

Introduction

Forms of Disappointment traces significant connections between Cuban and Angolan post-Cold War narrative and film, particularly their reconsiderations of past revolutionary forms, texts, and cultural politics. In this book, I argue for the relevance of disappointment as a concept that describes both the negative feelings associated with the collapse of confidence in the promise of ongoing revolutionary transformations after 1989, and the continued longing for the inheritances of revolutionary transformation and interlinked anti-imperial solidarity among artists and writers from Cuba and Angola. Both Cuba's collaboration with Angola's leftist MPLA party during Angola's civil war and broader discourses and portrayals of racial, political, and cultural solidarities across the Global South significantly impacted Cuban and Angolan culture, leaving traces even after the period of close internationalist collaboration came to a close.¹ In thinking through these historical contexts, this study places Cuban and Angolan novels and films into conversation via a set of textual practices that I call techniques of disappointment, means by which disappointment shapes the form of cultural texts in the post-Cold War era. For Cuban and Angolan narratives, this disappointment is rooted not solely in the collapse of the global socialist dream after 1989, but in the specific legacies of battles fought in the name of third-world solidarity. By demonstrating that these Cuban and Angolan narratives share techniques even after the era of close trans-national collaboration has come to a close, I show the ongoing impact of Global South networks that remain invisible when we only consider these cultural histories through the binary global politics of the Cold War or the vertical axis between metropole and colony. These texts are, I show, conditioned by Cuba and Angola's history of internationalist collaboration and allegiance across the Global South.

I would like to begin by reading a scene from Angolan director Maria João Ganga's film *Na Cidade Vazia* (*Hollow City*) that encodes disappointment

in the affective and formal registers that constitute the grounds for my analysis. Released in 2004, two years after the end of Angola's brutal civil war, *Na Cidade Vazia* portrays the young war orphan N'dala's difficult initiation into the often-hostile urban environment of the capital city of Luanda. Toward the end of the film, Zé, an older boy who has befriended N'dala, performs the title role as another war orphan in *As Aventuras de Ngunga* (*The Adventures of Ngunga*), a school play based on renowned Angolan novelist Pepetela's didactic children's story written on the battlefield as the author fought against the Portuguese in 1972. The sequence cuts back and forth between Zé's performance and N'dala's participation in a home robbery orchestrated by Joka, Zé's cousin. This parallel structure presents N'dala and Ngunga as undergoing analogous processes of initiation; the play's protagonist learns revolutionary sacrifice for the common good, while N'dala, coerced into shooting the homeowner, is initiated into a post-revolutionary scheme of violence and cynical opportunism that ultimately ends in his own death. My interest in this sequence lies in how the multilayered refraction of the allusions to the dual processes of initiation transforms the meaning of both scenes and forms of representation. The film abruptly shifts between the play and the robbery, a text associated with the past and a performance in the present. The director thus focuses our attention on the film's ironic repetition of prior historical moments and associated narrative forms. This repetition highlights the disjunction between Pepetela's objective to form Socialist New Men who would construct the revolution to come and the film's portrayal of N'dala's foreclosed future. It also signals a gap between the seeming coherence of Pepetela's didactic text with the social objectives it sought to inculcate in its actors and audience, and the multiple valences and plastic possibilities of cinema in the post-war moment.²

N'dala's death at the end the film provoked both controversy and disappointment in the viewing public, which the director acknowledges in a 2016 interview:

o público angolano, até porque já estávamos a entrar numa fase de esperança, de ver o nosso país a renascer, as pessoas, de certa forma, aqui, preferiam que tivesse dado um fim mais agradável. Mais soft. Aquela criança sofreu e as pessoas sofreram com ela. Recebi algumas críticas e encontrei mesmo pessoas que me diziam: “deste-nos tanta poesia, tanta beleza e depois matas aquela criança”. . . . Se o fiz foi porque, na altura, se todos estávamos com muita esperança no futuro, eu tinha a certeza que essas crianças não tinham futuro. (M. Gomes)

(The Angolan public, especially because we were just entering a hopeful phase, seeing our country being reborn, the people, in a way, here, wanted me to give it a happier ending. Softer. That child suffered and people suffered with him. I was criticized and some people even told me “you gave us so much poetry, so much beauty and then you kill that child” . . . If I did it was because, at that time, even though all of us had so much hope for the future, I was certain that those children had no future.)

The sense of disappointment that Ganga discusses in this interview stems from the repetition of the young initiate’s death seen through two different modes of representation (play and film), responding to two different historical moments (the 1970s and the 2000s), whose irreconcilable asynchronicity results in what Ackbar Abbas calls a “miss[ed] . . . appointment with meaning” (“Erotics” 219). The final scenes of *Na Cidade Vazia* manifest what Abbas goes on to describe as the effect of layered historical references and aesthetic forms whose juxtapositions call our attention to historical discontinuities that are in plain view but tended to remain unacknowledged (219).

I have chosen to read the final sequence of *Na Cidade Vazia* because it exemplifies some of the ways that feelings of disappointment about the present take the form of textual revisiting of the revolutionary past. *Forms of Disappointment* makes use of both the grandiose implications of “disappointment” as an expression of disillusionment or disenchantment, as well as its more mundane implications of the everyday gap between expectations and lived reality, in order to capture the complex range of political stances and aesthetic practices that the Cuban and Angolan texts analyzed here encode. Laura Quinney, in her examination of a poetics of disappointment in nineteenth- and twentieth-century poetry, notes how the etymology of “disappointment” reveals the specific vector of an individual’s engagement with the public sphere:

In its first use, disappointment meant “to undo the appointment of; to deprive of an appointment, office, or possession” (*O.E.D.*, 1483). Disappointment in this sense entailed losing one’s hold on public identity and public space, losing a goal for one’s energies and an occupation for one’s time. Most primitively, disappointment meant ceasing to be “à point,” in the right place at the right moment, and thus implied a break-down in one’s relation to time, a falling out and away from a recognizable order. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, disappointment came to

have its more familiar meaning, “the frustration or nonfulfillment of expectation, intention or desire.” (1)

For Quinney, disappointment wrests subjects from both their *place* in the world, as well as from their *time*: “To cease to believe in the destiny of the self empties time of its teleological promise . . . the disappointed subject thrust into a temporal void feels himself to be surrounded by nothing but time, in effect, to be drowning in time” (8). Quinney’s discussion illuminates several features of disappointment that are central to my study: the first concerns the relationship among communities in the social sphere, and speaks to how after the collapse of global socialism, upon withdrawing from Angola, Cuba is “dis-appointed” from its leadership role in the Global South, while Angola is “dis-appointed” as a center of global revolutionary solidarity. Quinney thus also signals how the sense of historical displacement and the lack of fulfillment of expectations effect a subjective experience of the world. These features are encoded in how Cuban and Angolan narrative texts published during and after the post-Cold War transition systematically revisit the cultural history of the revolutionary past.

While Quinney is concerned with individual subjecthood, the disappointment presented in works by contemporary Cuban and Angolan novelists and filmmakers is a fundamentally collective feeling; it is perhaps no surprise, then, that this expression of disappointment is well-developed in the polyphonic genre of the novel and in the collectively produced visual and narrative medium of film. In the following chapters, I analyze novels by Cubans Eliseo Alberto and Leonardo Padura and by Angolans Boaventura Cardoso, José Eduardo Agualusa, and Pepetela, as well as films by Cuban Rogelio París and by Angolan Zézé Gamboa. These literary and visual works engage two primary historical narratives that link representations of the Cuban and Angolan revolutions: they represent revolution as a form of anticolonial and anti-imperial resistance, and they establish connections between the Caribbean and Africa on the grounds of racial solidarity and histories of economic underdevelopment. Produced following the post-Cold War transition and focused on a process of historical reckoning, these narratives of disappointment revisit the question of the radical future possibilities of revolution through techniques of citation and imitation such as allegory, satire, pastiche, and historical re-writings. These works’ disappointment emerges, in part, from a realization that the revolutions, the events that were supposed to enact an indefinitely ongoing transformation of the totality of social life, do, in fact, become history. By citing and imitating this history, they interrogate how the meanings and cultural value of signs, forms, or events associated with past revolutions have changed in the post-1989 world. In other words, they

examine the process through which the revolutions are made historical, and, in so doing, uphold literary and cinematic works of art as privileged sites for dealing with the feelings of disappointment.

The Contexts of Disappointment

Cuba and Angola share a long history of Iberian colonization dating from the fifteenth century, as two poles of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and, more recently, a history of twentieth-century leftist revolutions—Cuba's, of course, triumphed in 1959, while Angola's anticolonial revolution won independence from Portugal in 1975. The mass forced displacement of enslaved Africans to the Americas fundamentally determined the course of both nations' post-colonial histories, and despite differences in Cuba and Angola's individual colonial processes, this shared history occupied a central role in the public rhetoric that justified Cuba's support for Lusophone African independence. In both places, the link between the colonial past and the threat of a neocolonial present provided an ongoing rhetorical basis for seeing Cuba and Angola as involved in similar ideological and literal battles for sovereignty, racial equality, and anti-imperial resistance as a corrective to the colonial past: symbolically, Cuba's early Angolan mission was named "Operación Carlota" (Operation Carlota) for the leader of a nineteenth-century slave rebellion in Cuba. A 1976 speech by Fidel Castro commemorates the anniversaries of the Cuban victory over US invaders in 1961 at Playa Girón (the Bay of Pigs) and Angola's independence from Portugal in 1975, laying out the rhetorical underpinnings of the long-entangled geopolitics linking the two nations:

En Girón se derramó sangre africana, la de los abnegados descendientes de un pueblo que fue esclavo antes de ser obrero, y fue obrero explotado antes de ser dueño de su patria. Y en África, junto a la de los heroicos combatientes de Angola, se derramó también sangre cubana, la de los hijos de Martí, Maceo y Agramonte, la de los que heredaron la sangre internacionalista de Gómez y el Che Guevara. Los que un día esclavizaron al hombre y lo enviaron a América, tal vez no imaginaron jamás que uno de esos pueblos que recibió a los esclavos, enviaría a sus combatientes a luchar por la libertad en África. La victoria de Angola fue hermana gemela de la victoria de Girón. (Castro "Discurso . . . 1976" n/p)

(In Girón, African blood was spilled, that of the selfless descendants of an enslaved people who were slaves before becoming workers,

and exploited workers before becoming owners of their country. And in Africa, together with the heroic combatants of Angola, Cuban blood was also spilled, that of the sons of Martí, Maceo, and Agramonte, of those who inherited the internationalist blood of Gómez and Che Guevara. Those who one day enslaved men and sent them to America, perhaps never imagined that one of those nations that received slaves would send its combatants to fight for liberty in Africa. The victory of Angola was the twin sister of the victory at Girón.)

This discursive strategy of equivalence has continued to have purchase long after the era of military collaboration came to an end. In 2007, during a state visit to Havana, then-Angolan president Eduardo dos Santos invoked similar rhetoric that collapses the “shared inheritances” of colonialism’s violent displacement of African bodies to the New World and the Cuban sacrifices on the contemporary battlefields of Angola when he remarked: “la amistad [entre Cuba y Angola] ha sido forjada con sangre” (“Presidente de Angola” n/p) (the friendship [between Cuba and Angola] has been forged with blood).

Other Lusophone African intellectuals share Castro’s and dos Santos’s rhetoric of placing together two moments of national revolution against colonial and neocolonial forces as parallel events in a worldwide fight against colonialism and imperialism. Nine years before Cuba’s official entrance into the Angolan conflict, at the First Tricontinental Congress in Havana in 1966, Bissau-Guinean revolutionary Amílcar Cabral had used almost the same language as Castro of retracing the routes of the slave trade in the shared interest of decolonization.³ After lauding the accomplishments of the “Cuban miracle” of the early revolutionary years, Cabral declares:

estamos prontos para mandar para Cuba tantos homens e mulheres quantos sejam necessários para compensar a saída daqueles que, por razões de classe ou inadaptação, têm interesses e atitudes incompatíveis com os interesses do povo cubano. Repetindo o caminho outrora doloroso e trágico dos nossos antepassados (nomeadamente de Guiné e Angola) que foram transplantados para Cuba como escravos, viremos hoje como homens livres, como trabalhadores conscientes e como patriotas cubanos, para exercer uma atividade produtiva nesta sociedade nova, justa e multirracial; para ajudar a defender com o nosso sangue as conquistas do povo de Cuba. Mas viremos também para reforçar tanto os laços históricos, de sangue e de cultura que unem os nossos povos ao povo cubano, como essa desconcentração mágica, essa alegria visceral e esse

ritmo contagioso que fazem da construção do socialismo em Cuba um fenômeno novo à face do mundo, um acontecimento único e, para muitos, insólito. (*Documentário* 172)

(we, the peoples of the countries of Africa, still completely dominated by Portuguese colonialism, are prepared to send to Cuba as many men and women as may be needed to compensate for the departure of those who for reasons of class or of inability to adapt have interests or attitudes which are incompatible with the interests of the Cuban people. Taking once again the formerly hard and tragic path of our ancestors (mainly from Guinea and Angola) who were taken to Cuba as slaves, we would come now as free men, as willing workers and Cuban patriots, to fulfill a productive function in this new, just and multi-racial society, and to help and defend with our own lives the victories of the Cuban people. Thus we would strengthen both all the bonds of history, blood and culture which unite our peoples with the Cuban people, and the spontaneous giving of oneself, the deep joy and infectious rhythm which make the construction of socialism in Cuba a new phenomenon for the world, a unique and, for many, unaccustomed event). (“The Weapon of Theory” n/p)

Anne Garland Mahler has specifically traced the origins of theories of the Global South to the ideologies of the Tricontinental Congress, and to its origins in Cuba’s symbolic and material leadership in third-world notions of liberation and decolonization in the second half of the twentieth century (*From the Tricontinental*). Angola was the site of Cuba’s largest internationalist military and humanitarian mission, and Stephen Henighan has shown that contact and collaboration between Cuba and Angolan revolutionaries dates to the early 1960s (“Cuban fulcrum” 236). Over the course of their military collaboration from 1975–1991, tens of thousands of Cuban soldiers served in Angola as allies to the leftist MPLA. Cuba’s initiatives included education for African students on the island in a range of specialties; teachers, engineers, and medical personnel numbered among the Cuban volunteers sent to Angola. Cuba’s leadership affirmed the two nations’ solidarity, and Angola’s politicians and intellectuals expressed their gratitude publicly. The two writers’ unions, the Unión de Escritores y Artistas Cubanos (UNEAC; The National Union of Cuban Writers and Artists) and the União dos Escritores Angolanos (UAE; Angolan Writers’ Union) signed an agreement of mutual publication in 1978.⁴

The public rhetoric in national and international publishing venues around the South Atlantic emphasized a process of mutual self-recognition,

articulated through notions of Africa-diaspora siblinghood as well as through anti-imperialist leftist solidarity. This feeling of solidarity is perhaps no more clearly demonstrated than in Nelson Mandela's famous 1991 visit to Cuba the year after he was released from prison. In his speech accepting the José Martí Medal, Mandela declared, "The Cuban people hold a special place in the hearts of the people of Africa. The Cuban internationalists have made a contribution to African independence, freedom, and justice, unparalleled for its principled and selfless character" (17–18). The political discourse, films, and literature written about the revolutions are emblematic for their expressions of enthusiasm, seen as a contagious feeling of affinity that spreads among revolutionaries and spectators alike.⁵

The argument that post-Cold War literature by Cuban and Angolan writers is linked to feelings of "desencanto" (disenchantment), "desilusión/desilusão" (disillusionment), "desengaño"/"desengano" (disillusionment or disappointment) or "decepción"/"decepção" (disappointment) is well established in the critical canon, as I discuss below, though with Casamayor-Cisneros, I believe that "desencanto" is not the only mode of post-Cold War literature (35–36).⁶ My use of the term "disappointment," to which each of the Spanish and Portuguese terms listed above could be translated, is not solely predicated on capturing a feeling associated with the political crises after 1989, but is also linked specifically to third-world solidarity and to moments in the 1970s when enthusiasm for internationalist allegiance in effecting revolutionary transformation around the decolonizing world overlapped with ideological purging and the escalating civil war in Angola, and censorship and bureaucratization of the aesthetic spheres in Cuba. Therefore, in *Forms of Disappointment* the term signifies a feeling associated with, on one hand, a historical crisis that begins in the 1970s and culminates in the early 1990s, and the subsequent search for narrative forms to help bring that history into view. On the other hand, "disappointment" refers to the everyday negotiations of the new worlds that these crises have engendered, especially as registered in affective relationships both with other subjects and with the past. Because it is characteristic of the decades of post-Cold War transition, disappointment can be read as a "para-critical mode" of feeling as well as one associated with emergent "cultural hypotheses" (Abbas "Dialectic of Deception"; Williams). I identify disappointment as a "feeling" deliberately. First, I use it to invoke Raymond Williams's concept of structures of feeling, which can be seen as the set of "cultural hypotheses" that are both felt and thought, produced in response to conditions and experiences that continue to be lived. In *Marxism and Literature*, Williams explains that a structure of feeling "cannot without loss be reduced to belief-systems, institutions, or explicit general relationships, though it may include all these as lived and experienced" (133). As Sean Matthews

argues, in Williams's work, structures of feeling emerge at moments of social change, where the ways of articulating the new realities may still be coming into being, while Johnathan Flatley notes that Williams's concept is "useful not only because it enables us to talk about the sociality of affect, but because it enables us to describe those structures that mediate between the social and the personal that are more ephemeral and transitory than set ideologies or institutions" (Matthews 186; Flatley 25). The "ephemeral" or "emergent" nature of structures of feeling are precisely why I find the concept useful for understanding disappointment. I see disappointment as a feeling produced in the struggle to make sense of an international solidarity located in the past, and therefore as a feeling that might produce a range of political and affective responses, from disenchantment to melancholy, to the revitalization of revolutionary enthusiasm at another time or in another place.

More recently, theorists of feeling, following Fredric Jameson's configuration of affect as free-floating "intensities" that characterize the postmodern age (10–16), have debated a distinction between emotion—produced by a subject—and affect—a generalized, disembodied, or subjectless feeling.⁷ In *Ugly Feelings*, Sianne Ngai argues that certain negative feelings that "[draw] our attention to the politically charged predicament of suspended agency" can thus exist as both emotion and affect (12). That is, she accounts for feelings which are both felt by a subject—a character in a literary work, for example, as is the case of Iván in Leonardo Padura's *El hombre que amaba a los perros*, or by the swindled churchgoers in Boaventura Cardoso's *Mãe, Materno Mar*—and those which, desubjectified, might exist as an "unfelt but perceived feeling," which results from interaction with the work of art, and whose primary repository is its form (28). Drawing on Adorno's account of aesthetic autonomy as self-reflexive guilt, Ngai sees the negative feelings that she examines as "allegories for an autonomous or bourgeois art's increasingly resigned and pessimistic understanding of its *own* relationship to political action" (3). Of course, art in revolutionary Cuba and Angola was conceived and theorized as politically engaged, part of the project of social transformation; here, Ngai's reading is referring to the capitalist context of bourgeois artistic autonomy. Nonetheless, Ngai's analysis of "ugly feelings" as allegories for this uneasy relationship between art and politics can help illuminate disappointment, and I draw from her methodology of uncovering "ugly feelings" in formal elements of literature. The disappointment traced in the Cuban and Angolan works in this book are conditioned by a changing relationship between art and the public sphere: that is, with the dis-integration of public institutions and artists, and the sometimes troubled relationship between works of art and the polis in the post-1989 period. Esther Whitfield has compared the accompanying cultural boom as Cuban literature entered the global marketplace in the 1990s to a

new postcolonial paradigm, in which Cuba remained on the margins of globalized markets (17–18). A similar anxiety about Angola's place as a belated consumer of globalized mass-market culture and the corrupting effects of its post-Cold War petroculture are central to both J. E. Agualusa's *O Ano em que Zumbi Tomou o Rio* and Pepetela's Jaime Bunda novels. Disappointment is a central expression of this sense of displacement.⁸

Both internal and external fascination with the struggle to understand the aesthetics and cultural histories of the Cuban and Angolan revolutions generate anxieties that are evident in works of disappointment. Ackbar Abbas proposes a similar dialectical relationship between two modes, fascination and deception—we recall that “decepción” and “decepção” are two common translations of “disappointment” in Spanish and Portuguese—to examine the entry of cultural products from formerly colonized spaces into global circulation. For Abbas, fascination is a “para-critical” mode of apprehending an event or situation, in that it occurs when something captures our attention but eludes our understanding (348). The promise of understanding may, in fact, be a deception, but it is that promise that also holds our fascination:

Deception in the sense I am giving it signifies not a love of trickery or obscurantism; it indicates that cultural phenomena always appear to us, to begin with, without the stamp of approval, with no clear value, unrecognised or misrecognized . . . The para-critical function of fascination is that it prompts us through the enigma to attend to what our culture or even we ourselves do not want to recognise. (356)

Abbas argues that attention to fascination is particularly relevant for “emergent” sites of cultural production; attending to site-specific “secret” histories of a space like Hong Kong reveals the “problematic nature of a colonial space making the transition from imperialism to multinational capitalism, a space where all the rules have quietly and deceptively changed” (363). Abbas is primarily concerned with a critical reception that attends to the specific histories that may not be evident to an uninformed global audience consuming cultural products from places like Hong Kong. In his discussion of fascination and deception, Abbas is capturing a similar sense of contingency that Williams's concept of structures of feeling describes. We can observe the same kind of fascinated struggle for understanding thematized within works of disappointment, a struggle that also underlies the critical responses of an international readership. Each of the authors examined in this book has achieved market success following the post-Cold War contraction of state-sponsored publishing in their respective places of origin by contracting with

international publishing houses, often in Spain and Portugal, and thus write under the pressures of the rubrics of “representativeness” and “subalternity” that Abbas rightly notes predominate discussions of cultural products from emergent sites of production.⁹

This sense of “subalternity” is a central theme in the postcolonial Angolan works analyzed here, which examine the ways in which the post-independence era cites the colonial past. Similarly, Cuba’s image of itself as an ally to the Third World and its solidarity with Angola and other decolonizing nations in the mid-to-late twentieth century was predicated on its own history as a former colony and its projection of itself as the ongoing object of imperialist desire. This ideological link between the two sites is central to understanding the literary techniques that characterize narratives of disappointment originating in these spaces. While textual features such as ironic citation, the blending of genres, pastiche, and parody are central to a broad range of postmodern texts, theorists have distinguished postcolonial African and Latin American literatures from postmodern works on the basis of their long tradition of rewriting colonial histories and their politics, which focus on contestation and revision. For example, Cuban critic Margarita Mateo Palmer argues that the postmodernist “discovery” of Latin American literature operated as a kind of new critical imperialism, ignoring the historical roots of Caribbean and Latin American literature as speaking back against the colonial record from the time of the Spanish chroniclers through the twentieth century.¹⁰ Similarly, Antonio Benítez Rojo notes that Caribbean textual features analyzed in the late twentieth century through the tools of poststructuralism have a long continuity through the centuries of Caribbean colonial history (39). Therefore, while postmodernist critical frameworks help elucidate some of these texts—such as Alberto’s *Caracol Beach* or Pepetela’s Jaime Bunda novels—I distinguish works of disappointment precisely because of their historical consciousness. This historicity and what Kwame Anthony Appiah calls a political “space clearing” marks a difference between narratives of disappointment and the sort of Jamesonian postmodernism experienced as an undifferentiated and apolitical present. While the textual strategies analyzed in the following chapters share aspects with techniques identified with postmodernism, I argue that for texts conditioned by south-south allegiances and the concomitant engagement with postcolonial politics, postmodernism is not the critical framework that can best illuminate the full range of texts in which we see these practices. Rather, these works maintain a dual awareness of how revolutionary aesthetic projects have occupied a place at the vanguard of an alternative narrative of the twentieth century centered on third-world allegiance. They also record a sense of precariousness in relation to their cultural and political sovereignty that is specifically related to their former colonial histories.

From Enthusiasm to Disappointment

As I have signaled, disappointment is closely related to the structures of revolutionary enthusiasm. A brief examination of the intellectual and political histories of Cuba's and Angola's early years of enthusiasm for revolutionary change will thus help to delineate how and when this feeling of possibility gives way to disappointment. In his article "Anatomía del entusiasmo" (Anatomy of Enthusiasm), Cuban historian Rafael Rojas examines an intellectual history of the Cuban Revolution through the moment in the late 1960s and early 1970s in which two important ideological turns took place: first, the turn of the Euro-American Left away from its support of the revolution, catalyzed by the series of high-profile censorship cases beginning in the late 1960s and Cuba's subsequent rapprochement with the Soviet Union. Second, he identifies the Cuban turn toward support and identification with other revolutionary movements in Latin America and Africa, in what Rojas calls an ideology of "Third-Worldism" most clearly theorized in Roberto Fernández Retamar's seminal essay *Calibán* (1971). For Rojas, the early revolution represented a "spectacle of ideas," in which the Euro-American and Latin American Left could observe and participate in the debates about the implementation of revolutionary ideals. To describe the newness of the feeling associated with this spectacle of ideas, Rojas draws on Jean-François Lyotard's 1986 essay *Enthusiasm: A Kantian Critique of History*.

For Lyotard, as for Kant, the French Revolution of 1789 serves as a philosophical touchstone in an Enlightenment history of democratic progress. In *Enthusiasm*, Lyotard analyzes Kant's discussion of enthusiasm as the political analogue to the aesthetic feeling of the sublime invoked by an idea such as "the maxim of patriotic virtue, or of friendship, or of religion" (Kant 57) that can come about due to unprecedented political events like revolution. While for Kant the French Revolution serves as the foundational event that inspires this feeling, in Lyotard's reading, the relevance of Kantian enthusiasm in the twentieth century is the possibility of heterogeneous unanticipated events that would provoke new feelings similar to enthusiasm, which, in turn, would lead toward yet-unnamed ends. In Lyotard's postmodern world, those ends cannot be the singular idea of human progress conceived by Kant, but rather are multiple: human rights, the rights of peoples, the dictatorship of the proletariat, etc. (63–67).¹¹

In "Anatomía del entusiasmo," Rojas examines the intellectual history that leads to an interpretation of the Cuban Revolution as an event that inspires enthusiasm for, among others, the idea of decolonization, ironically developed in (often mistaken, in his view) observations about Cuban

history by thinkers from the Euro-American Left. Rojas focuses on two of the ideas that took hold among Cuban intellectuals through their contacts with international theorists: first, the narrative of the Cuban Revolution as a decolonizing event, and second, the thesis of Cuba as an underdeveloped nation. He particularly finds in Ernesto “Che” Guevara’s landmark 1965 essay theorizing the revolution “El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba” (1965) (Socialism and Man in Cuba) a strong influence from Jean-Paul Sartre’s essays on the revolution published in *France-Soir* and collected in Spanish as *El huracán sobre el azúcar* (*Hurricane over Sugar*) (1960), as well as Frantz Fanon’s *Les Damnés de la Terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*) (1961).¹² For Rojas, the result of the theses regarding decolonization and underdevelopment among Cuba intellectuals, however, was an increasing distance between the Cuban architects of the revolution and their Euro-American spectators: these observers did not identify with Cuban social conditions. This distance became for many a definitive split after the state denounced poet Heberto Padilla’s and playwright Antón Arrufat’s prizewinning works in 1968; Padilla was forced to publicly confess to crimes against the revolution (the infamous “Caso Padilla”) in 1971. These events were accompanied by Cuba’s rapprochement with the Soviet Union after Castro refused to condemn the Soviet massacre of protesters in Prague in July of 1968, marking Cuba’s definitive turn toward the Soviet bloc. The island’s subsequent geopolitical position allowed Cuba to see itself as no longer “behind” the then-called “First World,” and to serve instead as a symbolic leader to the “Third World”:

Desarrollarse y descolonizarse implicará, entonces, romper con el humanismo occidental y con la izquierda democrática del primer mundo. En 1971—año del encarcelamiento de Heberto Padilla y del Primer Congreso Nacional de Educación y Cultura, en el que los líderes de la Revolución rompieron públicamente con aquella izquierda occidental—cuando Roberto Fernández Retamar escribe *Calibán*, ya aquella relocalización geopolítica de la Isla ha sido consumada. El bárbaro que hablará entonces podrá mirar su entorno antillano y latinoamericano sin sentirse amenazado por una identidad subdesarrollada que cree haber dejado atrás. Representar a Calibán, hablar en su nombre, vindicar la lengua del colonizador será, a partir de ahí, intervenir en la constitución de otro lugar, no exactamente caribeño ni tercermundista: el Segundo Mundo socialista, la alternativa global al mercado y la democracia, desde el cual se divisa y evalúa la marcha de la humanidad. (Rojas “Anatomía” 13)

(Development and decolonization would imply, from then on, a break with Western humanism and with the democratic Left of the First World. In 1971—the year of Heberto Padilla’s imprisonment and of the First National Conference on Education and Culture, in which the leaders of the Revolution publicly broke with the Western Left—when Roberto Fernández Retamar writes *Calibán*, that geopolitical relocation of the Island had already been achieved. The barbarian who would speak from then on could look at his Antillean and Latin American surroundings without feeling threatened by an underdeveloped identity that he believes he has left behind. To represent Caliban, to speak in his name, to vindicate the language of the colonizer would mean, from then on, intervening in the constitution of another place, not exactly a Caribbean or third-world one: the socialist Second World, the global alternative to the market and to democracy, from which one could discern and evaluate the march of humanity.)

In Rojas’s analysis, the consolidation of the Cuban Revolution as a decolonizing event and its turn to the Global South is paired with subsequent expressions of “desencanto” in the turn toward censorship and bureaucratic control of the intellectual sphere. For Jorge Fornet, “disenchantment” was largely located in the gap between the revolution’s utopian dream and the concrete failures of the bureaucratic state to realize that dream, rather than in the loss of the dream itself. That loss, he argues, came “late” to Cuba—late relative to much of the rest of the world—after the crises of 1989. Following Rojas and Fornet, I therefore locate the roots of post-1989 disappointment in a series of events of the late 1960s and 1970s, though it does not fully manifest until the post-Cold War period.

What remains outside of Rojas’s analysis is the enthusiasm that the Cuban Revolution generated for intellectuals from across Africa and Latin America. Therefore, I am arguing for a more nuanced relationship between enthusiasm and disappointment than a strictly chronological one—that enthusiasm precedes disappointment. I am also signaling something more specific than a widely generalizable structural argument that revolutions inevitably fail to fulfill some part of their promise—for what revolution across the globe and throughout time has lived up to its utopian imaginary? Rojas points to an ideological barrier between the Euro-American observers of the revolution and their Cuban counterparts, a barrier that fed the thesis regarding decolonization: the fact that international Western intellectuals had no intention of reproducing Cuba’s revolutionary action back at home. However, this is the opposite of the case for many observers from across the Global South, who

explicitly looked to the Cuban model as their own decolonizing movements accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s.

When Castro and Cabral cite Cuba and Angola's "shared blood" and the "routes of slavery," they are pointing to the ways that Cuban and Angolan society have both been profoundly shaped by the enslavement of African and African-descended people and the forced migration of enslaved people from the continent to the American colonies. Yet their differing colonial processes point to how by the 1970s, Cuba occupied a geopolitical position relative to the Lusophone African colonies imagined both horizontally as third-world solidarity and as social, political, and cultural vanguard. Both nations underwent processes of belated independence in relation to their surroundings, though eighty years apart; Spain and Portugal were loath to lose the wealth from extraction and agricultural export economies supported largely by slave and coerced labor.¹³ In Angola, late colonial policies of strict social apartheid limited education and social mobility to an extremely small elite. A valuable extraction economy based on petroleum, diamonds, and cash crops with cruel forced labor conditions accelerated under Portugal's *Estado Novo* dictatorship (1933–1974), deepening and exacerbating the divisions among factions that battled the colonial regime until 1975.¹⁴ Cuba's comparatively well-developed criollo land-owning class and urban bourgeoisie at the time of independence and during the republic (1902–1961) as well as its early twentieth-century national ideology of *mestizaje* (racial mixing), distinguished Cuban prerevolutionary conditions from Angola's both economically and socially. However, during the 1960s, Cuba's revolutionary leadership sustained the theses of decolonization and underdevelopment by pointing to the dominance of US economic interests on the island and US political intervention during the republic, increasingly recognizing the racism and social inequalities inherited from slavery and the colonial system. Cuba could thus simultaneously project images of subalternity and of third-world leadership—images the United States, Portugal, and other colonial powers saw as threatening—though they were enthusiastically acknowledged by communities around the Global South.¹⁵

The origins of disappointment in the late 1960s and 1970s temporally overlaps with an ongoing appreciation for Cuba's leadership across the Global South. Alfredo Margarido notes that the Chinese and Cuban Revolutions served as ideological models in the Portuguese colonies in the 1960s as anticolonial ideas turned to direct action (14), a position that Henighan affirms, noting that eventual MPLA administrators had sought contact with Fidel Castro in the late 1950s ("Cuban fulcrum" 236). Mário Pinto de Andrade cites the Cuban Revolution as a model for cultural liberation in his reflections on the 1968 *Congreso Cultural de La Habana* (Cultural Congress of Havana) ("Reflexions").¹⁶ The rhetoric of the iterability of revolutionary liberation is

evidenced in many key documents from the early years of revolutionary third-world solidarity: from Che Guevara's "Message to the Tricontinental," in which he argues for the tricontinental ideology of multi-continental allegiance in the fight against imperialism, and calls for the creation of "two, three, many Vietnams"; to Andrade's characterization of the Cuban Revolution as a model of the "poetic act" of cultural liberation for the tricontinental ("Culture" 4); to Nelson Mandela's gratitude to Cuba for its contribution to the fight against apartheid. Cuba's turn away from the Global North to embrace African and Latin American liberation movements in the 1960s precipitates among some of its theorists a new genealogy of revolution, one founded in a radically anticolonial interpretation of the enslaved and the oppressed taking charge of their historical future.¹⁷ In many ways, post-1989 disappointment encodes a longing for the traces of that enthusiasm: the reinvigoration of the revolutionary hero in Agualusa's *O Ano em que Zumbi Tomou o Rio*, addressed in chapter 4, is an example of this longing, while the protagonists of Eliseo Alberto's *Caracol Beach* (chapter 3) and Leonardo Padura's *El hombre que amaba a los perros* (chapter 5) lament cultural worlds lost after 1989. Rather than simply following enthusiasm, disappointment is entangled with it.

As its prefix indicates, disappointment is ineluctably contingent; it follows or works in tandem with another possibility, an "enchantment," or "illusion"; a hope for a future that comes to an end, or that never comes to pass in the first place. In this sense, disappointment exists in a dialectical relationship with enthusiasm: if the feeling of revolutionary possibility before its effects are cognized and judged is one of enthusiasm, disappointment is necessarily reflective, removed in time, and sometimes in space, from the events and situations that spur it. It is relational, and therefore formally linked to one of its dominant modes of irony, which depends on shifting meaning comprised in both utterance and context. The specific literary techniques I analyze in this book as the sites of disappointment, such as allegory and pastiche, are figures of multiplicity: they depend on other uses and meanings that they reconfigure. Practices of disappointment are where revolutionary allegiances live on, though in altered forms.

In Cuba and Angola, though political transitions do not follow the same phases of colonial occupation followed by globalized capitalist present that Abbas describes, the question of the "rules that change" in the post-1989 transitions is fundamental to disappointment. The constant revisiting of times and texts from prior eras makes that transition one of the primary features that links these works together. Enzo Traverso argues that this revisiting is a global symptom of a twenty-first century which began with no new utopias on the horizon to replace those that dissipated in the final decade of the twentieth, precipitating inevitable reconsiderations of both "closed" histories

and living memory, as two converging temporalities (9–10). The temporalities that converge in works of disappointment, however, are not just those of history and memory. These works also engage an acute awareness of the relationships, sometimes overlapping, and other times divergent, among revolutionary movements and histories of resistance and rebellion that mark the Cuban and Angolan experiences. Works of disappointment are often characterized by anxieties about the asynchronicity between the postcolonial world and former colonial and neocolonial powers, in the case of Angola, or between the then-called Second World, where I place Cuba as a representative space of the socialist alternative for formerly colonized places, and its relationships to both the First and the Third Worlds.

Susan Buck-Morss refers to the mechanism of that dialectical relationship between enthusiasm and what I am calling disappointment as a “colonization” of time. Using the example of the Soviet Union, she argues that the process of implementing enthusiastic dreams of a possible future carries real risk, including violence:

Utopian visions, ‘castles in the air,’ are scientific, Lenin wrote, when they motivate a ‘new people’ to realize a revolutionary plan. Historical actualization thereby becomes the criterion for the acceptability of socialist dreaming. It seems to give proof that the dream was no mere fantasy. But in the process, history itself becomes a dreamworld. The voluntarism of the vanguard party, including the arbitrariness of its revolutionary violence, is rationalized as history striding forward. Using the masses as an instrument for realizing the dreamworld of history, the armed vanguard ‘submits’ to a conception of time that, so long as it remains victorious, legitimates its own rule . . . But when their logic, in compensating for the disappointments of today, becomes a ‘plan’ that locks in future meaning, time’s indeterminacy and openness is colonized, and the utopian dream becomes a reality of oppression. (*Dreamworld* 67)

Iván de la Nuez, in his discussion of “postcommunism” in Cuba from 1999, identifies a similar process of “colonization of the future” by an overwhelming nostalgia for the pre-revolutionary past. For de la Nuez, this idealization risks reactivating the authoritarian and imperialist regimes prior to 1959 in the contemporary moment of Cuba’s conversion into a “theme park” of ideological consumption (169). De la Nuez’s discussion reveals how the metaphor of “colonized time,” the fixing of the historical future, thus has a different valence for communities that see their political and cultural revolutions as

decolonizing efforts. The significance of the sector of the Cuban Revolution's theorists who reinforced a narrative of intellectual inheritance in the decolonizing movements of the twentieth century over a genealogy that links it to the bourgeois revolutions of the eighteenth through nineteenth centuries is fundamental to understanding Cuba's investment in Angola and Latin America and Africa more broadly. In the Angolan case, this link is even more explicit: in a place of colonial violence time is already colonized; the future of the colonial subject is already foreclosed. In agreement with many of the first-generation African leaders who embraced socialism as an alternative to forms of governance predicated on their colonizers' traditions, Aimé Césaire famously argued in 1949 that "capitalist society, at its present stage, is incapable of establishing a concept of the rights of all men, just as it has proved incapable of establishing a system of individual ethics" (37). Disappointment is, therefore, not solely a term that reduces leftist revolutionary utopianism to its most repressive actions, or sees its failures at the close of the twentieth century as inevitable. Disappointment is repetitive: it is the condition that both brings about revolutions ("the disappointments of today") and the one which might follow in their wake. It is linked, discursively, to expressions of enthusiasm as the evidence of better possible futures, and sometimes mourns the dissipation of that enthusiasm. In its literary incarnations, this repetitive nature takes the central form of citational practices focused on history, literature, and other cultural media. Acts of citation—in parody, satire, and pastiche, but also in historical novels and remappings of history—become the central modes in which disappointment is written.

Entangled Political Histories

A trans-national poetics of disappointment is uncoincidentally rooted in the periods of internationalism—Cuba's deepest engagement with third-world politics of revolution and internationalist missions, and Angola's presence on the world stage of Cold War politics in the Global South—and yet deployed at a time when world events provoke a profound reconsideration of the socio-cultural place of Cuban and Angolan literature in the world. The 1960s and 1970s in Angola, also a tumultuous period of profound political and social changes, paralleled phenomena in Cuba in a number of significant ways. Angola's anticolonial war, which began with a series of violent attacks in the north of Angola in 1961, spread throughout the colony through the 1960s, before independence was negotiated in 1974 following Portugal's Carnation Revolution. In the 1960s and 1970s differences over the ideological model that national liberation would follow and eventually among the leadership of

the MPLA resulted in the alienation and exile of some of the most important anticolonial intellectuals, including intellectual historian Mário Pinto de Andrade, poet and cultural critic Mário António Fernandes, and *negritude* poet Viriato da Cruz. Angola's civil conflict between 1975 and 1976, following the turnover of sovereignty to the Angolan people, resulted in a single-party government under the MPLA, which was disputed among the other parties, notably Holden Roberto's FNLA and Jonas Savimbi's UNITA.¹⁸ The subsequent South African invasion of Angola's borders, seen as the apartheid government's attempt to stop the spread of communism in Africa, also had the effect of helping to escalate the civil conflict, as each of the major parties depended on international support: the MPLA from Cuba and the Soviet Union, and the FNLA and UNITA from the United States and South Africa.

Just as the early years of Cuba's post-1959 changes brought intense scrutiny from international observers and catalyzed both support and condemnation, the South African invasion of Angola attracted international attention as well, albeit on a smaller scale. As David Birmingham notes, the conflict was cast internationally in terms of two of the most important political debates of the moment: the Cold War and South African apartheid; "profound horror" with South Africa's apartheid regime resulted in increased Western support for Angola's MPLA government (*A Short History* 84). However, as in the case of Cuba, the institutionalization of communist ideals of the revolution in Angola brought a rapid end to the short-lived enthusiasm surrounding independence, as Fernando Arenas notes: "It can be argued that the beginning of the end of these utopias occurred immediately after the institutionalization of the political regimes that set in after independence. In the case of Angola such a utopia was stillborn in 1975 given the deep fractures within and between the anticolonial movements" (xxx). In 1977, the young radical Nito Alves attempted a coup with support from the Soviet Union and the popular classes against MPLA leader and Angolan president Agostinho Neto, backed by Cuba and seen as a representative of the urban *mestiço* (mixed-race) class and the intellectual and political elite.¹⁹ The failed coup led to a crackdown and period of violent purges of perceived enemies of the party, a subject addressed Boaventura Cardoso's *Maio, Mês de Maria* in chapter 1, and in José Eduardo Agualusa's *O Ano em que Zumbi Tomou o Rio* in chapter 4.²⁰

If the disappointment that *Forms of Disappointment* traces is rooted in the cultural politics of the 1970s, the events of 1989–1991 precipitate the widespread reconsideration of the changing meaning of the cultural and political history of prior decades. According to the New York Accords signed in 1988 and the Bicesse Accords signed in 1991, troops were to demobilize, foreign powers including Cuba were to withdraw from Angola, and multiparty elections were scheduled; nevertheless, they failed to secure peace. UNITA leader

Jonas Savimbi's refusal to accept the MPLA's dominance in the 1992 elections triggered a second phase of devastating and violent civil war centered in the nation's cities, rather than the rural hinterland where battles had taken place in prior years. In 1989, Cuban general Arnaldo Ochoa pleaded guilty to money laundering, corruption, diamond smuggling in Angola, and drug trafficking in Cuba; he and three other military officials were executed. Piero Gleijeses argues that Ochoa's gains were limited and his corruption anomalous (494–95), though critics both on and off the island have accused the Cuban leadership of widespread involvement in these crimes.²¹ In a series of interviews with writers including Cuban authors Karla Suárez and Yoss (José Miguel Sánchez Gómez), Raquel Ribeiro points to how the Ochoa trial marked a public crisis of legitimacy that has had lasting effects on how the war was memorialized:

'Uma guerra não acaba com os acordos de paz,' escreve Suárez. Porque não se pode falar de Angola sem falar do Verão de 89. Yoss também disse: 'Entre Cuba e Angola, há um antes e um depois de Ochoa.' Antes, exibiam-se as medalhas com orgulho. Depois, esconderam-nas. A sociedade cubana estava paralisada, dividida com o julgamento, a acusação . . . conta Karla: ' . . . E quando acabou foi um silêncio total. Foi o ponto final da guerra. Custou muito: crescer com o discurso dos heróis e depois descobrir que os heróis também se fuzilam.' (Ribeiro n/p)

('A war does not end with peace accords,' writes Suárez. Because you cannot speak about Angola without speaking about the Summer of '89. Yoss also says: 'Between Cuba and Angola, there was a before and an after Ochoa.' Before, medals were displayed with pride. After, they were hidden. Cuban society was paralyzed, divided by judgement, accusations . . . Karla recounts: ' . . . And when it ended there was total silence. That was the end point of the war. It really cost us: to grow up with the discourse of heroes and then discover that heroes are also executed.')

²²

The silence surrounding the war extends back across the Atlantic as well: Eliseo Alberto has written caustically about the absence of Cuban officials and representatives at the signing of the Bicesse Accords, the tripartite peace agreement among the Angolan parties and South Africa in Lisbon (*Informe* 170–71). Angolan writers Ondjaki and Ana Paula Tavares, both of whom are among the subjects Ribeiro interviews, note how in Angola the generalized silence about the MPLA's purges and the broader violence of the war has extended to a widespread suppression of discussion about Cuba's role