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Interpreting the ‘Thaw’ from the ‘Third World’: The Guyanese Writer Jan Carew on Modernization and Trauma in the Early 1960s Soviet Union

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This paper analyzes how the Guyanese writer Jan Carew explored the results of Soviet modernization and the trauma caused by Stalinist terror and the Gulag through the eyes of exchange students from the ‘Global South’ in the early 1960s. His novel *Moscow is not my Mecca* dismisses the USSR’s development as a model for newly emerging post-colonial states and depicts racist attitudes in Soviet society. Thus, Carew defied Soviet propaganda conveyed through intensified cultural diplomacy towards ‘Third World’ intellectuals, which brought authors such as Carew and exchange students to the USSR since the mid-1950s. However, I argue that the issues Carew addresses and the aesthetic tools he uses mirror Soviet Thaw literature of the time, which intended to revive communist utopianism. The Guyanese’s writings are therefore also an example of successful cultural diplomacy of the USSR, which is largely overlooked. The paper illuminates this by focusing on Carew’s portrayal of Russian peasants and the USSR’s peripheries on the one hand, and Soviet society’s inability to cope with its traumatic past on the other. It highlights some commonalities to Ilya Ehrenburg’s *The Thaw* and Vladimir Dudintsev’s *Not by Bread Alone*. The paper contributes to a new history of the Cold War, illustrating how permeable the ‘Iron Curtain’ could be. While most studies in this field focus on how global cultural influences shaped Soviet society, few explore the reverse effects.

*Introduction*¹

In 1964, writer Jan Carew from then still colonial British-Guiana published the novel *Moscow is not my Mecca*,² which tells the story of disillusionment of the Guyanese exchange student Jonathan “Jojo” Robertson. The protagonist comes to the USSR to learn the skills for developing his home country after its expected independence, but has to leave without a diploma after Russian thugs called him “uncultured,” a “Black monkey,” and beat him up because they were envious of

¹ I would like to thank Daria Tashkinova, Violet Dove, Paul Sprute, Alexandra Holmes and Maike Lehmann for helpful commentaries and Maria Laranjeira for invaluable corrections.

² Jan R. Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1964).

his Russian girlfriend.³ Therefore, 1960s Western media and more recent scholarship have a good reason to focus on Carew's book in the context of racist attitudes in the USSR that were reported by exchange students such as Carew's cousin Danny.⁴ Unlike earlier foreign visitors of the 1920s and 30s (namely African-American workers who helped industrialize the country), this new generation of travelers did not praise the USSR for its unprecedented equality devoid of racism.⁵ On the contrary, their accounts threatened to shatter the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's (CPSU) propaganda, which presented itself as a non-racist alternative to "imperialist" Western states.⁶ By reporting racist violence in the USSR and openly protesting against it, exchange students from the 'Third World' widened opportunities of what could be said and done, inspiring later Soviet dissidents.⁷

However, there is much more to Jan Carew's complex assessment of Soviet society than its depiction of racist attitudes against exchange students. As Tobias Rupprecht has pointed out, Cold War perceptions of Western observers during the early 1960s obscured that Carew, in addition to other Latin American writers and exchange students, also criticized racism in Western states and their colonies at the time, as well as stressing the positive aspects of Soviet society.⁸ For example, the characters in Carew's book report numerous incidences of "hospitality and

³ "Uncultured" on Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 57; "Black monkey" on *ibid.*, 25, 33, 185.

⁴ Maxim Matusевич, "Probing the Limits of Internationalism: African Students Confront Soviet Ritual," *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 27, no. 2 (2009) 22 on Carew, 30 on Nigerian students being called "monkeys", beaten up and even killed; Maxim Matusевич, "Expanding the Boundaries of the Black Atlantic: African Students as Soviet Moderns," *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2012), 338; Joy G. Carew, "Black in the USSR: African Diasporan Pilgrims, Expatriates and Students in Russia, from the 1920s to the First Decade of the Twenty-First Century," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 8, no. 2 (2015), 204; on Western reception see Tobias Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin: Interaction and Exchange Between the USSR and Latin America During the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 191-192. On 'Third World' exchange students and African-Americans in the USSR, see the bibliographical essay by Jan Carew's wife in Joy Gleason Carew, *Blacks, Reds, and Russians: Sojourners in Search of the Soviet Promise* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 257-263.

⁵ See the articles of Various Authors *The Russian Review* 75, no. 3 (2016); Barbara Keys, "An African American Worker in Stalin's Soviet Union: Race and the Soviet Experiment in International Perspective," *The Historian* 71, no. 1 (2009).

⁶ On the USSR's decidedly 'anti-imperialist' self-definition see Terry Martin, "An Affirmative Action Empire: The Soviet Union as the Highest Form of Imperialism," in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald G. Suny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 80-81.; Odd A. Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 48, 67.

⁷ Julie Hessler, "Death of an African Student in Moscow: Race, Politics, and the Cold War," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 47, 1/2 (2006); Matusевич, "Probing the Limits of Internationalism", 25 f.; According to Jan Carew, his cousin played a major role in the protests described by Hessler and Matusевич, Jan R. Carew and Joy Gleason Carew, *Episodes in my Life: The Autobiography of Jan Carew* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2015), Compiled, Edited & Expanded by Joy Gleason Carew, 84.

⁸ Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin*, 92; Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 14, 25-26, 42; Carew and Carew, *Episodes in my Life*, 65, 81, 77.

solidarity towards people from Third World countries.”⁹ Such passages are also not mentioned by historians such as Maxim Matusevich, who only refers to Carew as an example for “[a]ccounts by African students in the Soviet Union [...] replete with complaints about drab lifestyles, everyday regimentation, sub-standard dorm accommodations, and alleged spying by Soviet roommates.”¹⁰ Rupprecht, on the other hand, interviewed 15 former Latin American exchange students of different class and ideological backgrounds, concluding that “[w]hile xenophobic violence did become a huge problem from the 1980s, it was not a day-to-day issue for foreign students in the 1960s and 1970s.”¹¹ Instead, many of them – especially those of a lower social background – at least retrospectively laud the USSR’s perceived high standards of education and living, as well as the people’s generosity.¹² Thus Rupprecht, one of the few authors engaging with Soviet cultural diplomacy towards the ‘Third World’, concludes that it was largely a ‘success story’ in the case of Latin America.¹³

In this paper, I would like to illustrate how both of the aforementioned positive and negative accounts of Soviet cultural diplomacy are reflected in Carew’s writings. I will do this by exploring how the exchange students from the ‘Third World’ in his novel depict the results of Soviet modernization, and the trauma caused by Stalinist terror and the Gulag in the early 1960s. I argue that Carew’s negative account of Soviet development exemplifies unintended consequences of the CPSU’s efforts to gain sympathies from people in newly independent ‘Third World’ states during the mid-1950s and 60s. After all, like other Latin American, Asian, and African intellectuals, Carew was invited to visit the USSR’s peripheries and its capital in 1961/62 to write about the impressive record of rapid industrialization and education, as well as the non-racist nature of the multi-ethnic USSR – not about racism.¹⁴ However, his book also shows how successful the cultural exchange instigated by the CPSU’s new leader Nikita Khrushchev could be: Carew applied the language, imagery and contents of critical, yet optimistic

⁹ Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin*, 192.

¹⁰ Matusevich, “Expanding the Boundaries of the Black Atlantic”, 338.

¹¹ Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin*, 217. Rupprecht does not explain the change occurring in the 1980s any further. Matusevich, “Expanding the Boundaries of the Black Atlantic”, 74-75 names two factors for growing xenophobia during the 1980s: ‘Perestroika’ and ‘Glasnost’ lead to an unprecedented extent of free speech, Soviet critics used this to blame the huge sums of military and ‘development’ aid given to Africa as a cause of economic decline at home.

¹² Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin*, quote on 217, 227. *ibid.*, 188 also claims that “really negative reports” by intellectuals only started in the 1980s; Carew himself stresses that the education granted to exchange students from the ‘Global South’ would have been unattainable for them in their home countries, and yet they complained about its quality to him, Carew and Carew, *Episodes in my Life*, 80.

¹³ Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin*, quote on 223; see also *ibid.*, 186-190.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 162, 172; Ragna Boden, “Globalisierung sowjetisch: Der Kulturtransfer in die Dritte Welt,” in *Globalisierung imperial und sozialistisch: Russland und die Sowjetunion in der Globalgeschichte 1851-1991*, ed. Martin Aust (Frankfurt am Main [u.a.]: Campus, 2013), 431.

Soviet ‘Thaw’ literature to deliver his own critique of Soviet society. Thus, in Carew’s case, the strategy of propagating high culture such as Russian literature or ballet, which formed the second pillar of Soviet cultural diplomacy besides stressing rapid modernization,¹⁵ seems to have been quite effective.¹⁶

For several reasons, exploring these connections is a fruitful contribution to the growing body of literature that is trying to write a new history of the Cold War by focusing more on culture than on military aspects, and more on ‘peripheral’ than on ‘central’ regions.¹⁷ Firstly, the importance of Soviet Thaw literature for political, social, and cultural changes in the USSR between 1955 and the late 1960s can hardly be overstated. The fact that contemporaries as well as today’s historians named this period of Soviet history after Ilya Ehrenburg’s seminal novel *The Thaw* is a testament to that.¹⁸ Yet, the international influence of Thaw literature and the discussions revolving around it have barely been researched. The few exceptions focus on its reception in Western countries or Western influences in the Soviet Union.¹⁹ Secondly, the Cold War is increasingly being interpreted as a conflict revolving around competing concepts of ‘modernity’ and ‘modernization,’ in which the ‘First’ and ‘Second’ tried to convince the ‘Third World’ that their respective model was superior.²⁰ “Yet,” as David Engerman has noted, “few pay much attention to the opponent in this battle, the USSR, and none examines in any depth Soviet activities in the Third World.”²¹ I understand ‘modernity’ as

¹⁵ Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin*, especially 128-230 and 190; Boden, “Globalisierung sowjetisch”, 432, 436.

¹⁶ Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin*, especially 128-230 and 190; Boden, “Globalisierung sowjetisch”, 432, 436; Carew and Carew, *Episodes in my Life*, 81, recalls the “magical moments” of seeing the Kirov Ballet Company perform and visiting the Hermitage Museum.

¹⁷ See the issues of the “Journal of Cold War Studies” of the last years; Westad, *The Global Cold War*. I am aware that ‘periphery’ and ‘center’ are critically discussed terms, because they may imply that only those in the center act, while the peripheries react. This was not always the case in the USSR, although the center of power lay in Moscow, and the peripheral states could not develop self-sufficient economic structures that would have allowed them to act more independently; Martin, “An Affirmative Action Empire”, 75-76.

¹⁸ Ilja Ehrenburg, “Tauwetter,” in *Über Literatur - Essays, Reden Aufsätze; Tauwetter*, ed. Ilja Ehrenburg (Berlin (Ost): Volk und Welt, 1986 [Tauwetter 1956]).

¹⁹ Polly Jones, “The Thaw Goes International: Soviet Literature in Translation and Transit in the 1960s,” in *The Socialist Sixties: Crossing Borders in the Second World*, ed. Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane Koenker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Vladislav M. Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 89-120.

²⁰ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 1-72.

²¹ David C. Engerman, “The Second World’s Third World,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, no. 1 (2011), 188. In this paper, I do not illuminate the USSR’s activities in the ‘Third World’, but their consequences on a cultural level. When referring to countries in the southern hemisphere sharing a history of being colonized and a resulting higher poverty compared to countries in the northern hemisphere, I personally prefer to speak of ‘Global South’ rather than ‘Third World’, as the latter may imply a hierarchy of ‘development,’ in which ‘Third World’ means economically or culturally ‘backward.’ I use ‘Third’ or ‘Second World’ to hint at a perception of contemporaries of coming ‘from different worlds’; Andrea Hollington et al., “Concepts of the Global South. Voices from Around

an analytical concept rather than a normative category and 'Socialist modernity' as one of its ideal type variants, which is not *per se* 'better' or 'worse' than other forms of 'modernity' found in Western countries or the 'Global South.' 'Socialist modernization' includes a bundle of processes aimed at transforming a predominantly agrarian society into an industrial one. This meant the establishment of a planned economy based on heavy industry, collectivization of farms, urbanization, bureaucratization, a general faith in 'social engineering,' and the transformation of nature through technology and science.²² These processes were often forcefully introduced by a dictatorial regime, but also appropriated and changed by 'ordinary' citizen.²³ How people interpreted these changes and their underlying assumptions are thus a constitutive part of 'modernity' and 'modernization.'²⁴ This leads us to the third argument for analyzing Carew's writings: We know little about how people in the 'Global South' interpreted 'Socialist modernity' or how they appropriated Soviet cultural influences. Most scholarship focusses on how global cultural influences shaped Soviet society,²⁵ but few explore reverse effects. As Carew was a globally renowned activist, publicist, scholar and teacher on racism, pan-Africanism, and (post-)colonialism, his interpretation of Soviet society is one worth analyzing.²⁶ His novel provides interesting insights on all three of the aforementioned aspects if we analyze more closely *how* he explains racism against exchange students rather than just noting the fact *that* he does.

Such an approach also reflects the two-sided nature of Soviet 'Thaw' literature and its societal reverberations. I understand the Thaw in a twofold manner: first, as a literary-aesthetic form, which leads to the question to what extent Carew wrote *like* Thaw protagonists; second, as a historical event and period, leading to the question in what way Carew wrote *about* the Thaw. Both aspects are intertwined: by writing about certain issues in a certain manner with a specific inten-

the World," accessed 03.14.2017, kups.ub.uni-koeln.de/6399/1/voices012015_concepts_of_the_global_south.pdf; Jürgen Dinkel, "'Dritte Welt': Geschichte und Semantiken. Version 1.0." accessed 03.14.2017, https://docupedia.de/zg/Dritte_Welt.

²² Marie-Janine Calic, Dietmar Neutzat, and Julia Obertreis, "Introduction," in *The Crisis of Socialist Modernity: The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the 1970s*, ed. Dietmar Neutzat, Julia Obertreis and Marie-Janine Calic (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 9-14.

²³ Stephen Lovell, *The Soviet Union: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 37-57.

²⁴ This approach reflects concepts such as Shmuel Eisenstadt's "multiple modernities" or Anthony Giddens' and Ulrich Beck's interpretations of a "reflexive modernity"; see Thomas Mergel, "Modernisierung," accessed 03.14.2017, <http://ieg-ego.eu/de/threads/modelle-und-stereotypen/modernisierung/thomas-mergel-modernisierung>.

²⁵ Sudha Rajagopalan, *Indian Films in Soviet Cinemas: The Culture of Movie-Going after Stalin* (Bloomington [etc.]: Indiana U.P, 2009); Matusevich, "Expanding the Boundaries of the Black Atlantic"; Rupprecht, Soviet Internationalism after Stalin, 73-126; Denis Kozlov, "Introduction," in Kozlov; Gilburd, *The Thaw*, 12-13.

²⁶ For a short summary of Carew's vita see Margaret Busby, "Jan Carew Obituary," *The Guardian*, 12.21.2012, accessed 01.13.2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/dec/21/jan-carew>. For a more extensive one, including a comprehensive bibliography, see Carew and Carew, *Episodes in my Life*.

tion, Thaw writers influenced and initiated social, cultural, and political changes. Their works were widely, controversially, and publicly debated by Soviet citizens of all backgrounds and thereby also influenced politics under Khrushchev. Among the issues discussed were the freedoms that should be granted to cultural production and the extent to which the Gulag should be transformed into an institution preparing inmates for a return into ‘normal society’ by aligning living conditions in the camps to those outside of them.²⁷ Thaw writers wanted to create a new emotional language in order to inspire a forward-looking psychological condition and revive Communism’s utopianism. Thus, Ehrenburg’s metaphor turned into a “‘self-fulfilling prophecy’ that structured reality.”²⁸

I will consult three of Carew’s texts: *Moscow is not my Mecca*, passages in his autobiography dealing with this book and its origins, and a New York Times article on a visit to Belorussia.²⁹ I will interpret the novel as it presented itself to its readers in the foreword: a work of fiction claiming to be inspired by ‘real’ stories of Guyanese exchange students, with the intention of raising awareness for growing racism in the USSR. The Guyanese writer from a Creole family was invited by the Union of Soviet Writers to travel the USSR twice in 1961/62.³⁰ At the same time, his cousin Danny studied in Moscow and Leningrad, just as Carew himself had done in 1949 in Prague.³¹ During these travels, the writer met two factions of people whose influences would come to shape his book: exchange students from the ‘Global South,’ who told him about the racism they experienced, and intellectuals of the Soviet *intelligentsia* who seemingly conveyed the aesthetics and contents of the literature and political discourse of the Thaw to him.³² It is crucial to critically cross-check Carew’s contemporary writings with the contexts

²⁷ Karen Laß, *Vom Tauwetter zur Perestrojka: Kulturpolitik in der Sowjetunion, 1953-1991* (Köln: Böhlau, 2002), 44-196; Jeffrey S. Hardy, “‘The Camp Is Not a Resort’: The Campaign against Privileges in the Soviet Gulag 1957-61,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 13, no. 1 (2012).

²⁸ Denis Kozlov and Eleonory Gilburd, “The Thaw as an Event in Russian History,” in Kozlov; Gilburd, *The Thaw*, 23. The Thaw can be characterized as a period of ambiguous reform processes: the Soviet Union opened up domestically and internationally, but thereby often caused unintended consequences and new tensions within society leading to a dynamic of constant rollbacks and re-introduction of reforms. Other issues than those already mentioned were breaking with the ‘Stalinist’ past, affordable new housing or irrigating the Kazakh steppe’s ‘Virgin Lands’, see Polly Jones, *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era* (London, New York: Routledge, 2006).

²⁹ Carew and Carew, *Episodes in my Life*; Jan R. Carew, “Being Black in Belorussia Is Like Being from Mars,” *The New York Times*, 09.19.1971.

³⁰ Carew and Carew, *Episodes in my Life*, 71.

³¹ In his autobiography, Carew barely mentions his studies in Prague and does not recall any incidents of racism there, while he stresses the racism he experienced while studying in the USA, *ibid.*, 11-35.

³² Carew and Carew, *Episodes in my Life*, 55-87; Foreword in Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 9-10. Unfortunately, in the texts I consulted, Carew does not discuss to what extent Soviet writers influenced his work. However, considering the Thaw’s omnipresence in Soviet public debate in 1961/62 as well as Carew’s interest in socialism and Soviet culture, it is hard to imagine that he did not read some Soviet works and engage in a dialogue on Thaw literature’s contents and aesthetics while visiting the USSR.

he retrospectively gave in his autobiography. Due to pragmatism, I will interpret only these texts, not their perception.³³ The paper will also illustrate commonalities between Carew's writings and the two most domestically and internationally influential works of Soviet Thaw literature: Ilya Ehrenburg's *The Thaw* and Vladimir Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone*.³⁴ Further research should compare Carew to other Soviet Thaw literature, differentiate between its different periods, as well as elaborate on the changing environment of cultural policy in which Soviet authors operated, which would have been beyond the scope of this article.³⁵ However, this is balanced by a detailed and unprecedented focus on Carew's appropriation of Soviet influences, as well as by the consultation of secondary literature.

The Periphery in the Center: Alienation through Modernization

Descriptions of alleged 'primal' Soviet peasants form an integral part of Carew's novel. He presents these people as warm-hearted and discovers major similarities to people's mentality in the 'Global South.' However, this 'warm' nature seems to be extinguished by the processes of modernization such as urbanization, industrialization, and bureaucratization, which transform human beings into cold-hearted bureau- and technocrats. In Carew's logic, their rural origins could bring Soviet citizens and exchange students together. However, both groups in his novel distance themselves from these roots and thus foster racism: Soviet students from the peripheries feel inferior to allegedly 'cosmopolitan'³⁶ and self-confident exchange students, a few of whom indeed state that their Eastern counterparts were "uncultured." As a result, some Soviet students spit in front of exchange students, call them "Black monkeys," or even beat them up. It could be discussed whether what he describes as racism would not be better interpreted as cases of class-based discrimination between rural peasants and urban workers and intellectuals. However, this is of secondary importance for this paper, as I mainly analyze how Carew wrote about these issues and how he was influenced by Thaw literature. Carew's picture of alienation through modernization is related to topics and metaphors featuring prominently in Thaw discourse. He adapts these, combines it with

³³ In Western countries, the book was generally well received but reduced to its critique of the USSR. An unauthorized copy with a ranting foreword not written by Carew was also spread in the 'Global South'. In Eastern Europe and the USSR, his novel was not published, unlike his previous writings. Carew and Carew, *Episodes in my Life*, 55-87; Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin*, 191-192.

³⁴ Ehrenburg, "Tauwetter"; Wladimir Dudintzew, *Der Mensch lebt nicht vom Brot allein*, Lizenzausgabe für den Bertelsmann Lesering (Hamburg: Verlag der Sternbücher, 1958). As the English translations of these books were not available via interlending, I will limit the amount of direct citation to a minimum and only select passages that are easy to translate from the German versions.

³⁵ For such a periodization of Thaw literature see Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*.

³⁶ I do not refer to Soviet denunciatory language here, but try to describe that Soviet students experienced exchange students as people who had travelled to different parts of the world and were influenced by this.

19th century European critique of modernity and extends the perspective to the USSR's peripheries and the 'Global South.'

The protagonist in *Moscow is not my Mecca* discovers great potential for solidarity between the 'Second' and 'Third World' rooted in a very similar mentality, which in turn seems mainly caused by nature and space. Such a connection becomes apparent when Jojo describes the intensifying friendship to his Russian roommate Alexi:

He was a man from the Steppes where the consciousness of space besieging the individual was so overwhelming that men were drawn closer together. And I was a son of the rain forests where the living world wore green, and giant trees, locked up in their own fastnesses, dwarfed men and inspired a brotherhood that cut across the frontiers of race, class, nationality [emphasis H.S.].³⁷

Every time Carew describes such similarities, he applies an imagery of "warmth and spontaneity."³⁸ This form of description is especially striking when Jojo recalls how Russian peasants offered him and Alexi shelter from the cold night, after they got lost on a skiing trip: "although it was primitive and cramped – a narrow enclosure around a huge stove – the warmth and generosity of my hosts was overwhelming. It reminded me of home, where the poorest peasants would share all they had with a stranger."³⁹ In this context, Jojo does not perceive it as racist when the peasants touch his hair and skin⁴⁰ – while his fellow students had described such acts as examples of Soviet racism⁴¹. Likewise, Jan Carew himself recalled similar experiences from a trip through the Soviet province. He lauded the hospitality and added that "the intense curiosity of the Russian peasants was without affectation or malice, and hence, gave no offence [sic]."⁴² There is thus a common sense of class-based commonalities rooted in similar natural environments across peasants from all continents, which could promote international solidarity.

In this way, Carew takes on central metaphors of Thaw literature. In Ilya Ehrenburg's eponymous novel, nature and space have a profound impact on people's hearts and minds. Just like Carew, the Soviet author describes these in metaphors of warmth (meaning open, hopeful, warm-hearted) and coldness (meaning withdrawn, static, violent).⁴³ Both authors structure their tale along four seasons, with which the plot and its characters evolve. However, in Carew's novel, the coldness in the long run prevails, while Ehrenburg's characters, their mindset, and the nov-

³⁷ Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 89.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴² Carew, "Being Black in Belorussia Is Like Being from Mars", 66.

⁴³ Ehrenburg, "Tauwetter", 275, 294, 315, 335; Denis Kozlov and Eleonory Gilburd, "The Thaw as an Event in Russian History," in Kozlov; Gilburd, *The Thaw*, 18-23.

el's language continuously approach the Thaw and the accompanying warmth.⁴⁴ The very title of *Mecca's* US edition, *Green Winter*, already stresses this difference to Ehrenburg's *Thaw*.⁴⁵ Thus, in the course of its plot, Jojo and his friends, as well as his fellow students, realize that there is no place for primal, warm-hearted peasants in the USSR's future. Ehrenburg's novel suggests the exact opposite: while most of its characters hide their real feelings and warm-heartedness behind a veil of 'rational' behavior and speech in the winter, they reveal their full identity and confess their love for each other as spring approaches.⁴⁶ However, while the pessimistic Carew and optimistic Ehrenburg differ on the assessment of the Soviet future, they apply the same aesthetics and metaphors introduced by the latter.

The critique of bureaucratization is another commonality between Carew, Ehrenburg, and Dudintsev. To the exchange student Ali in Carew's novel, Soviet modernization seems to be accompanied by a change that is also threatening to the 'Global South,' as the Communist state was trying to export its model of development:

Stalin's invention, the New Soviet Man, is in danger of becoming a new kind of superman – the proletarian herrenvolk.⁴⁷ But, in addition, the Russians have created a new class – the Centurions of Communism, the technocrats; their god is an electronic computer, their Bible a technical manual, their gospel that of technology [...] We have learnt that the Russian technocrat is an empiricist, impatient with the frailties of the human herd [...] [b]ut our struggle is for the reassertion of an essential humanity.⁴⁸

Comparable descriptions of the modern Soviet man can be found in other parts of the novel. For example, Jojo and his girlfriend Liza both bemoan that the Russian woman's 'rational' and the Guyanese's 'emotional' complexion are an enormous burden for their relationship.⁴⁹ The same tension figures prominently in *The Thaw* and *Not by Bread Alone*. However, it is the main female protagonists who are the 'emotionals' in these novels, and they eventually leave their husbands,

⁴⁴ Ehrenburg, "Tauwetter", see e.g. 305, 369, 463.

⁴⁵ Jan R. Carew, *Green Winter* (New York: Stein and Day, 1965).

⁴⁶ Ehrenburg, "Tauwetter", 275, 305, 392-393. Dudintsev also lets nature evoke certain feelings in his characters, although to a lesser degree than Ehrenburg. For example, the smell of poplar resin is associated with human qualities such as "strength," Dudintsev, *Der Mensch lebt nicht vom Brot allein*, 93.

⁴⁷ Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 198. He seems to use the student Ali as a mouthpiece for his own views, as in the Epilogue, the author himself speaks of a racist Russian „herrenvolk", that only accepts „honorary Aryans" as equals. He therefore implicitly links Soviet mentalities to Nazism's fixed racial categories used to justify imperialist expansion, without discussing whether he expects such imperialism on a global scale from the USSR. Carew's extensive writing suggests further research on this topic, which could also include his perception of 'Western' policy towards the 'Global South'.

⁴⁸ Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 113.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 162-164.

who have turned into cold-hearted party bureaucrats, and fall in love with more idealistic, emotional characters.⁵⁰ Carew denies his couple such a ‘happy ending,’ because unlike the aforementioned women, Liza is consistently unwilling to act on her emotions. In Carew’s novel, exchange students repeatedly tie such a ‘cold’ and ‘rational’ mentality to “a bureaucracy that’s eight hundred years old.”⁵¹ In Carew’s autobiography, one of the few things he tells about his experiences as an exchange student in Prague in 1949 is that “[d]ealing with the bureaucracy each time was like taking a journey into Kafka’s castle” – an established metaphor of an impenetrable and inhumane bureaucratic apparatus.⁵² Like the exchange students in his novel, Carew also stresses how pre-revolutionary Russia lived on in the Soviet Union, most notably through its bureaucracy, when recalling his stay in Moscow in 1960.⁵³

In these passages, Carew adopts motives of critique against modernity, which accompanied and influenced modernization and its conception in Europe from the very beginning.⁵⁴ In particular, the idealization of peasant culture as opposed to emotionally degenerating urban environments was a prominent critique of 19th century Russian and German intellectuals.⁵⁵ Carew’s critique also closely resembles that of many Thaw authors, who identified the bureaucratization of the Soviet Union as a central aberration from Communist ideals. This critique may be illustrated best by Vladimir Dudintsev’s *Not by Bread Alone*, which revolves around the inventor Lopatkin’s almost endless fight against a clique of bureaucrats who impede his new machine from being built. While they do this for selfish motives, such as preserving their high posts or getting acquainted scientists’ inferior machines built, they call Lopatkin an “egoist” and “individualist” harming the collective.⁵⁶ After leaving an endless paper trail and even getting detained in a labor camp, Lopatkin’s machine eventually gets built, producing much needed tubes more effectively than ever. The idealism of such individuals who do not “live by bread alone” and fight for their ideas enables Communist progress in Dudintsev’s

⁵⁰ Ehrenburg, “Tauwetter”, 244, 245, 306; Dudintsev, *Der Mensch lebt nicht vom Brot allein*, 205-209.

⁵¹ Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 43, 168.

⁵² Carew and Carew, *Episodes in my Life*, 53. The student Malcolm also compares Russia with Kafka’s castle, 43.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁵⁴ Christof Dipper, “Moderne: Version 1.0,” Docupedia Zeitgeschichte, accessed October 1, 2016, <http://docupedia.de/zg/Moderne>.

⁵⁵ In addition, 19th century Russian liberal intellectuals often idealized allegedly primal peasants and “savages” in the Soviet peripheries as embodiment of a truly non-Western, “Russian” identity, Susan Layton, “Nineteenth-Century Russian Mythologies of Caucasian Savagery,” in *Russia’s Orient :Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917*, ed. Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 89 ff; Bourgeois critics in fin de siècle Germany also lamented “materialism, [...], ‘cold’ intellect, [...] division of labor and specialization, alienation and mass culture”, Ulrich Herbert, *Geschichte Deutschlands im 20. Jahrhundert* (München: C. H. Beck, 2014), 45. Further research should include comparisons to non-European authors.

⁵⁶ Dudintsev, *Der Mensch lebt nicht vom Brot allein*, 72, 282, 432.

tale. In the novel, such idealists are the embodiment of 'real human beings.'⁵⁷ Thaw authors such as Dudintsev and Ehrenburg also bemoaned that Soviet language as applied by state officials had been stripped of any content and emotion. Thus, one of their main ambitions was to replace this 'bureaucratese' with a livelier, more 'authentic' language. Some authors also recollected an allegedly 'primal' peasants' language" rooted in rural regions, although other writers were skeptical of this orientation.⁵⁸ One of Carew's characters, Alexi, also bemoans the 'proletarianized,' post-revolutionary language. In this context, Jojo states that:

[T]he campaigns in mass literacy had made Russian more functional, had impregnated it with the rhythms of the industrial age. The peasant used to have more time for ritual and excessive politeness, whereas the 'technical man', the product of a hasty Industrial Revolution, had to brush these aside. But the new Soviet intelligentsia, people like Alexi, were once again creating a more sophisticated language.⁵⁹

Thus, by contrasting warm-hearted, 'natural' peasants with the cold-hearted, rational-bureaucratic new Soviet Man, Carew deploys the imagery of Thaw writers and supports their call for more "emotions" and a new language, while also referring to older literary traditions.

However, Jan Carew uses this form of critique of modernity to describe problems that extend beyond the immediate Russian and European context. In addition to the rural population in the Muscovite hinterlands, Carew's biggest interest lies in the USSR's peripheries, which he sees as colonial areas. The writer uses them as case studies: the results of Soviet modernization in Central Asia and the Caucasus seem to answer whether the USSR's model of development was appropriate for developing new post-colonial states of the 'Global South.' Such an approach was not entirely new for the 1960s. The generation of foreign visitors that came to the USSR during the late 1920s and 30s was guided by the same interest – and mostly concluded that the CPSU's record of rapid modernization was indeed unprecedented. This holds especially true for African-Americans that came as contract workers to help build a modern infrastructure and industry in the peripheries „[a]nd [...] found the dramatic modernization of life for the Uzbeks and other people of color in the USSR as models for social change elsewhere."⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Dudintsev, *Der Mensch lebt nicht vom Brot allein* 433; Lopatkin also uses the proverb in the title (people cannot live "By Bread Alone") on page 83. Ehrenburg's characters realize that the fight for love is one that lasts throughout one's entire life but makes one who they are, see Ehrenburg, "Tauwetter", 463.

⁵⁸ Denis Kozlov and Eleonory Gilburd, "The Thaw as an Event in Russian History," in Kozlov; Gilburd, *The Thaw*, 51-53.; quote "'bureaucratese'" 51.

⁵⁹ Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 104-105.

⁶⁰ Carew, "Black in the USSR", 207. Carew here predominantly refers to the experiences of Homer Smith, *Black Man in Red Russia: A Memoir* (Chicago: Johnson Publ. Co., 1964) and Oliver Golden, as reported by Lily Golden, *My Long Journey Home* (Chicago: Third World Press, 2002).

Two things were new during the Thaw: those who visited the Soviet peripheries were now primarily intellectuals or students from ‘Third World’ countries and not workers from the USA; and they were more interested in planned economy and industrialization than Communist ideology.⁶¹ What had also changed was the extent to which Soviet authorities spread information of modernization in the peripheries to other countries and sponsored trips for foreign visitors in an increasingly organized way. One of the main achievements they stressed besides industrialization was education, and above all, the eradication of illiteracy. In addition, Soviet propaganda also emphasized the Communist state’s character as a multi-ethnic society of equals that promoted ‘indigenous’ languages and traditions, instead of banning them. ‘Third World’ intellectuals such as Carew were thus brought to Central Asia or the Caucasus to vindicate this.⁶²

The Guyanese writer retrospectively claims that learning from these regions was his main motivation for visiting Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara in 1960.⁶³ It is likely that he had this trip in mind when analyzing the impact of Soviet modernization for Uzbeks, Kirghiz, and Tajiks in the epilogue to *Moscow is not my Mecca* (which is oddly missing from the US version of the book).⁶⁴ Instead of focusing on concrete changes in their daily life, he tries to fathom how rapid change influenced these peoples’ mentality and spirit. He concludes that “[the] people had to pay a high price for the swift changes, the progress, the great leap forward [...] once the Uzbeks had crossed such a great distance in time so rapidly, then enormous voids are left in the spirit.”⁶⁵ While Carew seemingly refers to compressed time and space here as metaphors for development, which in itself was a concept emerging in 19th century Europe, his words also apply perfectly to the consequences of collectivization. As Soviet officials and steel workers had confiscated grain to force farmers to join unproductive collective farms between 1928 and 1932, peasants suffered mass hunger and often migrated to the cities to work in a factory.⁶⁶ Stripped of the cultural and social traditions of their villages, they had to adjust to a completely different way of life. It is unclear, however, whether Carew knew this and hinted at collectivization. Nonetheless, the exchange students in his novel seem to be familiar with feelings of alienation and uprooting. Jojo il-

⁶¹ Engerman David C., “The Second World’s Third World”, 21-22.; Carew, *Blacks, Reds, and Russians*, 200-211.

⁶² Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin*, 162, 172; Boden, “Globalisierung sowjetisch”, 431; Comparably, Zbigniew Wojnowski, “An Unlikely Bulwark of Sovietness: Cross-Border Travel and Soviet Patriotism in Western Ukraine, 1956-1985,” *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 1 (2015), 88 points out that Polish, Czech and Hungarian tourists were brought to the Western Ukraine to witness Soviet “achievements in modernizing the region”.

⁶³ Carew and Carew, *Episodes in my Life*, 60-61.

⁶⁴ Carew, *Green Winter* (New York: Stein and Day, 1965). As this version of the book was released later than the UK version, this cannot be the reason for omitting the Epilogue.

⁶⁵ Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 194-195.

⁶⁶ Jeronim Perovic, “Highland Rebels: The North Caucasus During the Stalinist Collectivization Campaign,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 52, no. 2 (2016), 243.

illustrates this when trying to calm down a fellow student from India, who wants to return to his wife, but is not allowed to leave the USSR:

He was suffering from the sickness of crossing too hastily distances in time and space, from being suddenly uprooted and having no familiar spiritual humus on which his roots could feed. We all suffered from the same thing, all the students from the emergent world beyond Europe. Coming from cities, villages, mountains, plains, forests, we sometimes crossed two or three centuries in a single day by jet plane, and then we were faced with the colossal task of adjusting our emotions to the rhythms of an industrial age at a cost in anguish that is incalculable.⁶⁷

In such notions, exchange students from the 'Global South' express thinking of their countries as 'backwards,' which they formulate in metaphors of time and space, usually associated with European chauvinism.⁶⁸ However, they implicitly counter claims that life in countries located in the 'industrial age' is necessarily better. Again, they stress a belief that a person's spirit and identity are deeply influenced by the natural environment in which one lives. In the Soviet case, this connection seems to be cut by rapid industrialization, which also makes people lose their warm-heartedness and generosity. Eventually, this process seems to destroy inter-personal relationships that could establish a "brotherhood that cut across the frontiers of race, class, nationality"—which Jojo's fellow students strive for and Soviet officials propagated. Furthermore, the ambitions of post-colonial proponents of independence — "the struggle [...] for the reassertion of an essential humanity"—seem unattainable through Soviet modernization. Such a "reassertion of an essential humanity" also lies at the heart of *The Thaw* and *Not by Bread Alone*, whose characters constantly explore what the ideal Soviet citizen should be like. Ehrenburg's characters especially struggle to make sense of their feelings and irrational behavior, which they deem "humiliating" and appropriate for characters in old novels, but not for Soviet men.⁶⁹ However, they eventually accept their sentiments and act on them in public, thus finding their real identity.

The exchange students' daily experiences seem to reinforce feelings of alienation through modernization in a nutshell: in Carew's novel, racist insults, spitting in front of the students, and physical attacks are rooted in the very factories and industrial centers which embody 'Socialist modernity.' The clever part in *Mecca's* plot is that the racist thugs in the cities could be the sons of the warm-hearted peasants that saved Alexi and Jojo from dying in that cold night in rural Russia.

⁶⁷ Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 61-62.

⁶⁸ See also footnote 55; comparable notions can be found in Carew, "Being Black in Belorussia Is Like Being from Mars", 69, where he speaks of the „temper of a people who had learnt their lessons in time and motion in backward villages where cruel winters and a wild countryside had imposed slow, secret rhythms upon their lives.“

⁶⁹ Ehrenburg, "Tauwetter", 276.

Alexi is convinced that these thugs are ashamed of their origins, which they try to cover by distancing themselves aggressively from their home:

[T]he memory of their izbas (village huts) has left a stench that they would like to banish ... you will hear them talking about their fellow peasants as ‘dirty brutes’, ‘uncultured animals’, but this is just a reflection of their closeness to the very people they are denouncing.⁷⁰

Indeed, as a result of rural exodus following collectivization, peasants came to form a larger part of the Soviet cities’ demographic.⁷¹ Afraid of ‘peasantization,’ Stalinist propaganda tried to teach them how to become “cultured” with lists and illustrations of appropriate behavior.⁷² Especially the younger generation tried to adapt to a new ‘modern’ urban lifestyle. For example, Stepan Podlubnyi’s diary illustrates how this young Ukrainian actively tried to become the ‘New Soviet Man’ of official propaganda to overcome his origins as a peasants’ son.⁷³ Alexi’s description of these people comes to mind when Podlubnyi speaks about people of a peasant background “from a backward, extremely low milieu [...] [whose] thoughts and manners are just animal like,” claiming that “it is very difficult, if not impossible, to put on their feet, and lead to the path of truth, the path of a cultured person.”⁷⁴ In Carew’s novel, the presence of ‘strangers’ from the ‘Third World,’ according to Alexi, galvanizes an inferiority complex resulting from such processes:

[W]e have been told again and again that your people are hungry and illiterate, victims of imperialist greed and oppression ... we were never told that some of you had travelled to New York, Rome, London, Paris, and that we would envy you your clothes, your way of talking freely about things we don’t dare to mention.⁷⁵

Indeed, Jojo’s fellow students repeatedly speak with arrogance regarding their “backwards,” “uncivilized” or “uncultured” fellow students from the Soviet countryside.⁷⁶ Ironically, they apply the same categories as the Soviet thugs, who, according to Alexi, denounce Soviet peasants, such as their own parents, as “uncultured animals” to reassure themselves that they are “cultured.” The new,

⁷⁰ Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 90.

⁷¹ Perovic, “Highland Rebels”, 43; Vadim Volkov, “The Concept of Kul’turnost’: Notes on the Stalinist Civilizing Process,” in Fitzpatrick, *Stalinism*, 212-213.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Jochen Hellbeck, “Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi, 1931-9,” in Fitzpatrick, *Stalinism*; see also Michael Kaznelson, “Remembering the Soviet State: Kulak Children and Dekulakisation,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 59, no. 7 (2007).

⁷⁴ Cited in Jochen Hellbeck, “Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi, 1931-9,” in Fitzpatrick, *Stalinism*, 92-93.

⁷⁵ Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 90.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 71, 90; 92.

seemingly 'cosmopolitan' and self-confident exchange students who challenge their Soviet fellow students' views and behavior seem to deeply unsettle them in their self-conception. As a result, some of them insult the newcomers as "Black monkeys" to reassure themselves of their 'culturedness' and superiority. Because most exchange students do not interact with their Soviet peers, they miss the opportunity to identify common rural origins as the basis for practiced international solidarity, which Jojo had discovered when befriending Alexi. We can therefore conclude that racism in the Soviet Union in the early 1960s as depicted by Carew is a result of young people from the 'Third' and 'Second World' distancing themselves from their traditional, rural cultures in order to appear 'modern', thus hiding their 'warm-heartedness' and feeding mistrust.⁷⁷ Such an explanation implicitly validates one of Jojo's convictions regarding how the people in 'Third World' countries could become free and independent. According to him, this cannot be achieved by imitating the "white man" to gain his respect, but by developing an identity of one's own and shaping society based on one's own means and ends.⁷⁸ It is this new, self-conscious spirit of self-determination reflecting the emergence of post-colonial states that also differentiates exchange students from the "Global South" in the Soviet Union during the Thaw from earlier foreign visitors.⁷⁹

These explanations for racism are also a comment on class-based discrimination rooted in the self-conception of the Russian *intelligentsia*, which Carew met. Its members were the main driver behind socio-cultural debates and changes during the Thaw. These potentials are illustrated when Carew's characters use the binary of "cultured" and "uncultured" (or "*nekulturny*"),⁸⁰ because certain rules of 'cultured' conduct and speech lie at the heart of this *intelligentsia's* identity.⁸¹ Besides the obvious attacks already described, such mechanisms seem to also be at work in a more subtle way. When Jojo visits Liza's apartment for the first time, he describes it as typical for the "cultured" Soviet elite, and admits that he feels intimidated and inferior when facing the vast collection of books and the Swedish furniture.⁸² However, such a discriminatory potential of 'culturedness' does not seem inevitable. For example, Liza shames the police men who do not want to investigate the attack on Jojo as 'uncultured,' and thereby forces them not to give

⁷⁷ This should not detract from the fact that it is only the Soviet students who attack exchange students, and are thus the perpetrators. However, as Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin*, 192, has pointed out, Carew also describes racist discrimination between and among the different communities of exchange students.

⁷⁸ Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 52.

⁷⁹ Matusевич, "Probing the Limits of Internationalism", 22-24; Hessler, "Death of an African Student in Moscow", 35.

⁸⁰ Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 57. The narrator here explains "*nekulturny*" as implying "a kind of mild hooliganism, a breach of manners, morals, etiquette."

⁸¹ Denis Kozlov, "Introduction," in Kozlov; Gilburd, *The Thaw*, 15. It should be noted that distinguishing between 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' groups is not an exclusively Russian, but a traditionally European trope that justified colonialism and racism.

⁸² Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 132-133.

up the case.⁸³ She thereby demonstrates that this essentially discriminatory categorization can also prohibit certain kinds of discrimination, depending on how it is applied.

Alexi hints that the *intelligentsia* was changing from when Khrushchev rose to the helm of the CPSU. He sees the career of this Ukrainian “who doesn’t speak the most elegant Russian [...] [but] embodies all the dark cunning of the peasant and the empiricism of the scientist,”⁸⁴ and his own vita as indication that people from rural regions could soon form the new elite. This re-alignment of the “head” and the “heart” without the exclusion of one at the expense of the other is a central call expressed in Dudintsev’s and Ehrenburg’s novels.⁸⁵ In the case of Carew’s novel, the main driver of discrimination – distancing oneself from rural origins – could soon vanish due to such a change. In this regard, Carew’s characters express another tendency of Thaw literature and policies: a revaluation of peasants’ culture and interests. Writers now tried to let their characters speak like country folk, the Soviet state was re-branded as an “all-people’s state” instead of “dictatorship of the proletariat,” and collective farmers henceforth received wages.⁸⁶ Peasants had figured prominently as revolutionary subjects in Marxism-Leninism before, but only if ‘proletarianized.’ Their cultural traditions were seen as obstacles on the way to Communism (especially when rejecting collectivization) or as causes of urban crime.⁸⁷ Carew hints at an intersection of positive and negative discrimination based on class and ethnicity, which is also discussed in historiography on processes associated with what I referred to as ‘Socialist modernity.’⁸⁸ While I cannot discuss this aspect in detail here, it is noteworthy that non-Slavic and non-Christian Soviet citizens from the rural peripheries were among the main groups of victims and beneficiaries of the regime’s modernization plans, which is reflected in Carew’s writings: he hints at the massive promotion especially of Central Asian students and scientists during the Thaw, but also at the alienation following ‘proletarianization’ and ‘collectivization’ of peasants during the 1920s and 30s, which hit people from the peripheries disproportionately hard.⁸⁹ Overall, it

⁸³ Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 182.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 128. Note the positive, essentialist discrimination of peasants’ nature, which is not further qualified.

⁸⁵ Dudinzew, *Der Mensch lebt nicht vom Brot allein*, 51: “You need to have a head on the shoulders to think – and a heart in the chest. Then, you can also hope!”, repeated on 53; Engineer Korotejew is praised as the kind of new Soviet man needed for the future, combining rationalism and romanticism in Ehrenburg, “Tauwetter”, 342; Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 152, for additional comparable statements.

⁸⁶ Denis Kozlov and Eleonory Gilburd, “The Thaw as an Event in Russian History,” in Kozlov; Gilburd, *The Thaw*, 35.

⁸⁷ Vadim Volkov, “The Concept of Kul’turnost’: Notes on the Stalinist Civilizing Process,” in Fitzpatrick, *Stalinism*, 214-215; Perovic, “Highland Rebels”, 234.

⁸⁸ Foundational is Stephen Kotkin, “1991 and the Russian Revolution: Sources, Conceptual Categories, Analytical Frameworks,” *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 2 (1998), 405-413.

⁸⁹ Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 61, 94; Carew and Carew, *Episodes in my Life*, 194; Martin, “An Affirmative Action Empire”, 68, 78, 81; Perovic, “Highland Rebels”, 435-36; Kate

appears that Carew emphasizes 'class' over 'ethnicity' as the ultimate explanatory variable of discrimination, which he nevertheless calls "racism." Additional research should further differentiate this preliminary interpretation, applying an intersectional framework. The novel's protagonist Jojo emphasizes Soviet society is essentially different from its Western counterparts, because "there is no national tradition of racial discrimination against negroes as in England or America [...] the conditions for its spreading do not exist."⁹⁰ This seems plausible in the novel's context, because racist attacks indeed result from integral parts of Soviet modernization, but are perpetrated by a violent minority and condemned by the majority of citizens. Thus, Carew's conclusion is that they are avoidable, but take place because the tolerant and mostly anti-racist *intelligentsia* remains silent, and political authorities try to arbitrarily cover them up. This, in turn, is a result of the trauma resulting from the "Great Terror," the Gulag, and collectivization.

The Past in the Present: Paralysis through Terror and Trauma

Like Soviet authors of the Thaw, Jojo for the larger part of Carew's novel assessed the USSR's future optimistically. This is the case even two thirds through the book. The most outspoken reference to the Thaw throughout the whole novel is placed right after Jojo has started a relationship with Liza and further tightens his friendship with Alexi:

The in-between month of March when the frost and the thaw fought for supremacy echoed the rhythms of life in all Russia in the 'sixties'. It was inevitable that the thaw would triumph, but the frost was ancient, malignant and cunning, a creature of the long nights always waiting in ambush, only willing to give in after a long struggle⁹¹ [emphasis H.S.].

The reader is thus led to expect a development similar to Ehrenburg's story, meaning that the characters confess their love for each other and thereby revitalize Communist idealism. However, Carew subsequently introduces a topic that has so far barely been present, which is absent from Ehrenburg's and mostly also from Dudintsev's novel: the "Great Terror" and the labor camp system of the Gulag, which, besides bureaucracy, signify the "frost [that] was ancient, malignant and cunning."⁹²

The lack of reconciliation with the Soviet Union's traumatic past increasingly becomes the novel's focus. This shift in topic alters Jojo's careful optimism about

Brown, *A Biography of no Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), 148.

⁹⁰ Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 175-176.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁹² *Ibid.*

the Thaw's prospects, and is subtly replaced by pessimism. With this new focus, Carew picked up the most present, but also most controversial topic of Thaw literature, discourse and policy during the early 1960s. However, unlike even the most critical Soviet authors such as Vladimir Maksimov or Iurii Trifonov, he denies the reader a hopeful 'happy ending,' which Thaw literature applied to present the processing of a traumatic past as an ultimately productive force to begin a new future.⁹³ It is this resilient, psychological winter that keeps Carew's characters from openly acting on their true emotions and dropping their façade, like Ehrenburg's characters had done after the inevitable, meteorological thaw had ended the winter.

Several characters describe a continuity of the Gulag. For example, the protagonist meets Jonathan, a black representative of the first generation of migrants, who came as technical workers to industrialize the USSR during the 1920s and 30s. Jonathan assures that "nothing could be worse than those seven years in a Labour Camp" that he spent there, adding that "the camps are still there."⁹⁴ He stresses that he himself did not encounter racism in the Gulag,⁹⁵ but explains that the xenophobia of the 1960s is a consequence of those experiences, because "we are all tired after the terror and the purges and the War, and we don't want to make any great effort to adjust to new faces."⁹⁶

On the other hand, Liza, at first glance, represents a diametrically opposed position. She is convinced that Soviet society has already changed quite drastically since Stalin's death in 1953, because Soviet officials and citizens allegedly learned from the past.⁹⁷ Furthermore, she claims to understand that Jonathan constantly feels tracked and observed by the secret police, but this anxiety, to her, is unfounded: "[w]e would need millions of Security Police to keep all the former inmates of Labour Camps under surveillance."⁹⁸ However, she thus implicitly recognizes that a major part of people in society were in those camps and therefore this is a reasonable anxiety.

The reactions following the racist attack on Jojo eventually prove that a combination of widespread anxiety and apathy hinder a successful investigation of the attack. Out of such fears, even Liza eventually signs an officially organized cover-up claiming that it was a "car accident," thereby helping to disguise racism in the USSR. Yet, it is Alexi who condemns Jojo's decision not to sign the cover-up and

⁹³ One of the few remarks on Lopatkin's detention in a labor camp is that he is grateful for the experience, because it gave him time to rethink his life and his approach of how to get his machine built, see Dudinzew, *Der Mensch lebt nicht vom Brot allein*, 363-364. On Trifonov, Maksimov and others, see Polly Jones, "Memories of Terror or Terrorizing Memories? Terror, Trauma and Survival in Soviet Culture of the Thaw," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 86, no. 2 (2008), 367-371.

⁹⁴ Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 147.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 165.

instead openly criticize the attacks on him and the official reactions: “Your reckless way of dealing with problems, Jojo, might be all right in your country. But here, our Don Quixotes find themselves inside barbed wire enclosures, or instead of tilting at windmills, facing a firing squad.”⁹⁹ Thus, it is Jojo’s best friend, who he idealized as a warm-hearted peasant, who agrees with Jonathan’s claim that the Gulag system and the methods of terror are still quite alive. Furthermore, Jojo finds out that Alexi spied on him and informed the secret police, which seems to justify Jonathan’s paranoia. This was indeed a practice that all of the exchange students, which Tobias Rupprecht interviewed, confirm, although unlike in Carew’s book, they do not bemoan this fact.¹⁰⁰

As I have demonstrated, Carew draws a disillusioned picture of the Thaw, in which Soviet society seems far from coping with the trauma resulting from the ‘Great Terror’ and the Gulag. Liza and Alexi condemn Stalinism and its methods, and they hope for an opening of Soviet society due to lessons drawn from the past.¹⁰¹ At the same time, both representations of a newer generation of Soviet *intelligentsia* are not willing to stand up to their convictions – unlike Jojo, who represents a self-conscious ‘Third Worldist’ stance in the face of violence and intimidation by the Soviet state. Jojo is thus comparable to inventor Lopatkin, who keeps fighting the windmills of bureaucracy despite literally being told not to,¹⁰² but there is no comparable Soviet character in Carew’s novel. By failing the plot’s moral test, the Soviet *intelligentsia* impedes a clear break with the Stalinist past, which was the key demand of the Thaw project to revive Communist utopianism. Rather, the still prevalent methods of spying and denunciations, as well as anxiety, apathy, and imprisonment in labor camps make it impossible to openly call attention to racism and to fight it.

Conclusion

When Carew published his book in 1964, the Cold War was a powerful reality. That year, the US and UK administrations ousted British-Guiana’s socialist-leaning Prime Minister Cheddi Jagan to prevent “another Cuba” and postponed independence until 1966.¹⁰³ The novel’s ultimate conclusion is that self-confident ‘Third Worldists’ fighting for their right of self-determination should not hope for foreign support. Certainly, they should not resort to Soviet help, because this

⁹⁹ Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 192.

¹⁰⁰ Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin*, 220-229.

¹⁰¹ Carew, *Moscow Is Not My Mecca*, 128-129, 166.

¹⁰² Dudinzew, *Der Mensch lebt nicht vom Brot allein*, 279.

¹⁰³ Cary Fraser, “The ‘New Frontier’ of Empire in the Caribbean: The Transfer of Power in British Guiana, 1961-1964,” *The International History Review* 22, no. 3 (2000); Robert Waters and Gordon Daniels, “The World’s Longest General Strike: The AFL-CIO, the CIA, and British Guiana,” *Diplomatic History* 29, no. 2 (2005). Jan Carew had served as director of culture for Jagan’s administration in 1962, when he was still writing *Moscow is not my Mecca*, see Busby, “Jan Carew Obituary”.

country's track record of development is a daunting example. Soviet society seems unable to reform itself, the Thaw will not triumph. However, the book also demonstrates that the early 1960s were a time for unprecedented global cultural exchange, illustrating that there was more than military confrontation, and thus transgressing our perceptions of an 'Iron Curtain.'

The Guyanese writer used the imagery and structure of Soviet Thaw authors to critically assess Soviet modernization. His conclusion seems to rule out a 'happy ending' for Soviet society's future and its relationship to the 'Global South.' Jojo's contacts with rural citizens illustrate that the Soviet Union itself was in many regions still a 'developing country'. where the warm-hearted mentality of the peasants could form the basis of international solidarity. The protagonist's contacts with the new generation of Soviet *intelligentsia* also suggest that they welcomed 'foreign' influences and condemn racism as 'uncultured'. However, they were not willing to defend their ideals, because they feared repression and impediments to their careers – thus, revealing that the shadows of the terror and the Gulag still loomed large over the early 1960s. A fundamental revival of socialism therefore seems impossible. Thus, people in the 'Third World' should resort to their own means and ideas if they wanted to have a better future for their newly emerging states. Soviet modernization only led to an alienation from one's origins, turned good people into cold bureaucrats and produced racism.

Jan Carew adapted aesthetics, contents, and controversies of the Soviet Thaw, expanded them to the relationship between the 'Second' and 'Third World' and turned the utopian aspirations, that even the most critical Soviet writers had, into a dystopian tale of his own. With his negative description of the Soviet *intelligentsia*, he seems to attack the Thaw's agents, which he met on his own travels to the country through an invitation from the Soviet Writer's Union. Thus, Carew's voice is one to take into account when idealizing Thaw writers as proponents of the dissident movement emerging in the 1970s and 80s. However, this should not detract from the fact that Carew found the language and framework for criticizing Soviet society of the 1960s in the literature produced by these very people. Therefore, it would also be short-sighted to only credit exchange students and their protests as the origin of Soviet dissidence. Rather, Carew's writings are an example of a complex appropriation of Soviet culture by a 'Third World' writer, encouraging us to look at how influences travelled both ways.