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Africa in What Age: Post-Global or Post-Rwanda?

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In "African Literature in the Post-Global Age" Tejumola Olaniyan is to be found asking: Where is the world at—and Africa with it? And for Olaniyan, the contemporary world is most ideally mapped as "post-global." The purview of the post-global—its "field commonsense"—yields a world of humanity beyond the boundaries of nation, race, and territory, joined in commonalities of global need and planetary responsibility. What are the implications of the world thus known for Africanist literary practice? Can it rightly continue to be a particularist practice dedicated in restricted humanist service to Africa known in racialist, nationalist, and nativist particularity? Or ought Africanist practice to direct its humanism expansively to the service of a world in transnational and cosmopolitan linkage? Olaniyan wants Africanist literary practice to be post-global—and therefore universalist. But is Africanist literary practice well served in discarding the particular? This essay is guided in answer by Aimé Césaire's caveat: "There are two ways to lose oneself: by segregation in the particular or by dilution in the universal."

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In *Arrow of God*, Chinua Achebe hands us this nugget of Igbo proverbial wisdom: "The world is like a Mask dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place."[1] The lesson the proverb imparts is that the world that we are given to know never comes in some eternally fixed and unchanging shape or form. And, moreover, we are not guaranteed that the world will arrive in our comprehension in a form complete—and certainly not from some ultimate and securely infallible vantage point in knowledge. As it turns out, the world is contingently and multi-dimensionally shape-shifting; and, in being so, it tends necessarily to slip away from a unidimensionally fixed observational and perceptual vantage point.

What caveat does the Igbo proverbial wisdom hold out to us in regard to our Africanist practice of rendering the world in and as knowing—what we call Africanist theory? The answer is that it requires us to have our theoretical understanding enacted in perspectival contingency. Our theorizing as such is enjoined to be submitted to an ever-renewed exploratory search for the world—a world dynamic in how it is and where it is, in how it goes and where it is going. Africanist theory, if it is to have and

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1 Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God* 2e (Oxford: Heinemann, 1986), 46.

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maintain an up-to-date relevance, therefore, must play perspectival catch-up with a world on the move. It risks explanatory obsolescence and risks losing its historical utility, the moment it has ceased to be a recurrently renewed movement of discovery of a world in a temporal contingency of change.

We might see in these opening observations the premises that inform the reflections and polemics of Tejumola Olaniyan's essay "African Literature in the Post-Global Age: Provocations on Field Commonsense."[2] In it Olaniyan is to be found inquiring whether the place and perceptual vantage point where we Africanists of the literary variety have chosen to theorize from (and for)—the vantage point of "Africa"—has kept up with a world in unfolding and shape-shifting movement. Has our literary Africanist knowledge moved in time and in tandem with the Mask dance of the world, as it were? Or has the world moved on ahead leaving our theoretical comprehension of it behind, lagging in time?

In Olaniyan's judgment, literary Africanist theoretical knowledge is in a state that leaves it behind the times. Africanist theory is in an unhealthy condition of knowledge deficiency for which it needs a cure. As Olaniyan reports, "[m]ore 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." It has become necessary, therefore, to point the way for African literary studies toward "what might be its most salient and informed tools of self-constitution and self-understanding in the contemporary moment."[3] Olaniyan's critical position may be summed up this way: if one is to be properly accountable to the world, then one is required see the world well, in perceptual clarity. In these terms, a knowledge that the world has left behind is a knowledge thus rendered cognitively deficient: being anachronistic in relation to what is contemporary, it cannot see well and is bound to fail the humanistic test of world accountability. There are compelling reasons of cognitive and humanistic rectitude, therefore, why Olaniyan cannot allow Africanist theory to remain a temporal laggard in knowledge. What is to be done to correct the vision of Africanist theory, Olaniyan proposes, is to update it and bring it into (time) synchrony with the world where it is in time.

How does Olaniyan determine, compute, and name time in a contemporary (historical) currency? What time should it be for Africanist knowledge, and what time should it keep, if its field of vision is to be brought up to date—to be in time synchrony—with a world on the move? And what world is there for this knowledge to (newly) discover from/for Africa in being brought into contemporary time consonance?

Olaniyan determines it to be a *post-global* time; and this is time computed on the universal scale of the planetary and the world-historical. In this determination, humanity is currently in "the post-global age"; humankind lives in the "post-global world" and is everywhere subject to the "post-global condition." These are intellectual choices that Olaniyan has made to aid him in accounting for the world—and thus "to arrive at what might be a most enabling conception of African letters for an age I conceive of as 'post-global.'"[4] And to the extent that, in intellectual inquiry of this

2 Tejumola Olaniyan, "African Literature in the Post-Global Age: Provocations on Field Commonsense," *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 3.3 (2016): 387–96.
3 Ibid., 387.
4 Ibid, 387.

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sort, such choices are debatable, they stand in need of justification. In this regard, we are entitled to ask Olaniyan: Why choose to make Africanist knowledge answerable to global time and not local time? If Africa must keep a certain time in comprehension, why must this time be computed expansively, in world-historical terms, and not modestly, in Afro-historical terms? Among possible alternatives, why choose "post-global" as the optimal name for the time and configuration of the current world? Why might other name choices prove to be comparatively suboptimal? Why is it critical that the global be "post"-marked in the temporal and formal characterization of the contemporary world?

That his choices require intellectual, ethical, and ideological justification, Olaniyan recognizes. If we are to be Olaniyan's proper critical readers, therefore, we are tasked to evaluate whether the choices he makes are validated in the justification—and tasked, again, to inquire whether other choices he rejects or does not make would have been equally valid, if not more optimal. In the end we have to question Olaniyan: Why does the post-global appear to be for you the be-all and end-all in understanding, in accounting for, and in being accountable to, the world? For, on the basis of the evidence provided by his essay, his answer to the implied question of the explanatory status of the post-global as a be-all and end-all is an insistent: "so it ought to be." It will be necessary to inquire, however, whether we can be satisfied with the perspectival absolutism in knowledge implied by this answer.

It might be proposed that "post-global," as invoked by Olaniyan, comes in answer to a problem for knowledge, in contemporary emergence, of how it is to adequately and authentically *frame* the contemporary world. Put another way, this is a requirement that tasks knowledge in our time to conduct *cognitive mapping*[5] of the world, and thereby to come up with a revised field map that merits recognition as a just and commonsense representation of the world. It would be a world thus made out of, and received as an avatar of, proper "field commonsense." In our time, therefore, we find that a competitive race is on in knowledge to discover and recover the emergent world in what would be the best—and the most rationally ideal—of its possible representations. Undertaking to representatively frame and deliver the world in field commonsense as post-global is Olaniyan's competitive response to this emergent problem and challenge of revisionist cognitive mapping.

With the post-global, therefore, we see Olaniyan deploying a mapping frame, this frame being a cartographic device that enables him to carry out field demarcation and delimitation. Deployed to carve up the world in mapmaking, a frame like the post-global comes to do so according to some notion, concept, and sense whereby the portion of the field carved up represents, for the contents enclosed, contained, and included within it, a common and commonly defining space. A mapping frame can therefore be seen as a spatial container—and this is the case with the post-global. And this frame-as-container prescriptively implies for the contents it gathers within the limits of its enclosure a common context of their being and belonging, and of their meaning and significance. This is to say that, contextualized by the frame, these contents—which comprise real things and phenomena, processes and events, in

5 On cognitive mapping, see Frederic Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping," *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 347–60.

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natural and human existence—get to belong *in kind* to one and the same content community, one and the same referential community, as it were. The frame container confers on them kindred inclusion wherein they signify and identify in a commonality—as elements within the same frame of reference and belonging.

Post-global can be seen as such a frame container. And as such it implies for the existential and historical, empirical and experiential, elements it takes in as content a context they share in common belonging, and by which they can be collectively or generally identified and referenced in common representation and name. As a frame container, therefore, post-global is representative of a certain world content; it renders this content in a generalized (i.e., contextual) intelligibility—as "post-globality"—by bringing it within the representational purview of a common frame of reference. Thus the things and phenomena in the world make sense in common—or get their commonsense—as post-global.

Frames are produced in line with the requirement and specification of concepts—and this much is true of the post-global also. These concepts can be seen as normative controls, as such the purveyors of a "commonsense" that predetermines and dictates the basis upon which, and the extent to which, an activity framing a field in mapping sets its spatial limits. And that is to say, the extent of the field permitted to be demarcated and contained in spatial enclosure by the (mapping) frame is preset by the frame-concept. What in the world, how much of it, must come into common representational and referential purview? These are questions that are pre-answered and prescribed for the frame by its concept.

Frame-concepts and their pre-answers come historically in a variety, and this variety means that the frames they underwrite deliver in field mapping different and competing commonsense versions of the world. There are, as Olaniyan comparatively shows in his essay, various consensuses about "field commonsense"—globalist, planetarist, Africanist, Third Worldist, nationalist, and so on. Each of these consensuses has proffered a different answer, and therefore a different pathway of field mapping, to the question of what the authentic version of the world is. And each of the answers has come in line with the prescribed field commonsense of one or another frame-concept.

A major concern of Olaniyan is: By their prescribed field commonsense, are these competing modes of mapmaking guided to get their context framing, their containerization, of the content of the world right? Such a question is born of Olaniyan's ultimate concern about the world needing to get the field map of itself prescribed and constructed right. Which mapmaking mode, then, is to be proposed in demonstration as getting its frame containment right, and to be seen as such to outcompete the other modes—and thus call the field commonsense of these others into question?

It is the "post-global" above all the others that gets the world right in its frame, according to Olaniyan. And if it is the post-global that does get the world right, why is it necessary, in the first and last instances, to get the world right (as post-global)? For Olaniyan the proposition is simply that for us to misrecognize the world—because our field commonsense does not give us an adequate map of it—is for us to be misguided and misled in action in and on it. If we have not discovered the world we live in right, then we are liable to be in it and act in it in bad faith. And this coming from Olaniyan is a caveat to any historic practice that is erected and justified on humanist principles

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of responsibility and accountability to the world. On the occasion of this essay, it is a caveat that Olaniyan directs especially at literary Africanist practice. The Aristotelian injunction is said to be "know thyself"; here, by Olaniyan, the injunction to the literary Africanist is "know thy world." If the contemporary common world remains undiscovered by us, then our Africanist practice is in danger of lapsing into bad faith—humanistically irresponsible and unaccountable. Getting our cognitive map of the world right is also a proposition of getting our literary practice righteous, as it were.

Olaniyan's "post-global" obliges us—his literary Africanist interlocutors and others—to discover the world in common being and commonsense through a new and revised frame. This frame, he is out to show us, is one that the contemporary world's own objective material, human experiential, and ethical disposition across the globe prescribes as its authentic frame-concept. Post-global as a frame-concept is an abstraction from what is empirically observable in and about the world as it is and as it goes. And what is empirically and concretely observable in a unique commonality in the world today that would justify the post-global as its common-world abstract?

There is, as Olaniyan mentions, the information revolution, which has had a worldwide impact. Today, in a global commonality, mass social media has engendered mass and individual agency (as well as illusions thereof). Again, looking at the domain of law and policy, we see the common pursuit of cosmopolitan human rights as an outstanding emergent feature of the contemporary world. And, yet again, there is the rise of common concerns about our planet—concerns that have to do with the environmental and ecological sustainability of a planet that we now understand and relate to as our common human dwelling. What we see is a world that has taken on the aspect of a humanist and planetary commons—a world potentially a global commonwealth, a cosmopolis. We have a globe that has become available as a common field of ethico-political practice: the campaigns, movements, and struggles to secure human rights, social justice, and to preserve and salvage the environment, are often now practices that know no borders. They connect people, institutions, and practices trans-territorially and transnationally—here, there, and everywhere—in common human-interest and planetary-interest communities and solidarities. We are able on the basis of the available evidence on the ground to discover the world in a frame recommended by a rational humanist idealism.

The world, Africa included, is commonly undergoing, Olaniyan suggests, "quantitative and qualitative changes that introduce elements of the new, the different, and perhaps the puzzling into social life." And although it may be that the "global" as "[t]he existing formation is still recognizable," the emergent developments have "also frayed the dominant protocols of recognition in profound ways."[6] For Olaniyan, therefore, "global" is not representative enough of the world in *ideal* commonality and community. In that case, he agrees with novelist NoViolet Bulawayo that "we need new names"[7]—names that will be able to reference adequately the "particular and peculiar exacerbations of certain social processes and experiences"[8] that are newly and

6 Ibid., 389.
7 NoViolet Bulawayo, *We Need New Names* (New York: Little, Brown, 2013).
8 Olaniyan, 391.

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commonly occurring worldwide. Which name, then, to settle on among potential choices? What alternative would do in place of "global"?

For Olaniyan, the choice of name and frame of reference is "post-global." The term is not Olaniyan's original coinage, although he is to be seen originally bringing to it a revision that expands its definitional and referential scope as a frame-concept. He notes that the term has been in critical use in epochally naming, characterizing, and describing politico-economic and sociohistorical developments prior to his picking it up. Olaniyan proposes in critique, however, that the precedent usages have been limited in their conception of what constitutes the post-global. The originator of the term, Mario Deagli, for instance, proposes the events of 9/11 as the iconic starting point of the post-global era. This is a time when the chickens of globalization come home to roost as those subject to its politico-economic depredations—those exposed to social misery by neoliberalism—strike back against the centers of global power. Consequently, "[p]ost-global means the end of the project by Western capitalist countries to globalize the ideologies and practices of growth and liberalism.[9]" The term is also used by the literary critic Alfred Lopez to characterize a certain subaltern experience, the experience in common with globalization's key victims as seen in the aftermath of 9/11. In a narrowly focused and temporally compressed literary sociology, Lopez sees these victims as women, immigrants, visible minorities, the poor generally living particularly in global urban centers.

In the two instances of its deployment, Olaniyan finds that much that could have been included within the frame of the post-global has been left out. As it is originally given, "post-global" appears in a certain ethico-political perspective to be a humanistically impoverished concept. In that case, "[w]e need broader and more historically informed thinking."[10] Post-global, then, is not to be temporally framed as merely post-9/11. Rather, it requires to be framed such that its political geography and social history are humanistically all-encompassing. After all, one might argue, neoliberalism's wretched of the earth did not appear only after 9/11, nor are they and their struggles restricted in globality to only urban spaces. Olaniyan's own appropriation of the term is done to provide an expansive understanding of the post-global concept that gives it authentic global coverage.

Olaniyan will have us understand that "'[p]ost-global' does not mean we are beyond the global age"; what it does propose, though, is "that 'global' no longer adequately describes the world we live in now."[11] But why is "global" not adequate? As Olaniyan shows, the global concept has been in historical revision. A version of the global was the reigning field commonsense in the postwar years up until roughly the end of the 1980s, and it gave us the map of the world in a tripartite framing. There were three geopolitical worlds, First, Second, and Third, taken to exist in mutual exclusivity and polarity. The time of the global in three-worlds understanding—the era of anticolonial nationalism—also coincided with the consolidation around the world of national sovereignty. A new map of the global, revised in field commonsense as "the idea of a supposedly all-inclusive world," came in the 1990s, and it did so "as a critique

9 Ibid., 389.
10 Ibid., 389.
11 Ibid., 389.

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of the containerized conception of distinctive, separate, and separated three worlds." This global-in-revision, Olaniyan points out, "assumed a world of material and experiential interconnectedness that the rhetoric of three worlds was simply too rigid and too binary to accommodate." Nevertheless, the new global commonsense is itself to be criticized for assuming and not questioning:

> much the certainty of the nation-state and territorial sovereignty, especially the constitutive function of these tools for the management of inequality on a global scale. It was as if the global needed the solidity and certainty of these structural containers to give it, the global, a meaningful, substantive, even ironic content.[12]

What Olaniyan appears to be proposing in critique here are: (a) the global is parasitic on the national and therefore must be considered not nearly enough global: it must be a pseudo-global, then, if what appears in its frame is an "ironic content"; (b) the parasitic global seeks from its captive host, the nation-state, the benefit of the latter managing for it inequalities, in worldwide (neoliberal) institution, of its own making. In its politico-economic institutional form, it is a global to be known in the making of the common ruin, and not the common weal, of humanity. The foregoing, then, comes as post-global critique—ethico-political critique in essence—of the (pseudo)-global.

The global concept, a skeptical Olaniyan proposes therefore, is given in error. Unlike the global, the post-global cannot count on the solidity of nation and sovereignty—rather it is posited in acknowledgment, in our time, of the "centrifugal forces [that are] breaking closed spaces and boundaries to move outward."[13] "Probably no one," Olaniyan will have us know in this regard, "can tell a more moving story of the emptying out of the nation-state and territorial sovereignty than the African of the last thirty years or so."[14] These developments are to be welcomed for they are the ones shaping the world as an authentic global commons, the concept of this commons being that which is exemplified and actualized in the decidedly post-global practice of cosmopolitan human rights, for instance. It remains a profound contradiction of our times, however, that even as "the idea and practice of sovereignty lay exhausted all around us, the nation-state remains the unyielding framework through which 'global' agendas are made sense of and, more importantly, effected."[15]

Post-global, therefore, is proposed as the concept of a practice that will take us beyond the inauthentic globality that is anchored in a perpetuation of the retrograde nation form. Olaniyan writes in this regard:

> 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 distant second. One contradiction I often confront in instances of making this simple formulation is that most of those who

12 Ibid., 390.
13 Ibid., 391.
14 Ibid., 392.
15 Ibid., 390.

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> 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.[16]

In the era of African decolonization, we find Fanon affirming "truth [as] the property of the nationalist cause"; and this nationalist truth affirmed by him again as that which "hurries the break-up of the colonialist regime."[17] In the time Olaniyan posits as post-global, truth has ceased to be a property of the nationalist cause and become the property of the post-globalist cause. In fact, the ethico-political truth of the post-global is to hurry the break-up of the nation-state.

> The post-global disowns the tattered illusions that yoke the two entities [nation and state] 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 populations and their diverse competing interests. The organizing frame . . . is less one of belonging to a territory than of management of quality of life universally conceived.

It is to be lamented, then that, although "we already now share this conception or vision . . . that is not the primary goal of the institutions we have." And this "is why the current world is really far less 'global' than it seems and why 'post-global' is a puncturing of that illusion."[18]

Puncturing the illusion means seeing especially, about Africa, that for it:

> [g]lobal . . . has so far meant little more than a world grouping to which it belongs in holding pens (nation-states) that both objectively 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 hankering after clarity in these matters, it is because it is time indeed for the post-global.[19]

The world in global righteousness is not what we get in its nation-statist configuration. In that regard, the world cries out to be post-globally reconfigured. If so, our practices of humanistic knowing have themselves to be reconfigured in post-globalist responsibility and accountability. They are enjoined to be everywhere practices that help the world along its path toward its righteous destination—a globality beyond the nation.

"It is . . . time [then] for the post-global" whose "organizing frame . . . is universally conceived." To be on history's right side is to be on the side of the post-global; to keep proper time is to keep post-global time. Our time therefore enjoins the discovery of the post-global—as the best of possible worlds that we must

16 Ibid., 392.
17 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove, 1968), 50.
18 Olaniyan, 392.
19 Ibid., 393.

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recover from an inauthentic global and work to bring to future full realization. And the world is post-globally discovered in cosmo-ethical conception, according to which the post-global is recognized and instituted in a pan-global and all-inclusive commonality of human belonging. This is a world, moreover, where all in common belonging share equally in dessert of, and entitlement to, that which conduces to the human weal.

If the post-global concept yields the humanistic best of possible of worlds, then it is to be seen as rendering all others that come before it, in time and in comparison, inferior. The predecessors in knowledge of the post-global, therefore, must appear in the present day and for the future, out of date and out of touch. As forthrightly certified by Olaniyan, therefore, the post-global is knowledge in *ultimate* discovery of—knowledge whose answer is the be-all and end-all to the question of—which way the world in rational ideality ought to go, and in what disposition and condition the world ought in rational ideality to be. Insofar as the post-global comes in unassailable concept supremacy—as the be-all and end-all—the institution of its explanatory dominion in knowledge cannot be in question. What the post-global must recommend, if not dictate, therefore, is wholesale conceptual clearing of the decks of knowledge whereby comparatively inferior, non-ideal forms of field commonsense give way to its own.

What must this post-globalist proposition mean for the organizing frame-concept(s) of African literary studies—the ones from which literary Africanists traditionally and conventionally derive our field commonsense? In Olaniyan's judgment, a superior post-global "is *tearing to shreds* the canons of provenance that have constituted . . . the 'field commonsense' of belonging and identity of African literary studies since the 1960s."[20] A critical post-global, in effect, renders questionable the (conceptual) basis upon which our African field maps cognitively frame and construct who and what is representatively included—or not—in commonality and community of African belonging. What are the Africanist frame-concepts that prescribe for African modes of cognitive mapping what and how much they can bring into their constructive purview? Olaniyan calls these conceptual prescriptions "tests," these being the normative qualifying criteria that are held out as the authentic measures of African belonging. He identifies four such tests of belonging: *language, geography, corporeality*, and *ideology*.

There is a case to be made against these "tests" that will justify their being swept away by the post-global—or otherwise make them accommodative to its demands. And that case is made on the basis of the relation between a frame container and its field content (i.e., what is "out there," in the world), it being understood that the container is the representative and the content is the represented. Where we seek to problematize this relation between representative and represented, this proceeds from questions of two kinds: Are the contents of the world *underrepresented* or *overrepresented* by the container?

Underrepresentation implies that there is more of content out there in the world that legitimately qualifies—or is fit—to be included in a given frame container than this representative is able to reference. In this instance where legitimate claimants to representation are unable to come into a given frame's representational purview, the

20 Ibid., 393; emphasis added.

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criteria of inclusion prescribed for the frame require to be seen as flawed. Inasmuch as it underrepresents, the frame container is to be judged as inadequately, or insufficiently, or inappropriately, or inauthentically representative.

Overrepresentation implies, on the other hand, that more is included in the representative frame container than is justified or warranted. It may be said in this situation that (some) things (represented) are out of their "natural," or ideal, or authentic (representative) context and are forced to belong to another context that can only be for them less than ideal. This less-than-ideal frame then is to be seen inauthentically representing in appropriation, making its own that which may not belong to it—guilty, we might say, of representational "theft."

What is one person's underrepresentation/overrepresentation is another person's perfect representation. And this is to say that the question of whether a frame is given in underrepresentation/overrepresentation is a matter of interpretation and critical judgment—in effect, a debatable matter. A given representative frame, then, is critiqued or defended on the basis of an interpretation that adjudges the appropriateness of the qualifying criteria—that is, the prescriptions that determine what content should ideally or authentically belong in the frame. And this judgment in critique or defense of the appropriateness of qualifying criteria must itself rest on some legitimate measure by which the one judging is authorized or entitled to determine what constitutes the appropriate—and what does not.

For Olaniyan looking at the instances of how Africa comes into representation, it is a matter of the qualifying criteria for inclusion in the representative frame container "Africa." And he judges—by post-global measure—that the frames and qualifiers of language, geography, corporeality, and ideology, each to a greater or lesser degree, underrepresent the content of the African field they posit and enclose. In that regard, these frames fail to bring elements that have a legitimate case for African inclusion into their representational and referential purview.

The problem with the language test is that the hundreds of ethnic languages and speech communities spread over the African continent make it an insufficient qualifying criterion of *all*-African belonging. As things stand, no one ethnic language is able to be the frame container that can inclusively gather all of Africa into itself in common representation. "The language of a literary text or piece 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." Language as a test of belonging in nativist authenticity, therefore, posits the African frame in underrepresentation. Linguistic nativism would disqualify from authentic African belonging the foreign languages in which African literature and criticism actually get written. The ironic reality, however, is that, "[t]oday, there is little to no criticism or theory in African languages, and African literature and criticism in foreign languages . . . are dramatically expanding."[21] The fact that these foreign-language productions are "all authentically African" is something that the flawed linguistic test is to be criticized for losing sight of.

When it comes to the geographical test, it is to be seen as doing better than the linguistic one in the qualifiers by which it frames Africa in inclusionary belonging. According to the geographical test, being located on the continent and being identified

21 Ibid., 393.

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in practice with and for this continental location are the outstanding qualifications for African belonging. Hence African literature and criticism were *properly* African to the extent that these two, and the writerly and critical expertise that informed them, were confined in location and practical service to the continent. In that regard, geographical belonging was neither coincident with ethnicity nor with nativity; belonging was determined by African habitation and practical orientation. In its prescribed framing of Africa, therefore, white southern Africa and Arab northern Africa were included, and so were "foreigners long resident in Africa as scholars and writers."

For all its inclusive radicalness, however, the geographic frame is still under-representative. For, according to Olaniyan, it "is stumped by the fact that the same geography is equally not coterminous with knowledge or expertise."[22] There is, in effect, spilling over the geospatial limits of Africa, more that is qualified *now*—and qualified even back then—to be represented in African belonging than the representational purview of the geographical test admits:

> 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 a quite complicated matter for the geographical test to richly account for.[23]

Olaniyan's post-globally accommodating perspective envisions as an imminent historical development, and welcomes as an option to be desired, the following: "[v]ery soon, there will be ample literature written in China in Chinese and by Africans, Afro-Chinese, and Chinese."[24] It would appear mandatory, in the post-global view, that the geographical test requires adjustment to bring it to produce a map of Africa commonly in transnational, translinguistic, and trans-subjective belonging.

There is, besides the linguistic and geographical, the corporeal test, which, articulated in the concept of race, has proven to be the premier qualifying criterion for inclusionary African belonging. The corporeal test, we are told, "is in scholarly circles in Africa and beyond . . . the most popular and most empirically commonsensical, even more than geography." And, furthermore, "it is the most historically evocative in a racialized world."[25] Authors and scholars, and their literary and critical productions, are included in African belonging according to the qualifying measure of racial blackness, it being understood in this that the Africa(n) defined according to black racial prescription is also in her or his geospatial location "sub-Saharan."

But should race be the ultimate qualifier, its legitimation offered on the empirical basis of Africa in self-evidence as a continent peopled by black humanity? Of course, the supposed empirical evidence does not stand up to scrutiny—there is more racially and racio-geographically to Africa than blackness—and more to being African than

22 Ibid., 394.
23 Ibid., 394; emphasis in original.
24 Ibid., 394.
25 Ibid., 394.

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being sub-Saharan. The corporeal framing of Africa underrepresents in being unable to admit into its representative purview other-than-black continentals who, based on the empirical evidence on the ground, are equally and legitimately entitled to African belonging: the Arabs, whites, Asians, and so forth of Africa. It is an absurd situation, then, where these non-black and non-sub-Saharan others are found to be upholders of the corporeal test.

> What would be the definition of the corporeal test for white, Arab, and Asian African scholars 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 forgo entirely any quest for Africanness in favor of other parts of their hyphenated composition, be it white, Arab, and Asian, which are also racial?

The corporeal test is wrongheaded on empirical grounds, but beyond this it is also to be called into question on ethical grounds. What appears in the frame as representatively African is humanistically impoverished because it comes in exclusionary and racist definition. "The fact that the corporeal test was and remains a favorite of many racially prejudiced nativists, Africans and otherwise, should be a big strike against it."[26]

There is, finally, the ideological test, "the most secular and worldly of our field commonsense" for which "what matters is not Africanness as any metaphysical category but as informed, sympathetic even if critical concern for the promotion of [Africa's] objective interests." A metaphysical understanding and framing of Africa must give way to a secular-materialist framing of the same. Here we must learn to separate "the racial affect of Africanness from global social inequality that structures it," for the reason that "even though the two are related they are not the same." Defining our objective interests as Africans, Olaniyan implies, needs no particularist mediation—and most certainly not the particularist mediation of the categorically racial kind. In the end, therefore, we are all human, in secular-materialist definition. As such, the interests that articulate Africans in common belonging are no special interests that attach to a racial people in particular. Once we have "decipher[ed] [them] . . . through [historical, political, economic, and sociological] study of the composite life of the [African] polity,"[27] we discover these interests as ultimately worldly ones.

In the ideological instance where field commonsense comes in interest-relative definition, we are enjoined to discover Africans in transcendental belonging—beyond exceptional belonging—in a universally common humanity. Olaniyan can conclude, therefore, "on race in the post-global moment, the requirements for Africanness would be less mystical, less restrictive, more objective on the transparent issues of material inequality, and also more opaque on the subjective issues of degrees of Africanness, such as skin color or language or location."[28] What is more, in the universalist commonsense of the post-global, "[t]he true measure of Africanness

26 Ibid., 393.
27 Ibid., 395.
28 Ibid., 396.

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[in literary or literary-critical writing is to be elicited from] 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."[29]

Olaniyan in conclusion is emphatic in endorsing the post-global: "the reason for the extreme corporeal, locational, linguistic, formal, and thematic dispersion of contemporary African literature and literary theorizing" is that "the post-global condition is tearing to shreds . . . our long-standing canons of [African] self-understanding. . . ."[30] When all is said and done, however, can we be happy with his nearly wholesale clearance of our Africanist conceptual decks to make room for the dominant institution of the post-global in their place? If Africa is enjoined to discover and be in time consonance with a world in change and revision—"the post-global moment"—is the knowledge pathway to this discovery justified in coming *only* in and through the universal field commonsense proffered as "post-global"? If the post-global is presented as the solution to the problem of African frames in underrepresentation, could we not see the post-global, in presuming to take the representative place of Africa, creating the opposite problem of overrepresentation? Would that not be tantamount to conceding that there is nothing that, in and for its particular self, Africa can representatively say; and that it must defer all such saying to the omni-representative post-global? In that case, is Africa not reduced to a condition of representational silencing? And that surely would be Africa placed in a representational situation not unlike the one that Karl Marx once diagnosed about the European underclasses: "They cannot represent themselves; [by superior others] they must be represented."[31] In the African instance diagnosed by Olaniyan, the proposition that emerges, we might say, is: "they are no longer allowed to representatively frame themselves; by another—'post-global'—they must be so framed."

Let us recall once more that the post-global's "organizing frame . . . is *universally* conceived." If this is what is on offer for Africa, do we not do well to pay heed to Aimé Césaire's caveat: "There are two ways to lose oneself: by segregation in the particular *or by dilution in the 'universal'* "?[32] And should Martha Minow's questions also not be our own: "when does treating people differently emphasize their differences and stigmatize and hinder them on that basis? *and when does treating people [as universally] the same become insensitive to their difference and likely to stigmatize or hinder them on* that *basis?*"[33]

Such questions should indicate that we find the proposition of the post-global as a be-all and end-all unsatisfactory—and that it is important that Africa, even at a time when it is enjoined to discover and keep time with the world, does not get to be *completely* spoken for in universality of the post-global definitional kind. We must seek out of Africa that which allows it to speak representatively for itself and from its

29 Ibid., 395.

30 Ibid., 395.

31 https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch07.htm. Accessed on April 17, 2017.

32 Césaire is quoted in Christopher Miller, *Theories of Africans: Francophone Literature and Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 24; emphasis added.

33 Martha Minow, *Making All the Difference: Inclusion, Exclusion, and American Law* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 20; emphasis added.

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difference. The polemical proposition here—or "provocation," as Olaniyan might put it—is that Africa discover and keep world time independently, on representative terms furnished by its own identifiably immediate—and therefore *intimately local*—historic and existential conditions. In this regard, Africa must come in discovery and time to the world on the basis of a field commonsense derived from its own situation and condition.

We must ask, therefore, what time we are to discover that it is in our locally representative interest—as African humanity—to keep. And the demand is that we endeavor to produce a frame that represents Africa bound in ethical commonality to keep, and to be accountable to, this time. What is Africa idealized, then, in temporal commonality—and how is this commonality to be referenced? We might propose in answer: *post-Rwanda* time. And this would be making a referential icon of the time of, and following, the genocidal events that shook Rwanda from April to June 1994.

Let us look at a scene of instruction where the lessons that come out of the extreme tragedy in that single African country are urged on others as relevantly all-African—in effect, as lessons that it is in Africa's common interest to learn and to apply. As reported on April 9, 2017, by the Ghanaian news website *MyJoyOnline*:

> The government of Rwanda has entreated Ghana to learn lessons from the ethnic cleansing which claimed the lives of millions [*sic*] of Rwandans in 1994. Chairman of the Rwandan Community in Ghana, Bernadin Gatete, says failure by Ghana to embrace its ethnic and cultural diversity could plunge the country into similar atrocities. Between April and June 1994, over 800,000 minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus were murdered in a genocide by the Hutu majority. . . . The killing was . . . triggered by a media tirade by a journalist [named] Hassan Nzege who called for extermination of Tutsi minority groups and provided names of people to be killed. In [a hundred] days there was mass slaughter of human beings. . . . The killings had come about as a result of deep-seated hatred and ethnic differences between the Hutus and Tutsis. Speaking with JOY NEWS on the occasion of the 23rd commemoration of the ethnic cleansing, Bernadin Gatete entreated the government of Ghana to strengthen laws which promote justice and equity. *"The key lesson that we thought we should share with Ghana is that we should have a common denominator as a country. We should avoid looking at each other from the things that differentiate us but rather the things that bring us together."*[34]

Let us ask here: In terms of what field commonsense is Rwanda projected above? For what time and space *in immediacy* is Rwanda's monumental tragedy given its epochal significance? Who is qualified to commonly share in the Rwandan experience and to be a shareholder in the lessons imparted by that experience? It does not stretch credulity to respond to these questions: "all of Africa." To answer this way is to propose that Rwanda's experience transcends its particular national locality and that it is able to speak in translocal representation as an all-African experience from which all-African lessons are to be drawn. Africa thus appears space-framed and time-framed in common belonging and common sharing as post-Rwandan.

34 http://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2017/April-9th/learn-genocide-lessons-ghana-govt-told-as-rwanda-marks-23rd-anniversary.php, accessed April 9, 2017; emphasis added.

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In that case, what time is it in African space as post-Rwandan? Post-Rwanda resets African time as nation time, a time that imposes on Africans a communalist imperative and burden of nation-building. And this is to be accomplished out of, and in spite of, the peculiar historical and existential conditions that, everywhere on the continent, Africans are similarly given. For the majority of Africans, it is not living between and across nations and territories—the post-global condition—that is immediately salient. What has immediate salience, rather, is Africans living as members of different ethnocultural groups within the "contact zones" of the various territorial enclosures we call African nations. We are to see Africans in the immediate circumstances of local territorial dwelling, obliged by the accidents of colonial and postcolonial histories to live their differences in side-by-side and face-to-face interaction. Is the African situation to degenerate into a facing off of contending interests—in the manner in which it disastrously did in Rwanda?

The African communalist project is placed in accountability in post-Rwandan time as monitory time—time that comes in warning to Africa in common that failure in the nation-building project is not an option. For the road of failure leads to Rwanda in the extremity of human tragedy. In post-Rwanda time comes a call to Africa, then, to redouble the effort to communally and commonly forge "out of the many one" and to do so locally guided by the humanistic principle of "one for all, all for one." Post-Rwanda time urges on Africa a renewed consideration of the question of where it ought to go, and how, in order to attain the best of possible local worlds. And this would be the institution of nationalist confraternity in intimate locality, within the immediate confines of our common dwelling. Therein we are to locally imagine and build survivable community—or to commonly perish in failing to do so. In the construct post-Rwanda, we discover and recover Africa in common—in field commonsense—in an *updated* communalist-humanist ethics, the situated ethics of a locally legitimated cultural nationalism.

"The most important issue in African cultural politics is the relationship of Africa with itself; the encounter of African nations, peoples, societies with one another."[35] Biodun Jeyifo wrote these words in 1992, and they should still ring true today. Against this proposition, Olaniyan would argue from the post-global perspective that the cultural nationalism of the local is an anathema. The communitarian nationalist project must be abandoned altogether in Africa—and elsewhere. For if "the postcolonial nation-state frame" has ensured "[f]or much of post-independence on the continent [that] politics be [largely] the politics of nationalities," involving "the imagining the nation as a community of shared culture and worldview," this proposition has been "more than less a Trojan horse." For Olaniyan, more than anything else, it is a materialist-humanist ethics that, globally, humanity needs. And the world in its cultural-nationalist imagining and institution—anchored in the institutional norm of the nation-state—detracts from the world's ideal realization in materialist-humanist institution, the kind that would usher humanity at large into a post-global best of possible worlds. For that world inscribed in post-global ethical

35 Biodun Jeyifo, "Literature in Postcolonial Africa: Repression, Resistance, Reconfigurations," *Dissent* (Summer 1992): 356.

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desire, to repeat, "[t]he organizing frame . . . is less one of belonging to a territory than of management of quality of life universally conceived."[36]

This is all very well. From another perspective, however, we are reminded, as literary-Africanist practitioners and knowledge producers, about the ethical demands imposed by our African situation in its intimate locality. Thus Simon Gikandi, in his reflections on "Literature and Moral Considerations":

> If we are going to use theory to respond to the African crisis, a crisis whose most important symptom is the collapse of institutions, the violation of bodies, and the absence of an ethics around which social practices might be organized, then it is perhaps imperative for us to rethink the usefulness of theories and categories that have fallen out of favor elsewhere, such essentialist categories as community, being, and morality.[37]

If Gikandi affirms anything, it is that there is a world to be discovered for ethical knowledge and practice on Africa's own contextually limited terms—the terms of a locally derived field commonsense. And it speaks volumes that Gikandi makes Rwanda take center stage in his meditations on the African crisis. By so doing, for our time, he makes the question of literature and moral considerations, as an urgent African question, a post-Rwanda proposition.

Will a post-global world not be good to have from an African perspective, then? It is true that the post-global points us in rational-idealist conception toward the best of possible worlds. It is a world that Africans and all others should desire and should work to bring into being. But we also see in the manner in which its sponsor, Olaniyan, presents the post-global that it appears to brook no competitor. The post-global comes "tearing into shreds," or demanding submission from, other conceptions of the world and of selves, other modes of field commonsense. In that regard, even though the post-global is to be embraced for the desirable humanist ideal that it is, we must also worry about the possibility that Africa embracing the post-global may end up getting smothered by the latter's comprehensive universalism. A post-global misrecognition of what makes Africa specific becomes a hindrance to proper African self-perception or discovery of where Africa is in its own time and place; what Africans ought to be doing in their practices that are humanistically responsible and accountable to this African specificity; and in what direction, and to what end, Africanist practice should bring itself to steer Africa to find, in African-specific definition, the best of possible worlds.

In the end, we can affirm that a post-global world will be good to have, but in the same breath must come an affirmation also that an African world would be good to keep. It is a matter of the post-global and the African, the universal and the particular, existing and relating in reciprocal recognition, and not of the one obliterating the other. What is the point of killing Africa in order to save it?

36 Olaniyan, 392.

37 Simon Gikandi, "Literature and Moral Considerations," *Research in African Literatures*, 32.4 (2001): 16–17.

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