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Cultural Diplomacy, the Political Police, and Nonalignment

IN "AFRICA AND HER WRITERS," a feisty Chinua Achebe begins by proclaiming, "*Art for art's sake is just another piece of deodorized dog shit.*" The joke, of course, comes at high modernism's expense, and he was neither the first nor the last figure from decolonizing regions of the world to rail against writing for a privileged few. I do not know the reaction of his audience at Harvard University, where he originally delivered these remarks in 1972, but Achebe himself performed as if he knew the ghost of alumnus T. S. Eliot would be among the listeners.[1] He laments that at some point in "the history of European civilization the idea that art should be accountable to no one, and needed to justify itself to nobody except itself, began to emerge." Artists themselves abandoned the principle that art fills specific human needs, rejecting the idea that literature ought to answer to a wider reading public. "Words like *use, purpose, value,*" he summarizes, "are beneath the divine concerns of this Art" (30). "Africa and Her Writers" offers a pointed synopsis, or caricature, depending on one's perspective, of what scholars call aesthetic autonomy. For Achebe, this theory of artistic freedom is a distinguishing feature of European literary development—or of European literary decline—providing one more piece of evidence that the rest of the world should think carefully before following their example.

A more succinct recapitulation and repudiation of modernism's aesthetic theories would be difficult to find. Achebe insists, against these snobs, "that art is, and was always, in the service of man" (29). For many years, Achebe's readers tended to see his work in precisely this way, as he represents it here: straightforward, where the metropolitan modernists prefer indirection; committed instead of aloof; pragmatic and utilitarian, not esoteric and self-contained; solicitous of broad audiences rather than chasing the approbation

of an elite. The most current generation of scholars, myself included, has questioned this neat antithesis, but we ought to remember that this way of positioning his work in the global literary field is authorized by Achebe himself, at least in moments such as these. To regard the work of Achebe and the writing of his many peers from the decolonizing world as contiguous and compatible with metropolitan modernism, one must sometimes read these figures against themselves.

If we turn away from "Africa and Her Writers" at this early juncture, however, we miss the full significance of the great Nigerian's aesthetic contrasts. Metropolitan modernists are not his only concern in this essay. Another camp of European writers, appropriately enough, rejects aesthetic autonomy in terms no less damning. This group—congregating further east in Europe, or on the other side of the same literary hill, to use Achebe's metaphor—begins with the proposition that "a poet is not a poet until the Writers' Union tells him so." Not content with peaceful coexistence, each tribe has gone out of its way to antagonize the other: "Between these two peoples, an acrimonious argument rages. [. . .] *Monstrous philistines! Corrupt, decadent!* So loud and bitter does the recrimination become that it is often difficult to believe that these two peoples actually live on two slopes of the same hill" (31). The high modernists in one camp, the Party's advocates of socialist realism in the other, but both groups are unmistakably European all the same. Despite employing words as simple as use, purpose, and value to describe his own writing, Achebe is no more sanguine about the "Writers' Union" approach to literary production than he is enamored of modernist autonomy. Again, working by way of shorthand caricatures, Achebe tells us that the dreary, predictable, administered world of state-sanctioned literature represents no better alternative than metropolitan modernism for the emerging talents of Africa. A curse on both these European houses, Achebe says! Writers from decolonizing areas ought to be wary of reproducing the excesses of Europe's leading aesthetic theories.

Before concluding with a consideration of the poetry of Christopher Okigbo, Achebe's friend and recently deceased countryman, the essay pauses to give us a glimpse of how the world's system of literary production appears from the perspective of a midcentury African writer. "As African writers emerge onto the world stage, they come under pressure to declare their stand," Achebe reports. A stand on what issue, we might ask: on imperialism and neocolonialism, on racism as an endemic international problem, on the use of European languages in postcolonial literature, all of which he considers in detail elsewhere? No. In "Africa and Her Writers," Achebe describes a world

literary system in which writers, European and African alike, are expected to declare their allegiances in what I call the aesthetic cold war. Outlining one's position in the "recrimination between capitalist and communist aesthetics in our time" is, Achebe considers, the most urgent question African writers must answer if they wish to find audiences both within and beyond national borders (32). Achebe's sense that African writers are walking onto a "world stage" is every bit as significant as his complaints about an aesthetic divide: it was during the middle decades of the twentieth century that one could begin to talk, realistically, about the field of literature in English including both writers and readers from colonial and postcolonial regions.

Following Achebe, *The Aesthetic Cold War* argues that the literatures of decolonization ought to be read as integral to, not apart from, the literatures of the global cold war. The cold war was of course a geopolitical event—a conflict between states—as well as an ideological showdown—a contest of ideas, we might say—but it was also an aesthetic standoff, arguably the defining and determining condition of literary production throughout much of the twentieth century. While scholars of metropolitan modernist, colonial, postcolonial, and global literatures have overlooked or downplayed the significance of this aesthetic competition—preferring instead to regard imperialism, anticolonialism, and global capitalism as the primary historical contexts for the literatures of the decolonizing world—this book will insist that the cold war and its aesthetic debates were coextensive with the global literary field in the twentieth century, especially in the anglophone regions. The aesthetic debates of the cold war do not provide—merely—a context for the emergence of African and other literatures of decolonization: the literatures of decolonization and the literatures of the cold war are tightly conjoined, not to be separated, contextually or otherwise. The imaginative representation of decolonization is one of the cold war's major, lasting contributions to literary history. If anything like a global literature came into existence during the period of decolonization, this global literary field was shaped by the cold war's aesthetic debates. To read the literatures of the cold war and decolonization separately, or side-by-side, or in a background-foreground relationship, is to misunderstand them both.

In political and ideological terms, late colonial and early postcolonial writers were a diverse bunch, although most gravitated toward some version of cold war nonalignment. The Bandung meeting of 1955, also known as the Afro-Asian or Asian-African Conference, provides the fullest and most visible articulation of decolonization as a global political aspiration.[2] The meeting's final communiqué urges economic cooperation and cultural exchange among

decolonizing nations and calls for an end to the racism and human rights violations that typify the colonial period. But equally, the document calls on large states, most obviously the United States and the Soviet Union, to abstain from applying economic, military, and diplomatic pressure on less powerful nations.[3] Writing just after the close of the Bandung conference, George Padmore says, "colonial peoples are resentful of the attitude of Europeans, of both Communist and anti-Communist persuasion, that they alone possess the knowledge and experience necessary to guide the advancement of dependent peoples."[4] A few years later, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon speaks for many of his fellow intellectuals of the global south when he categorically rejects the notion that decolonizing peoples must "choose between the capitalist system and the socialist system." Although Fanon recognizes that the anticolonial movement makes strategic use of "the savage competition between the two systems in order to win their national liberation," he firmly insists that "the underdeveloped countries must endeavor to focus on their very own values as well as methods and style specific to them."[5]

In broad sympathy with Padmore and Fanon, most writers from the decolonizing areas of the world, including Achebe and Okigbo, saw the cold war as both an exciting opportunity and a moment of profound danger. After World War II, the relative weakness of the European imperialist powers afforded colonial peoples their best chance of self-determination. The cold war, however, with its complicated grid of alliances, client states, influence, and proxy wars, threatened new and more insidious forms of external control for the colonized peoples of the world. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, for instance, Hannah Arendt says that the second half of the century witnessed "the unexpected revival of imperialist policies and methods" more commonly associated with the late nineteenth century scramble for Africa.[6] Most late colonial and early postcolonial intellectuals were not eager to trade direct European imperialism for another type of remote control, but unconditional political independence, military integrity, and economic self-sufficiency were rare commodities in this geopolitical context.[7] The cold war exacerbated political instability throughout the global south as wars of liberation, resistance to foreign occupation, and civil wars proliferated with direct and indirect superpower involvement. Writers from decolonizing regions experienced the cold war less as observers of an uneasy truce and more as witnesses to and participants in armed conflict. Writing specifically of the African context, Monica Popescu observes, "Some of the most compelling positions on the function of the writer came out of the search for a third, unaffiliated or

nonaligned, mode of cultural production."[8] Anglophone writers from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean tended to be conscientious objectors of one kind or another in the cold war's ideological standoff.

As fascinating as I find the political side of the cold war, the history of which continues to be told as new archives open for research, most midcentury writers were equally concerned with the status of literature, after all. In the sphere of arts and letters, the cold war exerted two opposing pressures on intellectuals from decolonizing regions: new opportunities for global circulation through cultural diplomacy programs, on the one hand, and increasingly severe sanctions, including surveillance, censorship, and imprisonment, on the other hand. Large states began an unprecedented effort to court writers from the decolonizing parts of the world. Yet these very same writers faced significant political pressures both at home and as they traveled.

Both the United States (and to a lesser extent its western European partners) and the Soviet Union (and to a degree, its inconstant allies such as China and Cuba) actively supported writers from sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, south Asia, southeast Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America. Cultural diplomacy, or soft power, complemented the armaments race: each side battling for proverbial hearts and minds, especially for the loyalty of writers and intellectuals in the decolonizing parts of the world. For the United States and the Soviet Union, part of this task involved packaging their own talent for export. Musical performers, dancers, art exhibitions, libraries, book tours, and other cultural goodwill programs were staples of US, British, French, Soviet, and Chinese cultural diplomacy throughout much of the century.[9]

This kind of programming was enhanced by recruitment of intellectual allies in the decolonizing world. Both the United States and the Soviet Union sponsored literary conferences and prizes, magazines, book publishing, libraries, arts centers, drama, music, and radio programs featuring artists and intellectuals from the decolonizing world. Often, such programs were open about the nature of the sponsorship: the Soviets were widely recognized for their support of *Lotus* magazine and its prize, while the US Information Agency was clear about its involvement in the career of Eileen Chang and other writers. In some instances, however, sponsorship could be clandestine, as in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) covertly bankrolling the Congress for Cultural Freedom, which had a formative influence on the emergence of African literature in English. I shall have much more to say about cultural diplomacy in the following chapters, but for the moment I will mention that it did not always work as we might expect it to work—that is, writers

from decolonizing parts of the world did not become cold war partisans simply because they were beneficiaries of US or Soviet patronage. In fact, many writers, including Achebe, were happy to receive accolades and tangible support from both sides.

In addition to cultural diplomacy, however, superpower competition affected literary life in the decolonizing world because the cold war's most powerful states, as well as the governments of postcolonial nations, resorted to surveilling, blacklisting, censoring, imprisoning, and expelling writers of diverse political beliefs. The disciplining of intellectuals among the Warsaw Pact states is an old story, limited in some ways because its telling is so often partisan. Intimidation of writers was commonplace in the capitalist democracies as well as in the postcolonial nation-states of Africa and Asia, with the practice in no way limited to Soviet or Chinese areas of influence. This fact is generally known, but its effect on the literature of decolonization has not been considered in any depth. As William J. Maxwell, James Smith, and Mary Helen Washington have shown in some detail, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the United States and MI5 (Security Service) and MI6 (Secret Intelligence Service) in the United Kingdom kept tabs on many intellectuals, especially queer and African diasporic writers.[10] C.L.R. James, Claudia Jones, Doris Lessing, and the All-India Progressive Writers' Association were some of the individuals and groups scrutinized by British intelligence; James and Jones were both detained and then deported from the United States as political undesirables. Being a fierce anti-Stalinist and critic of Soviet Communism, as James was, did not make him any more palatable from the perspective of the US government. Postcolonial states do not have a better record: Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Sajjad Zaheer, Rajat Neogy, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Wole Soyinka, to name only a few, all ran afoul of the authorities after independence for their nations. Apartheid-era South Africa, which does not fit easily into the model of colonial dependency or postcolonial nation-state, made life extremely difficult for many of its intellectuals, such as Ruth First, Alex La Guma, and Es'kia Mphahlele, each of whom I consider in subsequent chapters. The flip side of cultural diplomacy, then, is the harassment, intimidation, and coercive pressures that established and nascent states employed in attempts to contain or marginalize dissident writers.

As with cultural patronage, however, collecting intelligence on writers, even banishing or imprisoning them, did not always produce the effects intended by the governments responsible. Far from containing a figure such as Lessing, already living in exile, routine surveillance seemed to whet her intellectual

appetite. Some writers could take it as a sign of their own significance that they were worth monitoring. Others who were objects of state surveillance, such as Richard Wright, collaborated with security and intelligence operations when they believed it was in their interest to do so. Imprisonment of writers most certainly altered the development of postcolonial literature—how many texts were stillborn we will never know—but writers contested this practice by cultivating transnational, nonaligned networks of their own. Similar to cultural diplomacy, the fate of persecuted writers was a matter of fierce cold war rivalry, in which national governments, from the powerful to the weak, were prone to criticize one another by pointing to abuses in other states. Writers seized on such animosities. Jailing intellectuals, as I show in the second half of this book, encouraged writers to see themselves as part of an international guild of dissidents, refusing to recognize the cold war's geographical boundaries and ideological allegiances. In stark contrast to our times, when literary intellectuals freely acknowledge their insignificance to the workings of the state, the cold war was a period when writers mattered, when they were important enough for large governments to patronize them, to collaborate with them, to censor them, and even to imprison, banish, or kill them.

The Aesthetic Cold War argues that a global literary field, largely but not exclusively anglophone, emerged during the twentieth century through the incorporation of writers from the decolonizing world into transnational systems of literary production and consumption. The process of integrating writers from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean into a global network happened as part of the cold war. The Soviet Union and the United States, which sometimes worked through allies and client states, made significant efforts to control this process through cultural diplomacy programs and through punitive measures. It would be a significant mistake, however, to infer that such large states successfully enlisted or intimidated a great many writers from the decolonizing world, turning them into cold war partisans out of gratitude or fear. When it came to diplomacy efforts, the same writers had no qualms about accepting patronage from a variety of sources. Because of intense competition, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union made many overt demands on intellectuals from the decolonizing world, who tended to be fiercely independent and stubbornly nonaligned. Likewise, when it came to disciplinary measures, large states looked much the same from the perspective of the writer. Whatever their supposed ideological orientation, powerful governments and their allies had a marked tendency to surveil, censor, banish, imprison, and sometimes inflict capital punishment on outspoken figures.

Autonomy and Indigeneity

A few important observations follow from this book's fundamental contention that the literature of decolonization and the literature of the cold war are part of the same conceptual field, that to read one without the other is to misunderstand them both. First, readers will notice that I speak less in the following chapters of a debate between metropolitan modernism (or experimental writing, or art for art's sake) and socialist realism and more about the tension between aesthetic autonomy and aesthetic utilitarianism. Although the major cold war antagonists often reduced the aesthetic cold war to modernism versus socialist realism, intellectuals from the decolonizing world offered more capacious and sophisticated responses to the problem of aesthetic form in an ideological age. As Achebe's comments in "Africa and Her Writers" show us, the debate between art for art's sake and state-mandated literary forms was blinkered by political expedience and non-aesthetic judgments. Literature's proper use, purpose, and value, Achebe believes, can be located somewhere between declarations of pure autonomy and absolute submission to state control of the literary field. Read with care, Achebe's essay becomes a call for African writers both to assert their independence—against outside interference from neocolonial or cold war interests—and to create works of art that observe utilitarian principles by serving the needs of readers. Writers from the decolonizing world, I will suggest in the following chapters, reinterpreted the standoff between modernism and socialist realism as a more fundamental and enriching tension between the need for intellectual freedom and the desire to have writing serve practical ends, such as showcasing the dignity and value of one's culture. As chapter 2 will make apparent, writers from the decolonizing world were keen to assert their autonomy—their independence from the marketplace, from colonial culture, from cold war pressures, and from emerging nation-states—yet they did not necessarily forsake the goal of serving their primary constituents with their work. They thought about these competing imperatives in ways that may seem inconsistent from the perspective of a cold war partisan, but which I believe repay our attention as creative solutions to an impasse not of their own making.

In addition to autonomy and utilitarianism, writers from the decolonizing world thought deeply about the tension between indigeneity and cultural syncretism, as Achebe's discussion of Okigbo demonstrates. Should colonial writers resuscitate autochthonous cultural traditions and write in indigenous languages to fight against cultural imperialism? Or should they embrace the

unique forms of hybridity that come with intercultural contact? Likewise, could nonmetropolitan writers turn metropolitan languages into tools of anticolonial thought? Should writers Africanize English, as Achebe proposes elsewhere, or should they forswear writing in imported tongues, as Ngũgĩ argues? Thoughts on the language debate, narrowly, and the cultural particularity versus hybridity discussion, more generally, provide some of the foundational questions in postcolonial studies, as the work of Adélékè Adéèkó, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Ranajit Guha, F. Abiola Irele, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak shows.

These arguments about language and culture cannot be understood without considering the impact of cold war diplomacy. The US diplomacy system developed an implicit language centralization model, with English functioning as a convenient and self-serving medium of literary exchange. Soviet diplomacy programs, by contrast, worked with an explicit model of linguistic plurality—potentially limitless portals for translation, with no one language given priority over another. This difference between the US and Soviet networks—one implicit and inconsistently managed, the other explicit and given more practical emphasis; one favoring vertical integration through cultural exchange within a dominant language, the other preaching horizontal exchange between languages and cultures—was just as important as the confrontation between autonomy and utilitarianism. Yet here, too, writers from the decolonizing world rarely line up neatly in predetermined camps. Chapter 2, which sketches out a detailed intellectual history of these debates in the anticolonial tradition, provides a more involved account about how the autonomy/utilitarianism and linguistic centralization/linguistic plurality discussions were stoked by the fires of the aesthetic cold war.

A Few Words on Methods

My approach in this book is archival, meaning that my readings of individual literary texts and cultural institutions are supported by evidence found in a variety of written deposits, from intelligence files to organizational memos to correspondence between authors and editors. When I started research for this project, I anticipated finding records showing how the United States bent anglophone writing from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean into a shape it would find politically acceptable through circuits of patronage and elaborate networks of surveillance. Similarly, I expected Soviet networks to demand some version of socialist realism and ideological sympathy from their partners in the

global south and to exclude writers who employ experimental techniques. The archives I consulted, however, had other things to teach me. After familiarizing myself with materials related to cultural diplomacy, I became more and more convinced that we should think of this as a system with built-in competition. Accounting for the Soviet presence in the global literary system forced me to acknowledge the limits of US influence; the Soviet cultural diplomacy apparatus presented a vibrant, attractive network of its own. Although it is clear that the superpowers influenced the emergence of late colonial and early postcolonial literature by promoting some writers and attempting to limit the circulation of others, it is not at all clear that the United States or the Soviet Union successfully created partisan intellectual networks among writers of the decolonizing world. The presence of competing cold war programs and the willingness of canny, nonaligned intellectuals to be courted by multiple interests while remaining uncommitted complicates such a narrative. Arguably, the United States wanted to promote pro-US and anti-Soviet writers, but it ended up promoting anglophone writing from diverse political perspectives. Although consolidating the dominance of English was an unintended consequence of US cultural diplomacy efforts—manipulating intellectuals for political gain was the primary, but largely unrealized objective—the elevation of English writing in the literary field was more lasting than any political gains. Superpower rivalry also retarded the development of local publishing industries, which found themselves competing against heavily subsidized imports.[11] The underdevelopment of local book markets was another lasting but accidental by-product of cultural diplomacy.

Archival materials generated by the political police, likewise, pose interpretive hazards of their own. The most obvious problem is the unevenness of the written record, where materials have been deliberately suppressed or unintentionally misplaced by their keepers. While Claudia Jones's FBI dossier is reasonably complete, for instance, there is no trace of her MI5 file. Even the most complete dossiers are full of redactions. The motivations of the political police and their informants present another clear challenge. I make a deliberate effort to balance the accounts we find in the intelligence dossiers against the accounts provided by writers who were the target of surveillance. When I suggest that writers from the decolonizing world carved out a measure of intellectual independence despite the pressures to which they were subjected, I rely on their testimony to substantiate this claim. But my book proposes we go beyond a state containment/dissident resistance template for explaining the relationship between the political police and recalcitrant writers. The ubiquity

of state intelligence programs, from capitalist democracies to Communist governments to colonial situations to fledgling postcolonial states, led writers to think of themselves as vital nodes of an international, nonaligned network of intellectuals, neither beholden to ideology nor constrained by citizenship. Rivalries between states meant that writers who were bullied in one place sometimes found support and relief elsewhere. The United States and its allies, the Soviet Union and its allies, and the emerging states of the global south all contributed to the midcentury discourse of human rights by pointing out the weaknesses and limitations of other states, creating a system of competition that writers were quick to recognize and exploit to defend themselves. The writers I consider in the following pages understood state discipline and human rights networks as part of a multinational, advantage-seeking system full of gaps and inconsistencies. This context supported specific forms of intellectual nonalignment.

My account of the literary field is informed, broadly speaking, by materialist and sociological approaches to literary studies, especially by the work of Pierre Bourdieu and some of his leading interlocutors, such as John Guillory, Pascale Casanova, James F. English, Mark McGurl, and Sarah Brouillette. My claim that the history of late colonial and early postcolonial literature may be narrated as a struggle over intellectual autonomy, bolstered by ideological nonalignment, will be recognizable to scholars familiar with Bourdieu's descriptions of literary texts as self-legislating artifacts or the field of art as the economic world turned upside-down.[12] I differ from Bourdieu and from some of those influenced by his work when I suggest that the aesthetic cold war created an environment in which large states attempted to intervene in arts and letters in unprecedented ways. More so than at any time before or since, the literary field came under direct pressure from powerful government agencies that supported and suppressed literary production through complementary mechanisms. When midcentury writers thought about the question of autonomy and quarreled over utilitarian principles, they were thinking not only about the impact of global capitalism on the market for symbolic goods, but also about the workings of large states. During this period, powerful states devoted extraordinary resources to subsidizing literary production, which included financing work produced by international writers and destined for readers across the world. Likewise, they devoted extraordinary resources to controlling literary production by harassing dissident writers. In terms of literary history, the aesthetic cold war represents an anomaly, an interlude during which powerful nations attempted to shape the production of literature both

within and far beyond their areas of direct political control. This anomalous situation created a predominantly anglophone global literary field that has outlived the specific political conditions through which it took shape.

What Follows

The book has three main parts. The opening section includes this short introduction and a longer chapter on the intellectual history of the period. Here, I show how the aesthetic debates of the cold war, especially debates about autonomous versus utilitarian theories of literary production, were inextricable from anticolonial discussions about literary language, especially those about the use of metropolitan, vernacular, and indigenous languages. This chapter provides a lengthy, technical background of the aesthetic debates over decolonization and the cold war. Specialists will want to read it, but nonspecialists may wish to skip ahead to the second and third sections.

The second section of the book includes three chapters on cultural diplomacy programs. Chapter 3, on the activities of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Africa, shows how the CIA's literary activities functioned in a decolonizing environment. Against those who read the CIA as a skillful puppet master, I suggest that African intellectuals had considerable room for maneuver when they engaged with US cultural diplomacy. Chapter 4 turns to Soviet-led cultural diplomacy efforts, especially the Afro-Asian Writers' Association and its house magazine, *Lotus*, which were very similar to US programs. The Soviets were no more successful than their rivals in recruiting ideological mouthpieces among global south writers. The major difference between the superpowers' programs, I argue, is that Soviet-led cultural diplomacy insisted on the value of linguistic and cultural heterogeneity. Chapter 5 returns to US cultural diplomacy through the career of Eileen Chang and her dealings with the United States Information Agency (USIA), the cultural diplomacy offshoot of the US State Department. Unlike the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the USIA and the State Department were open about their sponsorship of cultural goods, which changes how we might understand their position in the decolonizing parts of Asia.

The final section of the book turns to programs of state surveillance and discipline of intellectuals. Chapter 6 delves in the intelligence files of the political police, in this case MI5, which kept tabs on Doris Lessing for nearly two decades. Rather than stifling her creativity, the experience of being monitored encouraged Lessing to write in new, more experimental ways. Chapter 7 looks

at the FBI files compiled on Claudia Jones and C.L.R. James, Trinidadians who were deported from the United States in the mid-1950s. My research suggests that surveillance, incarceration, and deportation brought these political antagonists—Jones was a card-carrying Communist Party member, while James was a Trotskyite—much closer to each other as they turned to the nationalist projects of the 1960s. Chapter 8 examines the genre of the prison memoir, with forays into the archives of PEN International. Jailing writers is a basic way of curbing intellectual freedoms, but the experience of reading prison memoirs also reminds us that these writers used the language of human rights to resist. Prison memoirs show us how writers collaborated with the cold war's human rights organizations to imagine themselves as part of an international, affirmatively nonaligned network of intellectuals, crisscrossing national boundaries and entrenched ideologies.

Before providing more details about how the cold war's systems of patronage and policing influenced the development of literature from the global south, I pause here to reflect briefly on my own ideological perspective. As I have presented some of my preliminary research over the past few years, both in talks and in print, I have been surprised by the number of audience members and readers expecting me to adopt a definitive position on a cold war that ended, effectively, three decades ago. Some react with fury, or glee, when they discover that the United States or the Soviet Union attempted to influence the world of arts and letters in Africa and Asia, or when I insist that Achebe's unwitting acceptance of CIA support or his conscious acceptance a Soviet-sponsored literary prize should not then lead us to suspect his motives or to question his integrity. My attempt to reconstruct a literary history of decolonization and the cold war together will neither exculpate nor condemn the cultural diplomacy of the era's superpowers. I take it for granted that the disciplining of intellectuals for merely stating their political views is cowardly, unconscionable, and all too common in this period. Likewise, I will not take a position on the tiresome question of whether one side of the cold war acted less dishonorably than another, with the nearly inevitable conclusion that the US state and its allies were somehow more justified than their rivals when they crossed ethical lines. I leave this to the people who feel called to take a belated partisan stand on these issues.

For a literary historian, as I attempt to write in these pages, these are unsatisfying and ultimately misleading approaches to midcentury global literature. Whether anticolonial writing might have evolved along more or less promising lines, or whether it would have been more or less free to imagine a different

future, without state interference are not questions we are in a position to answer: the most sustained attempts to decolonize literary culture happened in this specific intellectual and ideological context, and it is a speculative endeavor to wish it otherwise. If I have any ideological conviction in these pages, it is a species of loyalty to the anticolonial intellectuals who achieved a measure of cultural and political freedom for themselves and their primary audiences. Arguing that the literature of decolonization was sanitized or coopted by cold war cultural diplomacy and discipline does not help us understand the texts that Achebe, Lessing, Ngũgĩ, or Soyinka have left us, few of which promote colonialism, apologize for US imperialism, or defend Soviet authoritarianism. Where others have read cold war intellectuals as compromised by their acceptance of state patronage, this book tends to recognize how late colonial and early postcolonial intellectuals carved out a degree of independence in the face of considerable pressure. This conclusion will not satisfy those who are inclined to believe that the cold war superpowers were nearly omnipotent in their dealings with a group of disorganized, scattered, relatively powerless intellectuals. But it will, I hope, have the advantage of explaining how a genuinely anticolonial literary tradition found a footing on the cold war's rocky terrain.

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