 1.1 (2014): 1–6.

3 Now older pieces better capture the energy of the moment. See my "On 'Post-Colonial Discourse': An Introduction," *On "Post-Colonial Discourse": A Special Issue: Callaloo* 16.4 (Fall 1993): 743–49; and "Postmodernity, Postcoloniality, and African Studies," *Postmodernism, Postcoloniality, and African Studies*, ed. Zine Magubane (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003), 39–60.

I use “post” in “post-global” in my title the same way. As a figure of discourse, it is a boastful provocation for the critical imagination to think *simultaneously* in broad strokes and fine-grained refinements about the present and the future. Discourse is *both* later than, and prefigures—even predicts, wills, makes happen—actions, events, changes in society. Post-global does not mean we are “beyond” the global age—the future, after all, is unimaginable except from the here and now, a small limitation of the human—but it does propose that “global” no longer adequately describes the world we live in now. It is, therefore, a way of describing quantitative and qualitative changes that introduce elements of the new, the different, and perhaps the puzzling into the familiar experience of social life. The existing formation is still recognizable, but it has also frayed the dominant protocols of recognition in profound ways.

The discourse of the post-global is more resonant in the field of economics and political economy than literary studies, thanks in large part to Mario Deaglio, an Italian economist, and his book, *Postglobal*, a critique of the late capitalist phenomenon of growth without development in which social misery expands in spite of economic growth. “Postglobal” for him means the end of the project by Western capitalist countries to globalize the ideologies and practices of growth and liberalism. The attacks by Al Qaeda militants against targets in the United States on September 11, 2001, for Deaglio, inscribe a decisive moment of de-globalization.⁴ Alfred J. Lopez in his article “‘Everybody else just living their lives’: 9/11, race and the new postglobal literature” borrows Deaglio’s concept and premises to read *Brick Lane* (2003), the famous novel by the Bangladeshi-British novelist Monica Ali, as archetype of “post-global literature” in its foregrounding globalization’s key victims, “women, immigrants, visible minorities, the poor generally.”⁵ The novel, he believes, “heralds the emergence of a new postglobal literature, one that captures the experience of globalization not from the rarefied heights of *Windows on the World* but from the streets of London’s Banglatown” (512). For me, both Deaglio and Lopez seem too anxious to mark certainty of points, directions, and hierarchies in the transformations of the global. And some of those hierarchies and transformations are patently obvious and have a much longer trajectory than 9/11. Or they are unacceptably too narrow, as we can see from these supposed features of “postglobal” literature according to Lopez: “Let us then provisionally agree to label as ‘postglobal literature’ those writings that 1) are produced in the aftermath of 9/11, 2) contain either manifest or latent material informed by 9/11 and other globally felt crises, or that directly or indirectly refer to these and, most importantly, 3) focus on the lives and struggles of those most exposed to the vicissitudes of globalization and its impact on the world’s subalterns, especially those living in global urban centres” (512). We need broader and more historically informed thinking.

When was the global, we should ask as a beginning? Remember the then pervasive “three worlds theory” that dominated most of post-World War II twentieth

4 Mario Deaglio, *Postglobal* (Roma: Editori Laterza, 2004; no English translation). See the useful review of Deaglio by Lucia Re in *Jura Gentium: Rivista di filosofia del diritto internazionale e della politica globale* 2005. <http://www.juragentium.org/books/it/deaglio.htm>.

5 Alfred J. Lopez, “‘Everybody else Just Living Their Lives’: 9/11, Race and the New Postglobal Literature,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 42.4–5 (2008): 509–29, at 509.

century and memorably articulated in 1974 by Chairman Mao? “We are the third world,” he said polemically and proudly of Asia (minus Japan), and Africa, and Latin America.⁶ This was the era of anticolonial nationalism and consolidation of *national* sovereignty. *Transnational* community was imagined strictly on ideological lines, and the lines were clear and evocative—the capitalist First World, the communist Second World, and the “Non-Aligned” Third World.⁷ The idea of a supposedly all inclusive “global” world arrived two decades later as a critique of the containerized conception of distinctive, separate, and separated “three” worlds. *Global* assumed a world material and experiential interconnectedness that the rhetoric of three worlds was simply too rigid and too binary to accommodate. But the global assumed and did not question much the certainty of the nation-state and territorial sovereignty, especially the constitutive function of these as tools of managing inequality on a global scale. In fact, it was as if the global needed the solidity and certainty of these structural and decidedly local containers of nation, state, and sovereignty to give it, the global, a meaningful, substantive, even if ironic content.⁸

Post-global is a query, in part, of this certainty. Probably no one can tell a more moving story about the emptying out of the nation-state and territorial sovereignty than the African of the last thirty years or so. Many of our writers and critics, both in their work and in their life trajectories, are eloquent testimonies to this sociohistorical condition. And I dare anyone disagree with me that even our parents and relatives in our far-from-cities African villages deeply feel this condition too.

Here are three more constituent features of our post-global moment. We have just begun to understand the profound impacts of the *information revolution* of our times—the entire spectrum of mass social media and the individual and mass agency and illusions of agency it engenders and is engendering. The level of penetration of this revolution in Africa is still very low, new genres such as cell phone novels and its large readership nonetheless. This is just an example.

6 “In my view, the United States and the Soviet Union form the first world. Japan, Europe and Canada, the middle section, belong to the second world. We are the third world. . . . With the exception of Japan, Asia belongs to the third world. The whole of Africa belongs to the third world, and Latin America too.” Mao Zedong, “Chairman Mao’s Theory of the Differentiation of the Three Worlds Is a Major Contribution to Marxism-Leninism,” *Renmin Ribao (People’s Daily)*, November 1, 1977. Reprinted in pamphlet form in English by Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1977. <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-5/theory-3-worlds/section1.htm>.

Peter Worsley’s *The Three Worlds: Culture and Development* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) is a contextually thoughtful sociological study of the idea of the tripartite division of the world reigning then.

7 Two excellent studies of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) formed in Belgrade in 1961 are Bala Mohammed, *Africa and Nonalignment: A Study in the Foreign Relations of New Nations* (Kano: Triumph, 1978); and Peter Willetts, *The Non-Aligned Movement: The Origins of a Third World Alliance* (New York: Nichols, 1978).

8 The sociologist Martin Albrow tried admirably to underscore the global dependence on the assumption of a decentered nation-state. See his *The Global Age: State and Society Beyond Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). On studies of sovereignty in Africa and generally, see Pierre Englebert, *Africa: Unity, Sovereignty, and Sorrow* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2009); Hent Kalmo and Quentin Skinner, *Sovereignty in Fragments: The Past, Present and Future of a Contested Concept* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2014); and Dieter Grimm, *Sovereignty: The Origin and Future of a Political and Legal Concept*, trans. Belinda Cooper (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

In the area of law and policy, *cosmopolitan human rights* have finally caught up against most of our insular cultural nativist dreams that were dominant just two decades ago—and still fighting for survival in some of the tyrannical gender- and sex-related laws and deeply parochial public opinion in many of our African countries. We cherish our right to vote but we must kill the gays. The contradiction is a quintessential part of our post-global moment and future.

With the rise in rights culture also comes concerns that are larger than global, that is, *planetary* in nature, as we can see in the expanding scholarly studies of the weather, the environment, and ecological damages and possibilities.⁹ We are in African literary studies. If all these sound like Greek to us, then we must be unselfconscious about the water we drink or the air we breathe. And that would be tragic indeed, especially if we claim to be concerned about a continent that has had very little power to shape many of the changes currently going on.

Let me be clear that post-global is not wholly about centrifugal forces breaking closed spaces and boundaries to move outward. It is also, non-ironically, about the rise of muscular centripetal forces in defense of existing enclaves and old solutions. So, for instance, what have we had as answers to foundationally failed and failing states and unprecedented global inequality? Nothing but the old formal and informal answers of more weapons, more walled-up national boundaries, more deportations, more anti-immigrant xenophobia, more fanatical chauvinism of all kinds including religious, and more. These global anti-global forces are also profound signs of the post-global to the extent that history appears to be moving remorselessly against those positions, though we do not know to what alternative positions.

Post-global then describes particular and peculiar exacerbations of certain social processes and experiences. For some people, those exacerbations are part of the condition of “late modernity,” a phrase that has proven to be more enduring and more sober than the apparently too fanciful “postmodernity” that tried at one point to dethrone it. For others, especially those studying Africa and African literature, the condition is called “failed or aborted modernity,” if “modernity” is applied at all.

Why “post-global,” some may ask? After all, “global” seems to adequately describe developments and yearnings that have put the inadequacies of nation-state boundaries into sharp relief. Let us take the specific example of human rights. What is “post-global” when “global” seems to have adequately captured the aggressive and generally praiseworthy transnationalism of human rights in vision if not totally in practice? In instances such as this, “post-global” does seem “counter-intuitive.”¹⁰ That is precisely the case, and the big reason to think much more unconventionally. For instance, while the idea and practice of sovereignty lay exhausted all around us, the nation-state still remains the unyielding framework through which “global” agendas are made sense of and, more importantly, effected. Human rights, aggressively globally human as they sound, are still channeled through, and unachievable outside of, the protocols of

9 See the useful volumes, Tom Cohen, ed., *Telemorphosis: Theory in the Era of Climate Change*, Vol. 1 (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2012), and Henry Sussman, ed., *Impasses of the Post-Global: Theory in the Era of Climate Change*, Vol. 2. (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2012).

10 My gratitude to the thoughtful peer reviewers of this article.

the nation-state.¹¹ This may have worked well for the last half a century or a little more, arguably. Very obviously, the energy of the theorizing around the “global” in the last two decades—not to mention the much longer trajectory of the reality of state failure or collapse in many places, typically the sources of the most egregious violations of human rights—tells of a critical disjuncture between nation-state sovereignty and cross-national human rights in practice.

What would it mean to imagine human rights in the context of the now emerging post-global? It would mean a rearrangement of global governance such that quality of human life comes first and geographical territory a far distant second. One contradiction I often confront in instances of making this simple formulation is that most of those who disagree with me are actually those already invisibly living the possibility more or less, as they circulate with relative ease across national borders and live wherever their circumstances are much better off irrespective of their places of nativity. Why should that not be a world to ask for and to *work* to make possible? That would be a more ethically “global” world, indeed a *post*-global world. Although the discourse of the nation-state in the last one and a half decades has rhetorically been more about “state” or “nation” than the compound phrase, the foundational assumption still remains the latter, “nation.” The rhetorical separation has been a good beginning; though rarely acknowledged, the separation was engendered by the greater significance of the *state* rather than *nation* to the processes of globalization. What is not good is the conventional assumption of a conjoined-twin relationship that still silently subtends the rhetorical separation. The time of the nation is evolutionary and positivist, a sacred, filiative time. The time of the state is constructionary, secular, affiliative, contingent. The post-global disowns the tattered illusions that yoke the two entities and proposes their alienation. It holds that the state in substance is or should be no more than an “empty” tool or structure for the management of populations and their diverse and competing interests. The organizing frame, to reiterate, is less one of belonging to a territory than of management of quality of life universally conceived. We already now share this conception or vision, though that is not the primary goal of the institutions we still have. That is why the current global world is really far less “global” than it seems and why “post-global” is a puncturing of that deception.

For Africa in particular, the postcolonial nation-state frame has been more than less a Trojan horse. For much of post-independence on the continent, the politics of nation-states have been more the politics of nationalities—imagining the nation as a community of shared culture and worldview, and less the politics of statehood conceived as the cultivation of fictitious middle ground authority simultaneously constituted by but not captured exclusively at any point in time or for any stretch of time by one or an alliance of the diverse competing groups and interests (call them “nations,” “ethnic groups,” etc.) in a polity. The state is cultural but autochthony is not or should not be a primary virtue. It is familiar but is also strange, or should be. Familiar enough to command affect including the affect that leads to periodic

11 There are so many useful historical studies out there. I have benefitted from Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: Norton, 2008) and Jack Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice* 3e (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013). See also Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia. Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

refurbishing of it, but also strange enough to command regard and chastise impunity across the board of its constituent groups.¹² “Global” for Africa has so far meant little more than a world grouping to which it belongs in holding pens (nation-states) that both objectively and subjectively lack the capacity to realize for Africa what should be the real potentials of that community—including human rights—in a satisfying (quantitatively) and dignifying (qualitatively) way. For “Africa” in these statements, substitute many other parts of the globe. If we are now hankering for a new level of clarity about these matters, it is because it is time indeed for the post-global.

There are critical implications that the post-global has had and is having on African literary studies and African literature itself at the current moment.

First, the post-global is tearing to shreds the canons of provenance that have constituted what I call the “field commonsense of belonging and identity” of African literary studies since the 1960s. I am referring here to those unanimous or contested, spoken or implied assumptions of what constitutes the Africanness of African literature and literary studies. I give here a sample distillation, from a large and diverse data, of those commonsense canons. I have called them “tests,” as in tests for “pass” or “fail” determination, as a way of giving concrete verbal form to the clearly meant but elliptically unsaid.

There is the *language test*, which, in spite of its very auspicious birth in the famous Kampala conference of 1962, and its heroic propagation and advocacy by one of the continent’s leading writers,¹³ was doomed from the beginning. The language of a literary text or a piece of criticism or theory will just not be a major test of Africanness, thanks to the peculiarities of Africa’s linguistic and social histories. The goal was *not* wrong-headed by any means, for to assume that would be to turn historical accident into destiny. The goal’s logical end is still the ideal in any multi-language context: mutual translation. *All* languages ought to be thriving, not just as *mother tongues* but, also, and more critically, as *tools of social mobility*. We have paid too much attention to the former—because of the typical nativist overtones of our yearnings—and too little to the latter. A language that is not a thriving tool of social mobility will not survive for long as a mother tongue. The only egalitarian relationship between and among languages is, without equivocation, translation. Any other arrangement is a surrender to historical contingency. But that surrender as such is not necessarily bad—“society” is constitutively a compromise—if it is self-conscious, self-critical, and constantly open to periodic revisions and refurbishings. The problem with the dream of African literature in autochthonously African languages is the bypassing of existing historical contingency rather than working through it. Today, there is little to no criticism or theory in African languages, and African literature and criticism in foreign languages—as if you won’t even suspect—are dramatically expanding. And they

12 On the state in Africa and generally, see these summative and cogent studies: Crawford M. Young, *The Postcolonial State in Africa: Fifty Years of Independence, 1960–2010* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012); Basil Davidson, *The Black Man’s Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation State*, (New York: Random House, 1992); Achille Mbembe, *On The Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); and Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2015).

13 See Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: Heinemann, 1986).

are all *authentically* African nonetheless, if we are capacious-minded enough to grasp the antinomy.

And then we have the *geographical test*, which, until the 1990s, was quite smug in its political correctness. The entire continent was the location of true African literature and criticism, not the “sub-Saharan Africa” of prejudiced minds. According to an early 1980s survey of members, this was the position of the African Literature Association, the preeminent organization dedicated to the study of African literature, though it was located outside the continent.¹⁴ The position was radical in the sense that it did not take geography as co-terminous with ethnicity, so white southern Africa and Arabic northern Africa are all in. Even nativity was disregarded, so that foreigners long resident in Africa as scholars and writers were fully counted. That position is *still* radical, given the recent (2013) attempt by the Modern Languages Association of America (MLA), the largest association for the study of modern languages and literatures in the world, to divide African literature into two according to a discredited and racist geographical paradigm: “southern African” and “sub-Saharan African.” So, the continental geographical test proudly touts its politically correct claim that geography is not coterminous with ethnicity, but it is stumped by the fact that the same geography is equally not coterminous with knowledge or expertise. The distinction between “African” and “Africanist” to mean African and non-African scholars of Africa is nothing but a vacuous red-herring; *all* those who professionally study Africa—whoever they may be and wherever they might come from—are, by logical definition, Africanists. This is just one subtle way of indicating how, today, the location of African literature and literary studies has become quite a complicated matter for the geographical test to richly account for. And it will continue to be so. Very soon, there will be ample African literature and literary criticism written in China in Chinese and by Africans, Afro-Chinese, and Chinese.

Of course, corporeality is our most poignantly critical field commonsense, and I know some will wonder why I did not begin with it. In scholarly circles in Africa and beyond, it is the most popular and most empirically commonsensical, even more than geography. And in a racialized world, it is the most historically evocative. The *corporeal test* measures the racial Africanness of author or scholar and transfers that Africanness barometer back to the literature or literary study. According to this test, Africa is “black” and it is “sub-Saharan.” The less said about this test today, the better. For instance, if the majority of African scholars who subscribe to the corporeality test is black and sub-Saharan, then it means that white, Arab, and Asian Africans become automatically suspect. Because it is unsafe to assume that only African scholars who are black and sub-Saharan believe in the corporeal test, however, the question ought to be asked: What would be the definition of the corporeal test for white, Arab, and Asian African scholars and critics who believe in such a test? Given their numerical minority status, they obviously cannot say that the authentic African theorist or writer must be white, Arab, or Asian African. Or do they forego entirely any quest for Africanness in favor of the other parts of their hyphenated composition, be it white, Arab, and Asian,

14 See Sandra Barkan, “Emerging Definitions of African Literature,” *African Literature Studies: The Present State/L'Etat Present*, ed. S. Arnold (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1985), 26–46.

which are also corporeal measurements? Also, the fact that the corporeal test was and remains the favorite of many racially prejudiced nativists, Africans or otherwise, should be a big strike against it. Plenty of people of all races fought back in 2013 when the MLA proposed what amounted to a ghettoizing racialism to frame African literature and literary studies.

Finally, what I am calling the *ideological test* claims to be the most secular and worldly of our field commonsense. It holds that Africa has objective interests and that the interests could be deciphered by those who care to see them.¹⁵ What matters is not Africanness as any metaphysical category but as informed, sympathetic even if critical concern for the defense and promotion of those objective interests. In other words, the ideological test does not call for blind praise or blind criticism of Africa; all it calls for is a knowledge of how to decipher what the continent's "objective interests" are and make that the catalyst of imaginative and theoretical-critical expression. This test is not crippled by the usual criticism of what are supposed "objective interests" and who determines them; its answer, which leaves room for excess, debate, and refinement, is that through a careful study of the composite social life of a polity—its history, politics, economics, and sociology broadly conceived—the polity's "objective interests" can be deciphered, even if roughly at any point in time. The true measure of Africanness therefore is an affirmation, critical or supportive, of the objective interests of Africa, no matter who is writing it, in what language, where it is being written, or according to what method.

The post-global condition, I have said, is tearing to shreds these our long-established canons of the self-understanding of our field. This is the reason for the extreme corporeal, locational, linguistic, formal, and thematic dispersion of contemporary African literature and literary theorizing.

Of all the tests I discussed, it seems only the ideological test is better equipped to successfully weather the storm of the post-global, though that itself would be profoundly remodeled and refined by the storm. And this would be good for African literature and literary studies. After all, one impact of it would be a separation of the racial affect of Africanness from global social inequality that structures it. The two are related but not the same, and we have never wanted to be clear about this because of our unacknowledged pleasures of racial affect, though that affect was created by the very thing we lament so much about, racialism and racism. But a reformed ideological

15 This is the ground invented by and on which African Marxist criticism of African literature stood. Any reading, of course, is "ideological," but it was Marxist criticism that became synonymous with "ideological" criticism beginning from the 1970s. See, for instance, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Writers in Politics: Essays* (London: Heinemann, 1981) and Biodun Jeyifo's *The Truthful Lie: Essays in a Sociology of African Drama* (London: New Beacon Books, 1985). The classic magisterial text, however, is Omafume Onoge's "The Crisis of Consciousness in Modern African Literature," *Marxism and African Literature*, ed. Georg Gugelberger (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1985 [article written in 1974]), 21–49. The lasting advantage of this "ideological" criticism is now evident in the generalized awareness of the partiality of every point of view and the questioning of the position from which every view is uttered. Feminist criticism of African literature benefitted richly from it. See, for instance, Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie, *Recreating Ourselves: African Women and Critical Transformations* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1994), and Carole Boyce Davis and Anne Adams Graves, *Ngambika: Studies of Women in African Literature* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1986). The effectiveness of the deployment of ideological awareness or critique today does not depend on knowing much about its conceptual subtleties in Marxist criticism whether generally or in African literary studies in particular.

test would compel us to know the comparative relationship of *objective* and the *subjective* and not conflate the two. It is more potentially ready for trans-boundary alliances of all kinds, and its focus on interests promises to keep the matter of quality of life over ridiculous territorial boundaries in constantly sharp view. And on “race” in the post-global moment, the requirements for Africanness would be less mystical, less restrictive, more transparent on the objective issues of material inequality, and also more affirmatively opaque on the subjective issues of degrees of Africanness such as skin color or language or location. And that would be a great big deal.